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Situating Supervision in the Context of a Social Justice Paradigm: A Convergence of Bernard's Discrimination Model and Social Justice

Paper based on a program presented at the 2007 Association for Counselor Education and Supervision Conference, October 11-14, Columbus, Ohio.

Melissa Odegard, Linwood G. Vereen, and Nicole R. Hill

Odegard, Melissa, M.S., LPC, is a third year doctoral candidate studying counselor education and supervision at Idaho State University. Her research interests include multicultural competency, social justice, and creativity in counselor training programs.

Vereen, Linwood G., Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Counseling at Idaho State University. His research interests include student development and integration of a model of supervision, social justice as a force in counseling, humor in counseling, and group work.

Hill, Nicole R., is an Associate Professor at Idaho State University. Her scholarly and research interests include multicultural counseling competencies, play therapy, mental health counseling, working with children and adolescents, and professional development of faculty and graduate students.

Within the counseling profession, there has been an increased focus on the integration of social justice into clinical practice. Specifically, the emphasis on social justice that is reflected within the counseling literature represents a paradigm shift to critically and systematically explore the social context of the client worldview (Constantine, Hage, Kindaichi, & Bryant, 2007; Crethar, Torres Rivera & Nash, 2008; Gummere, 1998; Hartung & Blustein, 2002; House & Martin, 1998; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; McWhirter, 1991; Ratts, D'Andrea, & Arredondo, 2004). The increased focus on social justice as a force within the counseling literature is fueled by the unequal access to resources such as wealth and education that have affected those who are marginalized in society (Collins & Yeskel, 2000; Kozol, 1991; Romero & Chan, 2005; Smith, Baluch, Bernabei, Robohm, & Sheehy, 2003). The shift in attention to social justice within the counseling literature has propelled counselor educators and counselors alike to conceptualize how to practice as professionals committed to social justice. Specifically, counselor supervisors are challenged to articulate and practice the integration of social justice into their training practices with counselors and counselor trainees.

The integration of social justice into Bernard's supervision paradigm (Bernard, 1979; Bernard & Goodyear, 2004) was presented at the Association for Counselor Educators and Supervision (ACES) 2007 annual conference in Columbus, Ohio. The presenters discussed the integration of social justice as a paradigm and Bernard's model of supervision in their presentation at Columbus through (a) revisiting Bernard's model of supervision, (b) defining social justice through a supervisory lens, (c) the convergence

of Bernard's model and social justice, (d) a case study focusing on social justice concerns, and (e) challenges and strategies for attending to social justice in supervision.

Bernard's Model of Supervision

Bernard's model of supervision (1979) was introduced in the late seventies due to the sparse and contradictory literature surrounding the process of supervision during that time. Her development of the model attempted to pair the training of both supervisors and counselors in a systematic manner. Bernard's model encompasses three supervisory roles: teacher, counselor, and consultant (Bernard, 1979). These concepts were introduced for use throughout the various roles that the supervisor takes on with students to gauge student growth in understanding of conceptualization, the integration of process skills, and the personalization of individual and client issues. In Bernard's (1979) integration of the model with her students, it was presented and defined to both supervisors (doctoral students) and counselors (master's students) alike for the above purposes. Counselors were asked to role play counseling vignettes in which each of the functions were a focal point and supervisors were given the opportunity to integrate the roles defined in the model.

For example, if the counselor came into supervision struggling with implementing systematic desensitization with the client and never learned the technique; the supervisor would teach the counselor relaxation techniques, successive approximation, hierarchy building, and the desensitization process (Bernard, 1979). The above example is a dramatization of the *teacher role that the supervisor would take on*, while the counseling function represents the *process*. Bernard (1979) cautions supervisors not to oversimplify specific roles with functions in the discrimination model. She further states that if a counselor is deficient in process skills, the teaching role may not always be the most useful approach in supervision. To further illuminate this, it might mean that some counselors are uneasy with process skills because these skills do not fit the counselor's values or beliefs, thus the supervisor might consider the role of *counselor* instead of *teacher*. "The discrimination model is a *situation-specific* model and there are nine potential choice points for the supervisor to consider" (Bernard, 1979, p. 64). These choices allow room for supervisors to select a range of approaches that fit a variety of counselor functions (Bernard, 1979). Many supervisors have integrated Bernard's model of supervision over the years to assist in their supervision with counselor trainees (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004). Due to the influence of Bernard's model on the presenters as well as their commitment to the integration of social justice into their supervision, it was found to be beneficial to situate the discrimination model of supervision within the context of social justice.

A Social Justice Supervisory Lens

In order to understand how to integrate social justice into supervision, it is important to be aware of how social justice is defined within the counseling literature.

For example, Crethar et al. (2008) draw on Rawls' (1971) work emphasizing that social justice counseling is a multifaceted approach to mental health because "practitioners strive to simultaneously promote human development and the common good through addressing challenges related to both individual and distributive justice" (p. 270). Smith et al. (2003) suggest that counseling that integrates social justice is based on the acknowledgement of systemic societal inequities and the recognition of the location of every individual within this system. Ratts et al. (2004) concur that counselors committed to social justice in their clinical practice acknowledge unearned power, privilege, and oppression and how it adversely affects the mental health and well being of clients. For the purposes of this article, social justice can be defined as a process of acknowledging systemic societal inequities and oppression while acting responsibly to eliminate the systemic oppression in the forms of racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, and other biases in clinical practice; both on individual and distributive levels (Crethar et al., 2008; Rawls 1971; Smith et al., 2003).

With this definition of social justice in mind, the presenters discussed a three-fold goal of a supervisor committed to social justice: (a) to facilitate awareness of the oppression affecting the supervisee and its affects on the supervisory relationship, (b) to facilitate supervisee understanding of the oppression that exists in society and its affects on marginalized individuals the supervisee encounters within the clinical context, and (c) to facilitate the supervisee's action on behalf of their client(s) to effect change on systemic levels. The integration of social justice into the supervisory process requires the supervisor to critically question how they plan on facilitating the above goal with their supervisees. Critical questions that can assist supervisors committed to social justice include: 1. How will I facilitate supervisee awareness of the oppression that may affect their clinical work? 2. How will I facilitate supervisee understanding of the oppression that exists in society and the affects it has on marginalized individuals within the therapeutic environment? 3. How will I facilitate a supervisee's action on behalf of their client(s) to effect change on systemic levels? These stimulus questions provide a framework for creatively developing interventions that fit a social justice paradigm. Furthermore, these questions build a foundation to assist supervisors in the application of social justice in Bernard's model of supervision.

Bernard's Model and Social Justice

Similar to Bernard's model of supervision (1979), there are nine potential choice points for the supervisor to consider while integrating social justice into their supervision. In addition, the role of supervisor includes teacher, counselor, and/or consultant. However, the counseling functions include awareness, knowledge, and skills versus Bernard's personalization, conceptualization, and process (see Table 1).

Table 1: The Convergence of Bernard's Discrimination Model and Social Justice

Counseling Function	Supervisor Role		
	A. Teacher	B. Counselor	C. Consultant
1. Skill	<i>Counselor</i> would like to help the client gain access to needed resources but has never learned how.	<i>Counselor</i> experiences learned helplessness while attempting to advocate for a client.	<i>Counselor</i> finds one's clients responding well to one's collaboration with service\ providers and would like to learn how to develop alliances with groups working for change.
	<i>Supervisor</i> teaches the counselor how to locate resources in the community relevant to client needs.	<i>Supervisor</i> helps counselor determine the effect of the client on them that limits them from advocating for the needs of their client.	<i>Supervisor</i> works with counselor to identify different ways to develop alliances with advocacy groups.
2. Knowledge	<i>Counselor</i> is unable to recognize the effects of racism the client experiences in multiple contexts.	<i>Counselor</i> is unable to set realistic goals for the client who requests collaboration with community stakeholders.	<i>Counselor</i> would like increase one's knowledge regarding oppressive systems that impact the client.
	<i>Supervisor</i> uses videos of counseling sessions to teach counselor to identify the pattern of racism the client experiences in multiple contexts.	<i>Supervisor</i> helps counselor relate their discomfort with their own inability to collaborate in several relationships.	<i>Supervisor</i> discusses several systems for the counselor to consider.
3. Awareness	<i>Counselor</i> is unaware that one's direct use of language intimidates one's client who is from a different ethnic group than the counselor.	<i>Counselor</i> is unaware that one's gender bias influences one's work with their client.	<i>Counselor</i> would like to feel more comfortable addressing the systemic issues that influence the well-being of the client, a low-income single parent.
	<i>Supervisor</i> assigns reading regarding competent cross-cultural literature.	<i>Supervisor</i> helps client confront his/her gender bias and resistance to recognizing its negative impact on the therapeutic process.	<i>Supervisor</i> and counselor discuss systemic injustices that impact low-income single parents.

The convergence of Bernard's discrimination model and social justice provides the framework for a paradigm shift for counselor educators and supervisors. Similar to Bernard's model (1979), there is the danger of oversimplifying the connection between roles and functions in the convergence model. Supervisors are encouraged to maintain role flexibility to integrate these concepts in their work with counselors and trainees. Strategies to assist supervisors in maintaining flexibility and integrity while they integrate social justice include: increasing awareness and knowledge with regard to oppressive systems; modeling a focus on social justice in clinical practice and in the supervisory

relationship; and facilitating supervisee integration of social justice through initiating micro and macro level questions as counselors engage in their work with clients.

Case Study

To assist supervisors in conceptualizing the convergence of Bernard's model and social justice, a case study will be presented. Consider the following case: You are engaging in a supervision session with one of your supervisees. Your supervisee is a school counselor who works in a rural farming community where there are high incidents of families with low income, limited access to GED classes (60 miles away), and a yearly average of 15 percent of high school graduates who go on to a four year college. Your supervisee comes to supervision presenting a concern about one of the students with whom she has been working. She describes the sessions with him (an 18 year-old male) as focusing primarily on working towards his future career goals. While in counseling, the student shares his interests in receiving a technical degree and also shares his struggle with finishing high school. The supervisee later finds out that this particular student has turned his books in and dropped out of school immediately after their last session.

The following questions assist the clinical supervisor in attending to the convergence of Bernard's model and social justice: 1. Given what you know about poverty, what could be some of the systemic issues present? 2. What are some of the issues the student might be encountering? 3. How would the supervisor understand this case from a social justice perspective? 4. What supervisory roles (counselor, consultant, teacher) do you perceive would be helpful in your work with your supervisee? 5. As her supervisor, what areas (awareness, knowledge, and skills) might you focus on addressing and why?

Challenges and Strategies in Supervision

The presented case presents several challenges to the supervisor: 1. How to model the integration of social justice effectively in both supervision and clinical practice. 2. How to facilitate supervisee conceptual understanding of integrating social justice in their work with the student. 3. How to follow through and evaluate the attempts to address these concerns presented. Strategies to address these challenges might include taking seriously a commitment to addressing systemic issues in supervision and clinical practice through being intentional in exploring further the systemic concerns the above case presented. The supervisor might also consider increasing systemic awareness through asking the supervisee questions that further challenge her to consider ways to address the concerns related to her student on both micro and macro levels. Finally, setting concrete goals to implement and evaluate the strategies discussed to address the challenges the supervisee was facing with her student assists the supervisor to work with the supervisee from a social justice paradigm.

Conclusion

The importance of viewing social justice as a paradigm for integration into Bernard's model of supervision was illuminated. This was discussed through (a) revisiting Bernard's model of supervision, (b) defining social justice through a supervisory lens, (c) the introducing of Bernard's model and social justice, (d) presenting a case study focusing on social justice concerns, and (e) identifying challenges and strategies for attending to social justice in supervision. To address the increasing changes in society as well as the counseling profession, it is imperative that supervisors consider how they will attend to social justice in their supervisory work. The convergence of Bernard's model and social justice provides clinical supervisors a framework for attending to social justice. Future research would examine the efficacy of integrating Bernard's model and social justice in the supervisory process.

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