Distinguishing the Supervision Needs of Assessment and Therapy Trainees

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We appreciate the interest that Prieto and Stoltenberg (1997) display in their response to our model of assessment supervision (Finkelstein & Tuckman, 1997). Supervision of assessment has been a long neglected area, and we are pleased that our article has stimulated needed discussion.

However, we have some serious concerns about their assertions. In their comment (Prieto & Stoltenberg, 1997), they claim that our model mimics their model of counselor development (cf. Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987; Stoltenberg, McNeill, & Delworth, in press) and is therefore superfluous in the literature. Although it is true that their integrated developmental model (IDM) does provide a comprehensive model of counselor development, the IDM makes no mention of the development of psychological assessment skills, nor do the many references they cite.

It is unclear, therefore, why Prieto and Stoltenberg (1997) assume that the two models are identical. Therapy and assessment are distinctly different areas of practice and develop through different progressions. Although one would certainly expect similarities between the processes (and thus may use elements of the IDM and other models of counselor development to inform thinking about assessor development), further work is needed to ascertain the important ways in which the models differ. To do otherwise does a disservice to supervisors, trainees, and clients alike. We hope that our model, as well as the IDM, will forward the process of gaining greater understanding of this key area of clinical practice.

Prieto and Stoltenberg (1997) further claim that our model is out of line with known empirical data. To be specific, they cite significant literature stating that even veteran assessors still make administrative and scoring errors, despite our claims that these basics are learned in the first stage of assessor development. Perhaps we would have been more clear if we had stated explicitly that these basics are the focus of training in the first stage, not that they are fully and forever mastered. We are not at all surprised that even veterans still make these errors, nor do we disagree with Prieto and Stoltenberg that rigorous training is needed in these early stages.

Unfortunately, Prieto and Stoltenberg (1997) focus on merely the first of the eight stages we posited in assessor development. The true work of a skilled assessor comes in the later stages, when each of the individual tests is integrated into a coherent and deeply meaningful report. This restricted view on their part is typical of what is available in the literature—a great deal on the basics of administration and scoring, a fair amount on interpreting individual tests and measures, but only the barest minimum on integrating the great wealth of data from a battery into a complete report.

We firmly believe that such a narrow focus, although crucial as a foundation, neglects the ultimate utility of what is gained from the assessment. Our comprehensive model, by contrast, looks at the full process. We hope that this model will assist supervisors to more appropriately match their training interventions to trainees’ level of development, from neophyte to master assessor. To this end, making sweeping generalizations from the counselor development literature is unfounded until clarifying work is done.

References


of sites listed above (do not include inter-
view costs, only xeroxing, stamps, etc.)? What is your total estimated cost for the number of interviews listed above?"

In regard to application expenses, cost estimates ranged from $0 to $400, with a mean estimate of $124 (SD = 111) and a modal estimate of $50. Estimates of expenses incurred to attend an average of 6.69 personal interviews ranged from $60 to $4,000, with a mean of $1,044 (SD = 1021) and a mode of $400.

The combination of application and interview expenses yielded an average investment of $1,168. Not included in this estimate were expenses associated with child care provision, interview clothing, and possible lost wages. Although $1,168 may not be a substantial amount to advanced professionals, it more than likely constitutes 10% or more of students' yearly earnings. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that these applicants spent over $1,000 to compete for a job that has a yearly salary of $17,000 (1997 VAMC internship stipend), which exceeds the average yearly salary ($16,400) for programs accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA).

The representativeness of these students who participated in this study to the 3,000 students who applied for APA-accredited internships is unknown. However, the site has a history of attracting applicants from most states, from clinical and counseling tracks, and from both PhD and PsyD programs. The small sample and great variability limit the generalizability of these findings, but the results are consistent with students' estimates provided on a listserv discussion (personal communication, SAG [Division 17, Student Affiliate Group] Listserv, 1997).

In summary, these data are presented to demonstrate the financial effects of the increasingly competitive internship application process. This personal effect on students should be considered as trainers, the APA, the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers, and other organizations contemplate changes to the internship application process. For now, students should be aware that internship application is an arduous, expensive process and should plan accordingly.

References