Introducing BSW Students to Social Work Supervision Prior to Field: A BSW-MSW Student Partnership

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Abstract: *Little empirical information exists about how social work students are prepared to utilize supervision in practice. This study describes an experiential exercise designed to introduce BSW students to social work supervision prior to their field experience. MSW students enrolled in a supervision practice course provided mentored supervision to 42 BSW students in an introductory skills course. The skills course involved a progressive role-play that spanned the whole semester. Mixed methods were used to investigate BSW student perceptions of the exercise. According to survey data, BSW students reported a strong working alliance with MSW students and high satisfaction with the supervision they received. Qualitative data revealed two overarching categories of students: 1) students who reported benefiting from the exercise, and 2) students who reported mixed benefits or no benefits. Students who understood the role of the supervisor were also more likely to reported that they benefited from the exercise. Students who were unclear about the role of the supervisor reported mixed or no benefits of the exercise. Recommendations for social work educators relate to the need for educators to provide information on the use of supervision for BSW students, the necessity for guiding student reflections as part of the supervision exercises, and considering the developmental levels of students when crafting educational interventions.*

Keywords: *BSW, supervision, supervisee, experiential learning, mixed methods, training*

All social work graduates are expected to possess competency in a wide array of subjects. Social work educational programs have the responsibility for developing "the substantive content, pedagogical approach, and educational activities that provide learning opportunities for students to demonstrate the competencies" (Council on Social Work Education [CSWE], 2015, p. 6). One way that social work graduates are expected to demonstrate competency is through "the use of supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior" (CSWE, 2015, p. 7).

Supervision is central to social work and particularly for its signature pedagogy—field education. Both students and practitioners consider field education to be the most critical component of preparation for practice (Bogo, 2010). Generally, a student's first exposure to the supervisory relationship occurs during field education. Within that setting, quality supervision can help improve student skills (Deal, Bennett, Mohr, & Hwang, 2011) and also help students weather the emotional situations inherent in the practice of social work (Litvack, Mishna, & Bogo, 2010). Once students graduate, supervision helps foster and

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maintain professional growth, protect against burnout, and ultimately produce better client outcomes (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014).

Despite the CSWE competency requirement and the importance of supervision in practice, there is little empirical information about how social work students are prepared to utilize supervision in practice (Everett, Miehls, DuBois, & Garran, 2011; Miehls, Everett, Segal, & du Bois, 2013). There is an abundance of literature exploring what is "good" social work supervision (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Shulman, 2010) and how to teach social work supervisors how to provide good supervision (Bennett & Deal, 2012; Bogo, 2010; Fisher, Simmons, & Allen, 2016). Most empirical investigations about supervisees ultimately center around how supervisors can use the findings to provide better supervision (Bogo, 2010; Kanno & Koeske, 2010; Miehls et al., 2013). Nonetheless, the wealth of field companion books that introduce social work student to the nature, structure, and purpose of the supervisory relationship as revealed by a Google search ("social work field education books") demonstrate the necessity for orienting students to the supervisory relationship. Additionally, the mounting evidence that an alarming proportion of supervisees receive inadequate and even harmful supervision creates a sense of urgency for empowering supervisees with skills and knowledge about supervision is supported by (Ellis, Berger, Hanus, & Ayala, 2014; McNamara, Kangos, Corp, & Ellis, 2017).

The purpose of this article is to describe an innovative experiential exercise introducing pre-practicum BSW students to the use of supervision and to report the results of a pilot study of BSW students' perceptions of the exercise. Suggestions for future development of the exercise and evaluation are presented.

Relevant Literature

Social Work Supervision

The authors use the conceptualization of social work supervision provided by Kadushin and Harkness (2014): administrative, educational, and supportive functions of supervision are used to "direct, coordinate, enhance, and evaluate the on-the-job performance" of the supervisee (p. 11), with an eye toward enhancing both daily practice skills and the overall professional development of the supervisee. The administrative function deals with tasks such as paperwork, employment evaluation, and adhering to agency policy; the educational function has to do with facilitating the continuing education of the supervisee; and the supportive aspect includes meeting emotional needs of the developing social worker. The inclusion of the supportive and educational aspects of supervision is necessary for positive outcomes for both workers and clients, (e.g., reducing child welfare worker turnover; Renner, Porter, & Preister, 2009) and increasing worker empowerment and satisfaction (Mor Barak, Travis, Pyun, & Xie, 2009). Indeed, social work practitioners report their greatest supervisory needs are the educational and supportive aspects of supervision (Hair, 2013).

Strong supervisory relationships can be nurtured through the supervisory working alliance (Bordin, 1983). According to Bordin, the supervisory working alliance is developed through mutual agreement on goals and tasks, with strong supervisory bonds.

Goals refer to the types of changes that are to take place in supervision; tasks are behavioral objectives accomplished by the supervisor and supervisee to reach mutually agreed upon goals; and bonds are feelings of liking, caring, and trusting within the dyad which help to sustain the relationship. In addition, supervision satisfaction is linked to the quality of the supervisory relationship and attention to all three aspects of supervision (Mor Barak et al., 2009).

The supervisory relationship can predict the quality of the therapeutic alliance (DePue, Lambie, Liu, & Gonzalez, 2016) and has the potential to positively affect client outcomes (Horvath, Del Re, Flückiger, & Symonds, 2011). A positive supervisory relationship engenders trust (Renner et al., 2009). Psychological empowerment of the supervisee through power sharing between supervisor and supervisee results in the supervisee having a sense of control and competence, a sense of self-efficacy, and ownership of actions (Lee, Weaver, & Hrostowski, 2011).

Training Students to Use Supervision

Despite the centrality of supervision to social work, few studies explore how students are prepared to use supervision. One study proposing a developmental model for practicum supervision explored student perceptions. As part of a mixed methods design, Everett et al. (2011) assembled post-practicum students into focus groups and asked, "Did you feel prepared to make use of supervision, and, if not, what were you surprised by?" (p. 255). The authors reported that students did not feel prepared and were even confused by the term supervision.

When queried about preparedness for the supervisory relationship, students offered the following comments:

> *I wasn't. I had a professional job before coming here and think I have never had to go in and say this is what I am doing and like it just felt like really weird. I had no concept of how to use her in the beginning.* (Everett et al., 2011, p. 260)

Similarly, another student shared: "I didn't get it at all. I didn't understand what it was about—the whole thing puzzled me—even the term supervisor—it had a really different connotation" (Everett et al., 2011, p. 260). The authors concluded that "students lack adequate preparation about the function of supervision in social work practice" (Everett et al., 2011, p. 263). They urged social work educators to prepare students to use supervision using role-play, case presentations, readings, and discussion.

Using focus groups, Miehls et al. (2013) explored MSW student expectations and experiences of supervision. The researchers specifically questioned the students about their understanding of supervision prior to beginning field. Although students could not recall information about course content on supervision, several students had a general idea that supervisors provide help with both direct practice and mentoring. However, other students expressed confusion about the structure of supervision sessions and the nature of the supervisory relationship. Lack of structure (e.g., not collaborating on agenda setting) was cited as one reason for dissatisfaction with supervision. Another reason for dissatisfaction was a lack of conflict resolution bolstered by power differentials in the relationship. The

study results suggested a lack of clarity about the "content, frequency, nature, and focus of agency supervision" (Miehls et al., 2013, p. 143). In other words, many social work students finish coursework with little idea of what supervision should be, much less how to develop and utilize the supervisory relationship. The authors argued that one solution would be to train students regarding what to expect from and how to use supervision. In light of these findings and proposals, the authors developed an experiential exercise with the hope of introducing BSW students to supervision prior to their field experiences.

Experiential Exercise on the Use of Supervision

The authors designed an experiential exercise involving both BSW and MSW students, wherein BSW students enrolled in a required introductory skills course received social work supervision from second-year MSW students learning supervisory skills. The MSW students had all completed at least one practicum prior to the experience and thus had been exposed to social work supervision in the field. The exercise was designed to teach the MSW students how to provide social work supervision while simultaneously exposing BSW students to the range of practice behaviors that social workers encounter in their daily work, including the use of supervision (for an exploration of this exercise from the MSW perspective, see Fisher et al., 2016). A specific aim for the BSW students was to introduce them to the process of decision-making regarding clients while seeking supervision and thereby engaging in reflective practice. The exercise has been used at this institution during the fall semester for four years.

The exercise utilized the elements of Kolb's (1984) four-part experiential learning cycle: abstract concept, concrete experience, reflective observation, and active experimentation. Due in part to the ability of experiential learning to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Lu, Dane, & Gellman, 2005), this model is often used in social work (Anastas, 2010; Pugh, 2014). Students may begin Kolb's cycle at any stage, depending on their learning style. Due to its flexibility, the model is able to accommodate all types of learners (Anastas, 2010; Pugh, 2014). Table 1 provides an overview of the assignments, the learning objectives, and the timing of each assignment that was part of the BSW exercise.

The experiential component of the BSW introductory skills class began with students learning about each stage of the planned change process, from intake and engagement to termination, and the skills germane to each stage (abstract learning). The role-plays were based on predetermined scripts. The BSW students follow one case across the semester progressing from engagement to termination. The role-play scripts were constructed by both BSW students and the instructor at the beginning of the course. BSW students conducted and video-recorded 30-minute individual sessions with a classmate or an instructor-approved participant who was willing to play the role of the client. There was one client session per stage: engagement, exploration, assessment, treatment planning, and termination (concrete experience).

Table 1. *Components of the Experiential Exercise on Supervision*

Assignment	Experiential Learning Objective	Timing
Pre-Self-Assessment	Reflection	Beginning of the semester
In class lecture and discussions of topics (planned change process and skills)	Abstract concepts	Weekly throughout semester
Five recorded role-play sessions with "clients"	Concrete experience Active experimentation	Beginning at middle of semester and continuing biweekly until complete
Session notes and log	Concrete experience Reflection	Immediately following each role-play "client" session
Supervision	Reflection	Following each role-play "client" session
Post-Self-Assessment	Reflection	End of the semester

The BSW students were presented with varying opportunities for reflective observation. First, the BSW students were required to review their own sessions, write a self-reflection, and create progress notes for each session. Next, BSW students were assigned MSW student supervisors. BSW students met with the MSW student supervisors for 30 minutes a week for five face-to-face sessions. Students were responsible for negotiating times to meet. MSW student supervisors were instructed to vary supervision based on the BSW student's developmental needs. MSW student supervisors conducted at least one live supervision session and reviewed student tapes in other sessions. For each recording, the BSW students identified the part of the tape they wanted to present in session. For at least one session, the MSW supervisor reviewed the entire recorded role-play.

The students initiated supervision in as realistic a manner as possible, with the MSW student supervisor providing appropriate forms and paperwork (informed consent, necessary releases, etc.) to explain, review, and sign in the first session. Also during the initial session, the MSW student supervisors and BSW supervisees developed goals and a contract for supervision. For subsequent sessions, the BSW students participated in setting the goals and agenda for each session and were responsible for choosing what part(s) of the role-play recordings they wanted their supervisor to review. The supervision sessions occurred after each recording was made but ideally before the next recording so that students could incorporate supervisor input (active experimentation). The exercise culminated with a final self-reflection activity, a post-self-assessment, in which each BSW student provided a written self-assessment of his or her progress toward mastering the skills covered during the semester.

By the time the supervision began, the MSW students were familiar with Bordin's (1983) supervisory working alliance and Shulman's (2010) parallel process model, and had learned about the administrative, educational, and supportive functions of supervision (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Shulman, 2010). They had also delved into the study of developmental supervision, which sees supervision as having a trajectory with a beginning, middle, and end (Shulman, 2010), because supervisees are more satisfied with supervisors

who attend to their developmental needs (Everett et al., 2011). MSW students were, therefore, instructed to assess supervisee developmental level and vary their supervision based on each BSW student's developmental needs.

To ensure quality supervision for the BSWs, each MSW student recorded at least five supervisory sessions for review by the MSW instructor, produced written reflections and notes on each session, and received group input on their supervision. Although MSW students provided supervision, the ultimate responsibility for promoting and evaluating the BSW students' interview skill acquisition rested upon the BSW instructor. Both MSW and BSW students received course credit for their participation in the clinical supervision exercise. No students were enrolled in field at the time of the exercise.

Methods

This pilot study addresses a gap in the literature by exploring the experiences of BSW students participating in a training exercise in supervision. More specifically, this study addressed the following research question: What were the perceptions of the BSW students regarding the training exercise focused on the use of supervision?

The design of the study was an embedded mixed methods approach. After approval by the institutional review board, the research team used both quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (focus groups) approaches to explore the research questions. The description of the samples, procedures, and results for each portion of the study are provided below.

Surveys (Quantitative)

Participants. A purposeful sample of BSW students was recruited from a CSWE-accredited program at a midsized state university in the southeast. The participants were 42 students enrolled in two sections of an introductory practice skills course. The sample was comprised of students who were African American (61%), White (35%), and Other (4%). The majority of students (93.5%) were female. Most students were between the ages of 18 – 24 (70%), while 30% were 25 and older.

Procedure and instruments. Survey data was collected in two waves during fall 2014 and fall 2016. BSW students completing the survey in fall 2014 were invited via e-mail to complete two online surveys, the Working Alliance Inventory–Trainee (WAI-T; Bahrick, 1990) and the Supervision Satisfaction Questionnaire (SSQ; Ladany, Hill, Corbett, & Nutt, 1996), each containing Likert-style scale survey items. The e-mail included a link to an online consent form and to the online survey. Fall 2016 survey participants completed both surveys prior to their participation in the focus groups described below.

In 2014, extra credit was offered to students who completed the questionnaires, and extra credit plus pizza was offered in fall 2016. Incentives can increase participation, although other factors also influence the decision to participate (Rickles, 2010; Sharp, Pelletier, & Lévesque, 2006); intrinsic motivation may be the more important incentive rather than rewards (Omori & Feldhaus, 2015).

Working Alliance Inventory—Trainee (WAI-T). The WAI-T was used to assess each BSW student's perception of the strength of the supervisory relationship using the factors

contained in Bordin's (1983) definition of the supervisory working alliance: goals, tasks, and bonds. The 36-item self-report instrument includes such items as "[Supervisor] and I collaborated on setting goals," "We agreed on what is important for me to work on," and "My relationship with [supervisor] is very important to me"). Each of the three subscales contains 12 items, which are rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*almost never*) to 7 (*almost always*). Higher scores reflect increased strength in each domain. With respect to validity, the WAI-T was validated by asking seven expert judges to rate the relevance of each item on the three supervisory working alliance subscales (i.e., goals, tasks, and bonds; Bahrick, 1990). In addition, the WAI-T was positively related to supervisee satisfaction and favorable supervisory racial identity interactions, but negatively related to supervisee role conflict and role ambiguity (Ladany & Lehrman-Waterman, 1999). In the current study, the WAI-T showed good internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha were $\alpha = .90$ (goals), $\alpha = .89$ (tasks), and $\alpha = .88$ (bonds).

Supervision Satisfaction Questionnaire (SSQ). The SSQ was used to assess student supervision satisfaction, which is also linked to the quality of the supervisory relationship and attention to all three aspects of supervision (Mor Barak et al., 2009). The SSQ contains 8-items rated on a 4-point scale that measures satisfaction with various aspects of supervision. Sample items include, "How would you rate the quality of supervision you have received?" and "Has the supervision you received helped you to deal more effectively in your role as a social worker?" Scores for the scale are obtained by summing the item ratings. The reliability coefficient for the SSQ was .96.

Data analysis. A series of chi-square goodness-of-fit tests were conducted to describe a) the extent to which BSW students perceived that they had a strong working alliance (i.e., goals, tasks, and bonds) with the MSW student supervisors; and b) the extent to which BSW students were satisfied with the supervision they received from MSW students. Responses on the WAI-T were dichotomized into strong or weak bonds and high or low for goals and tasks. If students reported "often," "very often," "always" in response to positive statements or "never," "rarely," "occasionally," or "sometimes" to negative statements, they were coded as strong/high. In contrast, if students reported "never," "rarely," "occasionally" or "sometimes" in response to positive statements or "often," "very often," or "always" to negative statements, they were coded as weak/low. Results are presented using descriptive statistics.

Prior to the implementation of this exercise, BSW students received peer mentoring from other BSW students who had taken this introductory practice course the previous semester and were given the WAI-T and SSQ to assess working alliance and satisfaction with supervision. About 50% of the students surveyed reported a strong working alliance and satisfaction with supervision they received. Therefore, if the null hypothesis is true, we would expect about 50% of the students to report a strong/high working alliance and high satisfaction with supervision after receiving MSW supervision. If the null hypothesis is not true, however, more students would report a strong working alliance and high satisfaction with supervision after receiving MSW supervision.

Focus Groups

Participants. Focus group participants were BSW students recruited from the most recent cohort who participated in the supervision exercise. The sample (*n*=12) was comprised of 6 African American and 6 White students. All 12 focus group participants were females between the ages of 20-22.

Procedure. Focus group participants were recruited via email. Along with the recruitment email, students were sent a link to an online sign-up sheet for the scheduled focus groups. As previously discussed, extra credit points and pizza were offered as incentives to attend the focus groups. Students who signed up for the groups were sent confirmation and reminder emails prior to each focus group session. The pizza incentive did not appear to influence a social desirability bias because students seemed equally willing to offer criticism of the exercise as they did favorable comments (Cyr, 2016).

The following questions were used to guide the focus group discussion:

1. Talk about this experience and what it was like for you.
2. What did it mean?
3. What, if anything, did you learn?
4. Now that you have had this experience, what else do you think you need to know about supervision?
5. Do you think this experience will be helpful to you in the future? If so, please say specifically what you think was helpful. If not, please try to state specifically what was unhelpful?
6. Think about the process of this exercise. What was helpful? What was not helpful? What do you think you could have used more or less of?
7. What, if any, skills or competencies do you think you have developed as a result of this exercise?

Data analysis. A thematic analysis of data was employed (Thomas, 2006). Data analysis relied on video recorded during each of the two focus groups. The videos were transcribed with participants identified by code names. Transcripts were imported into NVivo software package 11 (QSR International, 2015) for text retrieval and flexibility of organization and linking after manually completing initial coding. The primary unit of analysis was individual comments.

The responses of students were entered into a columned matrix that enabled consideration of what themes might be indicated and labeled with preliminary codes. As this was the first attempt in this series of investigations to understand how BSW students experienced supervision, the authors elected to provide a more detailed account of a particular set of themes in the data, i.e., student comments that reflected a perception that the exercise was or was not helpful or beneficial (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Underlying categories in each of those themes were identified and clustered into matrices (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014), recognizing that category construction is not always unambiguous (Saldaña, 2016).

The authors reflected, compared, and discussed interpretations using Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model of data analysis. A general inductive approach using

thematic analysis was employed to develop the framework of the underlying structure of experiences (Thomas, 2006). The framework was illustrated using excerpts from the raw data and presented in the findings (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

Results

Survey Results

Results indicated that the distribution of the responses to the WAI-T and SSQ following the implementation of the MSW supervision exercise was not the same as the distribution for peer supervision. BSW students reported a strong working alliance with MSW students and high satisfaction with the supervision (see Table 2). Based on the odds ratio, students were 5 times more likely to report a strong emotional bond (86%) as opposed to a weak emotional bond (14%). They were 4.3 times more likely to have a high level of mutual agreement (81%) than a low level of mutual agreement (19%) on goals. Students were 6 times more likely to have a high level of agreement (86%) than a low level of agreement (14%) on tasks. With respect to satisfaction with the supervision they received, students were 5 times more likely to report high satisfaction (81%) than low satisfaction (19%).

Table 2. *Results of the Chi Square Tests (n= 42)*

	(χ^2)	df	p-value	OR
Working Alliance Inventory – Trainee (WAI-T)				
Bonds	21.43*	1	<.001	5.0
Goals	16.10*	1	<.001	4.3
Tasks	21.43*	1	<.001	6.0
Supervision Satisfaction Questionnaire (SSQ)				
Supervision satisfaction	16.10*	1	<.001	5.0
Note: OR = Odds Ratio				

Focus Group Results

The analysis of the narrative data identified two categories of how BSW students experienced the supervision process: (1) those who found it a positive and helpful experience, and (2) those who had a mixed experience and/or did not see it as beneficial as it could have been. Sub-categories were identified within these two broad categories.

Helpful experiences. Among those who found the supervisory exercise beneficial and experienced a degree of learning, BSW students identified such themes as learning to improve performance and relate the experience to actual practice. These students also tended to define the experience as more one of mentorship. They were able to identify the skills they learned as a result of the supervision they received, and how to use the experience to prepare for future use of supervision.

Improve future performance. Students expressed gaining understanding and insight into what they were doing well, as well as how to improve by observing and discussing other students' video interviews and receiving feedback from the MSW student supervisors. One student stated:

I felt it was very good practice. In one of my videos I was focusing on the client's husband instead of the client, and my supervisor reminded me to focus on my client—the wife, even though I wanted to help the husband, too.

Other statements included "I learned to ask them if they have any questions. I felt that I did a good job, but I forgot to ask if they had any questions about what I was saying," and "Every time we would get a new topic in class we would also ask our supervisor how it would relate to real life social work."

In discussing how the supervision sessions were structured, one student said, "We would make our videos together and then talk about them and the different scenarios. It was like getting insight on more than one example." Another BSW student had this to say about the videos of the client sessions: "We would watch them and discuss what was done well. She had a checklist and would see if we were progressing. That was really helpful, because we were confused going in, but she helped make it a lot more clear."

Importance of relationship. Students expressed seeing the exercise as the MSW student being more of a mentor, giving suggestions about being a successful student rather than helping develop practice skills. "I looked at this as more a mentor thing than a supervisor." This was also indicated through statements such as, "Not only was she excited about the videos, she wanted to know more about us as well. She was concerned about our lives" and "I liked my supervisor, too. She also helped me with my question about graduate school." One BSW student suggested, "I think it would be good to have this for all social work majors. Once they declare, pair them up with someone who can guide them."

On discussing the mentoring aspects of the relationship, one student said, "That's what my supervisor was like [mentor]. She would tell me about different teachers, insight into what to expect in our classes and the work load." Similar statements were "I felt that they were able to give me valuable feedback on the path to graduate school," and "I learned about the license exam. That was probably the most helpful thing because I did not really know about it."

Mixed experiences and/or less beneficial. Students who had mixed and/or less beneficial experiences of the exercise identified such themes as feeling unsure and not certain, feeling misguided, being frustrated, finding the exercise time-consuming, or not wanting feedback about performance.

Stress and frustration. The most typical experience of students who did not find the exercise beneficial was frustration and added stress. This was indicated in responses where those exact terms were used, but also alluded to, as in the students who said, "I felt like it could have been more" and "It just seemed a little random. They felt sort of rushed and stressed…going through the motions and meeting the steps we had to meet." Some students with frustrating experiences seemed to have initial hopefulness, as illustrated by statements like "…maybe I'll meet with her by the end of the semester" and "I had wanted it to go better than it had."

More benefit to the MSW students. Students who identified themes of the self-serving aspect of the MSW student participation also expressed disappointment and a feeling of having been misled. For example, one student said:

I felt a little misguided. I thought it was 100% for our benefit, and I did not realize that we were partaking in their assignment. It kind of changed the way that I looked at it. I felt that it was only important to them because they were getting a grade and not for helping us. I like my supervisor, but I think it changed the dynamic of the meetings.

Another student agreed, saying "It was more like their assignment that we were helping with than a tool for us." However, one student expressed just the opposite, stating "Up until right now I didn't know that they were only using us to practice being a supervisor."

Role of supervision for learning. Some of the BSW students thought the exercise was intended to help them complete the role-play interview assignment and achieve a better grade, thus they were frustrated that the review occurred after their assignment was completed. For example, a student expressed the following:

By the time that I would meet [with my supervisor], I would have already turned in my video and I didn't really care about what anyone else had to say about it. I did not have a grade on it yet, so I did not need someone critiquing it. I would have appreciated help a week earlier.

This theme related to BSW students not having a grasp of supervision's role in practice, or the purpose of the exercise and how it could be helpful in the future.

Utilizing supervision. Students knew little about social work supervision prior to the exercise, in theory or in practice. Only two students expressed any prior knowledge of the role of supervision in general, and none expressed awareness that they would have supervision in field practicum or in social work practice at the BSW level.

A little more than half of the focus groups participants also found the process useful in terms of increasing knowledge about the purposes and use of supervision. For example:

I could tell that she actually took her time with this assignment. She brought notes telling me what I could do to improve. I could tell that she really took the time to watch each one. She was able to watch my videos and tell me, "You need to ask more questions."

Those students also expressed awareness of how the exercise could contribute to their use of supervision in future coursework and practice. Several of them appreciated the one-on-one attention.

I think that it will be really helpful to have someone guide you. When we first started, I had no idea what we were supposed to do with the video. The supervisor really helped everyone in our group focus and figure out what we were doing.

Also, "[t]hey can prepare you for when you are ready to be out on your own," and

I think it will be helpful next semester when we are taking the practice classes. We can use this to be more helpful to clients and maybe get a better grade. My supervisor taught me that an introduction is more than just about our name and title. It's about making the client feel comfortable before jumping into the session.

Examples of learning from supervision include, "She gave me good feedback on the second [video of a session]. The first one she mainly talked about what I had done. She didn't really tell me what I could have done better. She watched our second video and gave us some advice on what to do in the third." Another student stated:

> *My advisor watched all of our videos and then went through and gave us the positives and negatives. When she watched our videos, she would ask a lot of questions and would point things out. I was able to use her advice.*

However, it is important to note that, even though it was explained to students during class, there was little awareness in about half of the BSW students of using supervision to identify and reflect on what worked and what did not work after a client session. One student stated:

> *I guess I don't really know what was expected of me before supervision meetings. I'm not really sure what I would need to bring to the table. I wish we would have been given a goal of what we were supposed to have gotten out of supervision.*

One revealing statement that seemed to indicate another disconnect between MSW student supervisor and BSW student supervisee was:

> *She asked about my goals and I really did not have any, but she kept pressing me so I answered the first thing that I thought of, "active listening." So, every time we spoke we had to talk about active listening, even though I didn't care. We had already gone over it in class; I know what to do.*

Discussion

We introduced the concept of supervision to the BSW students with the aspiration of providing an orienting experience to social work supervision prior to field. The survey results indicate that the BSW students were generally satisfied with their supervision and perceived that a strong working relationship and alliance had been formed. The information from the BSW students who participated in focus groups helped clarify the experiences of both those students who were satisfied and perceived a strong supervisory working alliance and those who did not.

Qualitative data revealed that the BSW student supervisees who reported being very clear on the dual role of supervision as being supportive of professional development as well as skill development (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014) tended to be satisfied with their supervision. However, BSW students who were less clear on the role of supervision believed their supervisors' role was to tell them what to do on the next recording. These students tended to express more dissatisfaction with the project.

The BSW students' characterization of their relationship with their MSW supervisors as being "more of a mentor" revealed potential insights into their perception of the supervisory relationship. "Mentor" was the term supplied by the BSW students themselves; the focus group facilitator did not explore its meaning. The students' label of mentor might indicate that the supportive functions of the supervisory relationship (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014), as well as bonds of trust and respect (Bordin, 1983), were present. The

comments also suggest that professional development is important to these BSW student supervisees, as shown by positive comments about the MSW supervisors answering questions about the licensure examination.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

More information is needed on how supervisees perceived the supervisory relationship. For example, what did the students mean by "mentor" and is the inference above correct? Also, did unhappy supervisees express their dissatisfaction or disappointment to their supervisors, and if so, in what manner? Did they feel that they could have questioned their supervisors? Also, the current exploration did not include gathering any information regarding both MSW student supervisor and BSW student supervisee levels of experience. More information is needed regarding if and how experience affects student perceptions of the exercise.

Another useful area for investigation includes examining the effect of adding very specific procedures regarding the information provided to BSW students on the function of social work supervision and reflection opportunities for the BSW students throughout the project. Although the purpose of supervision was very explicitly addressed in the project documentation (the Supervision Contract includes both the MSW student supervisor professional disclosure statement and a place to insert goals of the supervisee; the Informed Consent for Supervision includes a statement that MSW student supervisors will be using recordings for class assignments), this study did not explore the process through which some of the BSW student supervisees arrived at the end of the project with very little understanding of the purpose of social work supervision.

Recommendations

The results suggest that while the exercise has utility, there is room for improvement. Student reflections can and should be used to assess strengths and limitations in the educational process of a social work program. Just as reflection enables social workers to consider alternate perspectives, understanding how student social workers make connections in practice can assist educators to help students move toward professional development (Williamson, Hostetter, Byers, & Huggins, 2010).

Perhaps the most striking need revealed by this investigation is the importance of the BSW instructor assuming an active role in teaching BSW students about supervision. Even students in the field practicum sometimes have insufficient knowledge about supervision and how to utilize supervision for growth (Miehls et al., 2013; Moorhouse, Hay, & O'Donoghue, 2014). Understanding how to use supervision takes time; thus, learning in this area should be "more robust" (Moorhouse et al., 2014, p. 47). These topics need to be part of BSW practice classes prior to the practicum experience as BSW student understanding of supervision cannot be assumed. We suggest creating a script or other materials explaining the function and purpose of social work supervision, and providing that to the BSW students. A quiz or other means of evaluating learning is imperative.

Furthermore, the BSW instructor in projects of this type must attend to the developmental needs of the BSW students. The need clearly exists to help students develop

the ability to deepen their thinking, to articulate their process of thinking through how they reach conclusions, and to understand and plan what to do with the increased understanding and awareness (Sussman, Bailey, Richardson, & Granner, 2014). One mechanism for facilitating and tracking this development could be to have the BSW students do more group reflection, e.g., during class, on their practice videos and to elaborate on how or why they made their decisions (Lee & Fortune, 2013). This mechanism would also quite directly satisfy the reflection component of experiential learning as described by Kolb (1984).

In addition, students in the beginning stages of the education process have little or no experience to connect with theory and practice; they need clear guidelines in the form of rules (Davys & Beddoe, 2009). These students are often functioning in very basic stages of cognitive complexity (Simmons & Fisher, 2016) wherein learners believe there are black and white answers to all problems and that authority figures will provide all of the needed answers. This may explain why students voiced dissatisfaction with supervisors who did not tell them what to do on their next recording. These supervisors were essentially not giving them the "right" answers to the problems they faced. In order to assist students in moving beyond the basic level of cognitive development, a balance of support and challenge is necessary. Structure and guidelines, along with positive feedback and support, is necessary to help students reflect on their actions and the outcome of those actions. Because the demand for reflection can be overwhelming in students who are not ready for that level of complexity, both the BSW instructor and the MSW student supervisor must guide students in both thinking about the experience, and in reaching for the understanding and growth that comes from thinking through and talking aloud about the experience (Davys & Beddoe, 2009). The BSW instructors and the MSW student supervisors need to initially take a more directive role while also helping BSW students see how to use the experiences in the video being reviewed to learn strengths and areas for improvement and plan for the next interview session, even if it is "a totally different scenario."

It will likely also be helpful for the BSW students to observe skilled supervisors in action in order to fully understand that good supervisory skills include asking questions and encouraging reflection. This might assist BSW students in being more open to participating in the process by connecting it with their learning needs (i.e., to develop practice skills), and how that is reciprocal in the development of MSW student supervision skills. Specific reflection by the student supervisee, guided by the MSW student supervisor, to help the supervisee use insights in planning for the next interview/intervention will possibly enable the BSW student to develop an appreciation for the role of supervision.

A final recommendation is that if there is more than one instructor involved in the project, they should meet regularly to compare notes. Ensuring that all students are receiving the same information is essential, as is regularly checking in on progress and problems encountered along the way.

Conclusion

This preliminary investigation of student perceptions of the exercise suggests that it has promise for teaching BSW students how to use supervision. However, the investigation also revealed several areas for improvement. Next steps include providing quality controls

and opportunities for reflection as described above. Further evaluation of the project should include assessing student learning while investigating the effects of variables such as social work experience levels of both MSW and BSW students.

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