Solid Ground: Helping Supervisees Develop a Theoretical Orientation
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Learning Objectives

* Examine two roles of supervisor in developing supervisee theoretical orientation
* Explore the role of supervisor in theoretical orientation
* Explore three strategies for incorporating theoretical orientation in supervision

Theory’s Function for the Practitioner

* How do you describe your theoretical orientation?
* What is the function that theory serves for you?
* When do you believe that you felt comfortable or felt that your practice incorporated your theory naturally?
Theory Drives Practice

* What is the **Problem**?
* What is the **Goal**?
* What is the role of the **Therapist**?

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Theoretical Structure

Theoretical Model

Theoretical Philosophy

Therapeutic Posture

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**Theory** and theory

* **Theory**
  * Basis for understanding general etiology of dysfunction and healing
  * Basis for understanding the role of the counselor
* **theory**
  * Basis for understanding the unique client barriers and resources
  * Basis for developing a meaningful relationship with clients
Making Theory Your Own

- Underpinnings
- Techniques
- Theoretical Orientation

Melding of self and theory

- Personal theory
- Personal connection to practice
- Natural flow of practice

Role of the Supervisor

+ Teacher
+ Facts
+ Oversight
+ Education
+ Mentor
  + Normalize & Encourage
  + Professional Identity
  + Development of a unique, therapeutic voice

Critical Incident Research

+ Dr. Rochelle Cade & Dr. Jason Martin
+ Ongoing qualitative research based on interviews with recent graduates of Masters degree programs
+ "What were the 'critical incidents' that helped to shape your theoretical orientation?"
+ Preliminary emerging information
  + Very few new graduates feel comfortable in their theory
  + Most were heavily influenced by one or more faculty supervisors
  + "It feels right." — The theory resonates personally.
Strategies in Supervision

* Theory
  * Establishes a de facto starting point for treatment.
  * Provides a language/vocabulary for the clinical framework

* How do you develop your therapeutic rapport?
* How do you connect with a client & adapt to the uniqueness of the client?

Supervisee Developmental Stages

* Beginning Practicum: Pre-theory; Focus on practice of basic counseling skills
* Advanced Practicum: Experimentations in Theory
* New Professional: Focusing & Honing Personal Theory
* Experienced Professional: Integrated Personal Theory

Theory development in supervision

* Help the supervisee describe their theory before they might describe Theory.
* What does the theory tell the supervisee about what is happening with the client?
* What does Theory tell the supervisee should happen in counseling?
Strategies in Supervision

Consider the developmental stage of the supervisee.
* Occasionally review supervisee’s theoretical orientation paper and development.
* Require a “supervisory question” in each supervision session.
* Focus on clearly identifying the theoretical problem and the goal of therapy.
* Begin with theory when faced with “I don’t know what to do.” or “I’m stuck.”

Audience Questions

* How do you facilitate the development of your supervisee’s theoretical orientation?
* What are some of the challenges you encounter in facilitating this development?
* What are some of your successes in facilitating this development?

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