Counseling Supervision: Where is the Manual for Working with the Millennial Generation?

Adina Smith and Rebecca L. Koltz

Montana State University

Author Note

Adina Smith is an Associate Professor of Counseling in the Department of Health and Human Development, Montana State University. Rebecca L. Koltz is an Assistant Professor Counseling in the Department of Health and Human Development, Montana State University. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Adina Smith, Department of Health and Human Development, PO Box 173540, Bozeman, MT 59717-3540. Email: adinas@montana.edu.
Abstract

Many students entering counseling programs across the country are from the newest generation, the “Millennials.” This generation is the largest generation since the Baby Boomers, and the Millennials are unique characteristics that both enhance and present unique challenges in supervision. The authors will address the characteristics of this generation, as well as provide strategies to enhance supervisory experiences.

Keywords: counseling programs, millennials, supervision
Counseling Supervision: Where is the Manual for working with the Millennial Generation?

Supervision is essential to the development of ethical, professional, and competent counselors. The literature on counseling supervision acknowledges that supervisors conduct supervision using a variety of theories, styles, perspectives and roles (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004; Fernando & Hulse-Killacky, 2005). Regardless of supervision approach, the relationship between supervisor and supervisee is at the heart of supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004) as supervisors consistently involve supervisees in the supervision process and in achieving their supervision goals (Holloway, 1997). Thus, the quality of this ongoing relationship determines the effectiveness of supervision (Bucky, Marques, Daly, Alley, & Karp, 2010). In an effective supervisory relationship, supervisors strive to develop a positive working alliance with their supervisees and must be aware of supervisees’ values and ways of being. Generational differences between the supervisor and supervisee can certainly pose challenges to supervision. The generational diversity that typically exists between those teaching and those learning may span over several generations, which could lead to a collision of values and ways of interacting (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Given the importance of understanding the impact of cultural, ethnic, and gender differences on supervision and the supervisory relationship, it also seems critical to understand and attend to generational differences when they exist.

Each generation is impacted by political, social, economic, ecological, cultural and psychological forces and although each generation shares a different experience from the previous generation, they are also strongly influenced by earlier generations. It seems
that while some authors make valid points about how understanding generational characteristics can be useful in fields such as education where generational differences are inherent (Howe & Strauss, 2003), others view generational attributions as a form of stereotyping (Hoover, 2009). Hoover stated:

> After all, people who work in higher education see plenty of reminders that the *when* of student's birth is but one factor in that student's development. Where a student is born, who a student's parents are, and how much money they have—all these things influence that student's educational opportunities, scores on standardized tests, and expectations of college. (section 6, paragraph 5)

Perhaps, it is important to consider that each decade emerges with new information or technology that was not previously available. The Millennial generation is unique in that they have only known a digital age, so while it is important to not stereotype, it is also necessary to recognize that there are similarities within a generation as well as differences. This concept of recognizing differences as well as universal qualities is at the very heart of multicultural counseling (Sue & Sue, 2003). While the authors acknowledge that much of this article focuses on traits that describe the majority of population, considering students’ individual characteristics, culture, and experiences is essential to providing effective supervision.

The Millennial generation was born roughly between 1981-2002 (Elam, Stratton, & Gibson, 2007). Historically, they have experienced Desert Storm, working mothers, a divorce rate exceeding 50%, the shootings at Columbine High School, the Rodney King beating and subsequent uprising in South-central Los Angeles, the impeachment proceedings vs. Clinton, and the events of 9/11. Throughout these historical events and
occurrences, parents of Millennial children have been involved in the greatest safety movement in the U.S., have prioritized their children’s academics and extracurricular activities, and involved their children in decision-making at home. Millennials are hardworking individuals and are socialized to be successful by their parents. In addition, they volunteer in social programs and are exposed to diversity and social justice issues (Broido, 2004). The peer-focused Millennial generation is confident, community oriented, involved, and technologically savvy (Elam, Stratton, & Gibson, 2007; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).

Millennials began arriving on college campuses in 2000 and in graduate programs in approximately 2004. It was predicted that 2010 would be the peak year for Millennials to enter college. They number more than 80 million and comprise more than 41% of US population (Howe & Strauss, 2000). While it is easy to generalize about the different generations, recent literature has consistently identified themes that are characteristic of Millennial students as well as offered suggestions for educators working with Millennial students (DeDe, 2005; Elam, et al., 2007; Gleason, 2007-2008; Kattner, 2009; Lowery, 2004; Murphy, 2010; Sax, 2003; Wilson, 2004). However, none of the existing literature has examined challenges in counseling supervision in working with Millennial students.

Howe & Strauss (2003) stated that “In all fields of graduate education, this generation will want structure, supervision, and feedback” (p. 204) as well as praise for their work. However, this notion often contradicts with the nature of graduate school where students are expected to be self-motivated and self-directed. Thus, considering the characteristics of the current generation in supervision is essential in the clinical training of counseling students. It is likely that supervisors can expect challenges in supervision
that parallel challenges colleges and workplaces are recognizing as generational trends. It is equally important to note that the Millennial generation has numerous strengths. The existing literature describes the very positive attributes of this generation, yet it is learning from the challenges that will create a stronger supervisory process.

This manuscript will describe each unique characteristic of the Millennial generation, as well as the implication of each characteristic in the supervisory relationship and supervision sessions. While several variations of core traits of the Millennial generation exist, the ones we have included have been repeatedly noted in the literature (Elam, et al., 2007; Gleason, 2007-2008; Howe & Strauss, 2003; Lowery, 2004; McGlynn, 2008). Finally, supervisory challenges and strategies connected to working with graduate students from the Millennial generation will be provided.

Unique Characteristics of the Millennial Generation

Unique characteristics of the millennial generation has been identified throughout higher education literature (Elam, et al., 2007; Gleason, 2007-2008; Howe & Strauss, 2003; Lowery, 2004; McGlynn, 2008). The following are the central characteristic themes found in the literature: specialness, sheltered, confident, team oriented, high achieving, pressured to succeed, conventional, and accepting. Each of these characteristics will be described according to the literature with corresponding challenges in supervision identified.

Specialness

The Millennial generation has been a central focus of their parents and society (Elam, et al., 2007; Howe & Strauss, 2000, 2003). As a result, they feel individually and collectively special, as well as central to the nation’s and their parents’ “sense of
purpose” (Howe & Strauss, 2003). They are often so connected to their parents that colleges have reported a significant increase of parent-initiated contact and involvement in their children’s college experience (Lowery, 2004). McGlynn (2008) described Millennials as having an attitude of “consumerism” and therefore may view education as an acquisition rather than a process. This author further stated that due to their reliance on technology, students expect to have information at their fingertips through the internet and cell phones. Thus, they often have high expectations for professors regarding checking and responding to emails quickly, and professors inevitably spend increased time responding to students (Young, 2002). McGlynn (2008) stated that as academicians:

> We need to get their work back to them quickly, and we need to give them praise. This is the generation that heard “Good job!” from their parents for much of what they did. Although we can offer constructive criticism, we must be sensitive to the fact that they thrive on praise. (p. 22)

**Supervision and Specialness**

The characteristic of specialness in Millennial generation counseling students may manifest in several ways in supervision. First, students may have high expectations for supervisor availability, which can include wanting immediate and definitive responses to their questions both during and outside of supervision. Whether this is due to having their parents’ constant availability, and or the immediate availability of information through technology, students are reliant on the “Fast Food” manner of attaining information and responses. Thus, it may be difficult for students to problem solve on their own, without peers’ or a supervisor’s input. In addition, it may prove difficult for some supervisees to wait for supervisors to answer to their questions. Students may feel
pressure to “master” counseling and struggle with ?? when they do not feel confident about their abilities. Seeking answers may help temporarily relieve their anxiety.

Second, as Millennial students are used to being treated as special, they tend to have difficulty if they are not at the same level as their peers in their skills. Since learning to become a counselor is a process that is not easily mastered, the notion of fast-track learning may be counterproductive to what supervisors hope to communicate during supervision.

Third, as opposed to the more deferential structure that has typically been inherent in student-professor relationships of past generations, current students may expect the supervisory relationship to be largely egalitarian. Some students desire and expect praise, often becoming anxious when they realize the hierarchical nature of the supervisory relationship. Thus, the realization that constructive criticism is central to supervision and counselor growth could be an intimidating experience. Students’ sensitivity to criticism also may arise with giving and receiving peer feedback, as students may give each other only positive peer feedback or talk about clients rather than the counselor’s role and experience for fear of upsetting the relational balance.

Fourth, because Millennial students may be focused on their own needs, they may struggle with recognizing the needs of others, including the supervisor’s and their clients’. They may expect supervisors to work around their schedules as opposed to being inconvenienced themselves. This may mean expecting individual supervision to be scheduled around extra-curricular activities or not wanting to schedule supervision on days where they are not on campus. In terms of clients, students may not recognize clients’ abilities to determine their own path and this may manifest as wanting to “fix”
clients, and/or struggling with clients’ processes. Ronnestad & Skovholdt (2003) have indicated that the supervisee’s ability to regulate their own needs is paramount to the development of empathy. Supervisors may need to assess for this more thoroughly when working with Millennial students.

**Sheltered**

The Millennial generation has been part of the largest youth protection movement in U.S. history, and has been protected and sheltered by parents (Elam, et al., 2007; Howe & Strauss, 2000, 2003). Many had overindulgent “helicopter” parents who rarely left them unsupervised (Gleason, 2007-2008; Murray, 1997) and closely supervised their academics. Although, they may be considered the healthiest generation in recent years, this generation has been recognized for depending on adults’ help to deal with their problems (Lowery, 2004). As a result, Lowery noted, Millennial generation college students may hold expectations that parents will continue to resolve conflicts for them, and colleges will protect and nurture them. Gleason (2007-2008) posited that this generation tends to trust institutions, but is skeptical of authority figures. This may be related to a history of sharing authority via involvement in family decision-making processes since they were young (Murray, 1997).

**Supervision and Sheltered**

As students have been under close watch, they may expect particularly close supervision by counseling supervisors. If Millennial students face a new situation with an unfamiliar process or one without immediate resolution, not having a supervisor readily available may create anxiety. This generation of students may struggle more with their own anxiety, whether about their counseling abilities, the supervision process, or issues
that arise in the counseling relationship. Tolerating this anxiety may be challenging for them, and it is probable that students will seek resolution of this anxiety through the supervisor. Such anxiety can extend to concerns about their own process and progress, working from a chosen theory, and their limitations with clients. Rather than taking responsibility for their own learning, students may expect a supervisor to take responsibility for them and nurture their growth. Such dependence on a supervisor may emerge as neediness in supervision and can result in projection of their own anxiety onto the supervisor.

**Motivated, Goal-oriented, Assertive and Confident**

Millennials have high levels of trust and optimism, and are eager for the future. They are rule oriented, work hard, and value “not messing up.” This civic minded generation wants to make a societal difference and is oriented toward volunteer work (Howe & Strauss, 2003). They expect to advance rapidly in the workplace (Gleason, 2007-2008) and are confident in their ability to be the next great generation (Howe & Strauss, 2000, 2003). Sax (2003) acknowledged Millennials’ strong academic performance but argued that these students are not as committed to the process of studying and homework as prior generations. She stated that their expectations for success may lead students to “become demoralized when they earn their first B or C grade” (p. 19). Lowery (2004) suggested that Millennial students will need student affairs professionals to support them “to develop meaningful and realistic plans and to achieve their ambitious goals” and they will need support when they do not “meet their own expectations” (p. 90).
Lowery (2004) and others (Elam, et al., 2007; McGlynn, 2008) recognized that another area in which Millennials feel confident is technology. While being proficient and comfortable with technology clearly has its merits, it also has recognizable drawbacks. Research has indicated that this generation appears to collectively lack interpersonal skills as a result of distance communication (e.g., texting and emailing, phone communication, social networking) and that too much multitasking decreases students’ attention span (Elam, et al., 2007). Elam, et al. and Howe & Strauss (2000) have noted that students’ curricula prior to attending college may have inadvertently emphasized rote learning and reliance on technology, which may have caused them to refrain from questioning adult standards, authority figures, or themselves. Also, as a consequence, students may have decreased ability to be critical thinkers, or to be introspective and self-reflective (Murray, 1997).

**Supervision and Confidence**

Given that students’ confidence tends to be based on achievement and good grades, they may expect to advance rapidly in their counseling abilities. This expectation may result in students approaching supervision as a business relationship, rather than being vulnerable and honest about their process. Students may struggle with a grade that is based on their ability to form intimate personal relationships and integrate constructive feedback.

The supervisory relationship may be confusing for students who have experienced distant relationships with professors rather than intimate ones. Thus, if they struggle with intimacy and vulnerability in supervision, students may be viewed as disingenuous, rather than inexperienced in intimately relating. Additionally, students, who are inexperienced
at negotiating intimate interpersonal relationships, may be uncomfortable in a one on one relationship with a supervisor and with clients. Furthermore, because this generation is comfortable with communicating technologically (internet, email, texting, distance learning), confronting issues with people in person may seem invasive and rude. Clearly, questions arise regarding this generation’s comfort and ability to counsel clients and participate in a supervisory relationship. Consistent with this concern, Murray, (1997) described Millennials as resistant to participating in their own counseling.

**Team Oriented**

Millennials are team oriented and want to fit in with the mainstream, the majority. They seek regular contact with peers through cell phones, texting and social network websites (Gleason, 2007-2008). They are particularly comfortable in group settings as team and group work has been emphasized as a primary means of teaching and learning in school systems (Howe & Strauss, 2000; McGlynn, 2008). Wilson (2004) noted that college students fear appearing unintelligent in front of their peers and their professors, which decreases their participation in class. She further stated that these students are not comfortable working independently, are not at ease taking intellectual risks and tend to prefer to work in groups. Teachers reported that due to discomfort with standing out, students struggle to debate issues where they already feel a strong consensus (Howe & Strauss, 2003). Also, because of preference for group consensus, including in family decision-making, Millennials seem to prefer egalitarian leadership instead of hierarchies (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).
Supervision and Team Oriented

Given Millennial students’ orientation toward group consensus and working as a team, numerous aspects of supervision may prove to be challenging. Individual face-to-face supervision with a supervisor may be uncomfortable for students who have worked in groups and are not comfortable with being the focus in a one-on-one relationship, especially one that is hierarchical. Individual supervision with counseling students often consists of students showing their work with clients with the primary focus being on the student’s process. This process includes but is not limited to exploring the student’s own reactions, experience with the client and the student’s progress. Constructive feedback is essential to training effective counselors yet students may feel ineffective when given such feedback. Also, giving constructive feedback to peers about their counseling may be difficult for Millennials. In group supervision, this may be especially difficult as research suggests that students are less inclined to take intellectual risks as they worry about appearing unintelligent (Wilson, 2004). However, working solely in a cooperative environment can deprive students of critical interpersonal experiences and lead students to avoid confrontation and dealing with differences with other students (Lowery, 2004). Group agreement is problematic when participating in class, observing and critiquing counseling sessions, and learning to give and take feedback are critical components of the group experience. When students struggle with this process, it may translate into a parallel process revolving around giving honest feedback to their own clients without a supervisor’s prompting. Also, given their propensity to want to work in teams, students may experience difficulty differentiating from others when it comes to their own personal growth. Students may see the experience as an “us” when in reality learning to become a
counselor is an “I.” Thus, they may compare themselves to others as opposed to focusing on their own process, which can be detrimental to their development.

**High Achieving**

The Millennials have experienced being overscheduled with school and extracurricular activities; therefore, they have always been expected to work hard. Lowery (2004) stated that this characteristic is best understood in combination with “specialness” as Millennials “have always been told they are special and that great things are expected of their generation.” They are focused on achievement, rather than personal development and may not value the benefit of lifelong learning. Gleason (2007-2008) and Murray (1997) asserted that Millennials’ parents have determined their success by getting them the best teachers, helping them complete their homework, and chauffeuring them to activities in which they excelled. Since they have been always been involved in numerous organized activities, Millennials tend to prefer structured situations (Lowery, 2004). Consistent with this framework, Millennials seem most comfortable when they are told very specifically what to do and why (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Lowery, 2004) and may be intolerant of ambiguity that prior generations regarded as an important strength (Howe & Strauss, 2003). Wilson (2004) suggested that Millennials need “clear expectations, explicit syllabi and well structured assignments. For educators this presents challenges since learning, growth, and development requires increasingly complex thinking, greater autonomy and reliance on self, and less reliance on authorities.” (p.65)

If students are dissatisfied with grades or an institution, they along with their parents are more likely to challenge the system (Howe & Strauss, 2003).
Supervision and High Achieving

While academic achievement is commendable in many fields including counseling, academic achievement alone may not be indicative of traits conducive to becoming a competent counselor. When students are academically focused, there may be the tendency for them to believe that hard work and good grades translate into counselor competency. Starting to integrate personal development into their lives in graduate school may be challenging for students. Thus, students may struggle to benefit from supervision at a deeper level or the process may be slower than what supervisors expect. Often graduate students enter the field of counseling unprepared for the lifelong learning that counseling requires and become frustrated when they are not able to master the process of counseling during their schooling. Such expectations and needs for perfectionism not only hinder the learning process but also may become projected on the supervisor for ineffective teaching. Without consistent feedback on their clinical work, students may assume that they are doing better than they are and at the end of the semester may have difficulty accepting any grade less than an “A”. Furthermore, the supervisory relationship requires students’ increasing autonomy, complex thinking, and self-reliance in order for them to move through the stages of supervision. Students requiring structure may depend on the supervisor to provide the lead and may struggle with the developmental process inherent in supervision.

Pressured

Howe & Strauss (2003) stated that in their childhood and adolescence Millennials were under more pressure than the previous generation. They are have been pressured to succeed by their parents and themselves (Brooks, 2011). Grade inflation, which is a trend
in universities across the nation,(Rojstaczer & Healy, 2010; Sax, 2003) contributes to students’ fear of failure, lack of risk-taking and not wanting to stand out. Millennials are less focused on the spontaneous learning experience than the bottom-line grade and interest is declining in the process by which things are created or happen (Howe & Strauss, 2003). These authors and others recognized that while pressure can be a positive motivator, it can also lead to health and mental health issues such as sleep deprivation, stress, anxiety, eating disorders, sports related injuries and increased ineffective coping skills (Gleason, 2007-2008; Howe & Strauss, 2003; Lowery, 2004).

**Supervision and Pressured**

Students may become too focused on goal achievement without being attentive to the process. They may struggle to understand their own and their clients’ processes and may have increased anxiety due to the lack of immediate solutions. If students are focused on their grades and are not interested in spontaneous learning or understanding process, they may experience increased anxiety regarding their own feelings as well as difficulty tolerating their clients’ feelings. It is foreseeable that students could become frustrated and question their choice of profession as well as frustrate professors by projecting their anxiety upon their peers, supervisors, or their counseling program. In negotiating between academics and clinical work, it may be difficult for supervisees to integrate what they learn in their academic coursework with their clinical work, and to gauge their learning in other ways aside from earning “A’s”. Although they have always maintained busy schedules, students may experience anxiety due to the demanding schedule of graduate school or may believe that more is better, without understanding their own limits. As supervisors, it would be easy to find these students bothersome.
Rather, it seems crucial to anticipate such problems and teach students self-care as well as assist them in setting boundaries on their work schedules. Also, given the propensity for health and mental health issues associated with feeling pressure to succeed, supervisors will need to recognize such stress and support students, while also setting limits for students who cannot do this for themselves.

**Conventional**

Unlike the “too cool for school” mentality of Gen-Xers, the Millennials are more traditional in their value system (Elam, et al., 2007; Lowery, 2004). They are respectful of adults, value manners and rules, as well as modesty (Gleason, 2007-2008) and tend to accept their parents’ values (Howe & Strauss, 2003). They tend to be more respectful of the system as well as the authority figures in the system. In addition, the Millennials may tend to be less critical of their parents’ values than previous generations, and may be less aware of what they believe.

**Supervision and Conventional**

While most professors (and adults in general) expect respect from students and value good manners, such conventionality can also translate into students’ discomfort being vulnerable with authority, fear of showing a weak side, and a lack of self-questioning and interest in personal growth. In addition, students who have not given thought to their own value system separate from their parents’ may find supervision uncomfortable as they may be unable to articulate their own value system due to lack of awareness. Such lack of awareness of their own values could certainly impact supervisees’ acceptance of clients’ values.
Accepting of Lifestyle, Racial and Ethnic Differences

Although this characteristic of Millennial students has not been typically included in the literature as a defining feature, it surfaces as a critical characteristic in supervision when working with people who have differing race, ethnicity, culture and/or lifestyle choices from the student counselor. Despite Millennials being the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in United States history (Gleason, 2007-2008), Millennial students may not be necessarily exposed to more intergroup contact than prior generations (Broido, 2004). Furthermore, since outward acceptance of differences is typical for this generation, personal conflict around diversity may not be visible or obvious (Broido, 2004). Students may perceive themselves as accepting of different others if they attend ethnic festivals or events or know others who have lifestyles that are different from theirs. Supervisors may notice students making generalities or grouping different others together rather than examining their assumptions, reactions, and biases. As a result, students may not account for or address differences in their clients and may neglect to explore how and why clients choose to identify themselves as they do. Concurrently, students may fail to address dynamics between themselves and their clients due to downplaying any differences.

Strategies for Supervising Millennial Students

Based on the characteristics of the Millennial generation and the supervision challenges that can emerge, the following strategies are provided for supervision of Millennial counseling graduate students.
Clarify Expectations from the Beginning

In supervising Millennial students, it is crucial to set clear expectations and provide detailed instructions with explicit syllabi which may involve providing more clarification and details than in the past (Gleason, 2007-2008). Supervisors should establish clear expectations including the goals, expectations, and methods of supervision from the onset (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004; Costa, 1994). This may include describing the manner in which supervision will be conducted, setting norms for the supervisory relationship, asking students to define their goals for the semester, discussing how feedback will be given, and clarifying requirements for grades. It also will be critical to address students’ expectations of supervisors and to clarify whether these expectations will or will not be met as well as to articulate personal and professional boundaries, such as “I don’t respond to emails on weekends.” In group supervision, in particular, students’ participation in promoting norms for classroom interaction helps them to feel comfortable in class, and enhances their investment and participation. Millennial students may need explicit information to understand what a particular norm entails. For example, if “give respectful feedback” is the norm established, than clarifying the specifics of what giving respectful feedback entails may need to be discussed. McGlynn (2008) stated that the Millennial generation thrives on praise and although we can offer realistic constructive criticism, we must give them praise. Thus, more than ever, supervisors will need to consider how to balance constructive and positive feedback.

Decreasing Students’ Anxiety

Costa (1994) suggested that supervisors need to consider matching their supervision methods with the supervisee’s developmental stage. It is normal in the
beginning of the training process to be anxious; however, it is necessary for the supervisee to move toward increased independence. Costa further stated that to offset anxiety it may be helpful for the supervisor to share his or her biggest mistake, and if necessary directly address the anxiety.

Given that it is developmentally appropriate that students are anxious as they begin their clinical work, it seems important to anticipate and normalize this experience with students. A dialogue about how students cope with and manage their anxiety may serve several purposes including: increasing students’ awareness of their anxiety and their understanding of their own process around anxiety, as well as helping them develop effective coping strategies. It may be that discussing projection of anxiety, what it looks like and when it occurs, and working with students to tolerate and take responsibility for their anxiety will help both the supervisory and counselor/client relationships. Connected to helping students learn to sit with anxiety is helping them to understand and tolerate ambiguity in their professional relationships.

**Create Individual Safety**

Supervisors will need to work with Millennial students on building intimate supervisory relationships that are safe despite being different from past academic relationships with professors. This may include meeting individually and getting to know them as well as building students’ capacity for intimacy. Because students are familiar with more distant interpersonal relationships from their experiences with group activities and communicating with individuals via technology, it may take time for them to be comfortable with the face-to-face, intimate nature of supervision and counseling. Encouraging and initiating discussion that helps to develop empathy and intimacy among
peers can increase students’ comfort level and their group participation (Wilson, 2004). Bernard and Goodyear (2009) suggested that when forming the supervisory relationship it is necessary account for individual variables such as cognitive learning style, experience in the field, as well as cultural variables. Given that the Millennial generation has unique cultural differences from previous generations, it seems important for the supervisor to adjust his or her approach. Each supervisee presents in supervision with a unique characteristic, thus it is critical for the supervisor to treat each supervisee as unique ??(need a Noun) and at the same time recognize generational differences that may be present.

**Build Confidence**

Educating students on the process of counselor development seems to be of particular importance to offset the tendency to fast-track learning, as is structuring program development in such a way that they are quickly introduced to easily learned models or techniques. Ronnestad & Skovholt (2003) indicated in their research on counselor development that teaching “straightforward, counseling/therapy methods (models, systems, approaches, frameworks) that can be absorbed quickly with focused effort…” (p. 12) are critical to beginning counselors.

**Building on Students’ Strengths**

In order to make group supervision student centered and process driven rather than supervisor driven, supervisors may tap students’ need for social connection by including group projects, group discussion, and experiential learning (McGlynn, 2008; Wilson, 2004). It will also be necessary to acknowledge that students will have to learn and internalize different ways of learning as the interpersonal expectations for counseling
trainees differ from other graduate training programs. Therefore, it seems that while supervisors can build upon supervisees’ strengths, it also seems important to provide challenge to help supervisees understand that they need to adjust as well. In this way it is similar to adjusting counseling style with different clients. However, the notion of building on supervisees’ strengths is not a new concept in supervisory literature (Koob, 2002).

**Teach Self-care**

Because students may be familiar with being overscheduled and stressed, they may not be aware of their limitations and the impact of such pressure on their health. Yet, a recent study by Lawson and Myers (2010) found that quality of professional work was impacted by high versus low scores of wellness. As self-awareness and ability to be present are key components in counseling training, students may need to learn to take care of themselves in order to work with others. In addition, to encouraging students’ to be in their own counseling, supervisors may need to teach students to recognize their limitations (at what point can they not be present or available to others) and how to set limits for themselves. Lawson and Myers (2010) suggested that counselor educators may need to aid students in regular assessment of their wellness through introducing students to the notion of wellness assessment.

**Honor Student’s Goals of Achievement and Employment**

Millennial students may struggle with in staying present with their learning process if they can’t see how it will help them in the future. Thus, offering career planning that emphasizes the long-term over the short-term (Gleason, 2007-2008) may assist students in meeting their career goals. Also, supervisors may want to provide
information on the interviewing process and how to conduct themselves in a counseling related interview, which is often different than a business or academic interview (Gleason, 2007-2008). Providing interview questions and having students role-play a mock interview may help decrease students’ anxiety.

Researchers suggests that attending to developmental tasks of training is critical from the beginning of graduate program to post graduation (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). While other models of development supervision focus primarily on the period of time for training, Ronnestad and Skovholt looked at a more holistic portrait of counselor development.

**Teach Students about Diversity**

As students now are exposed to more diversity and diversity issues than in the past, they may also be more accepting of clients who are diverse. However, this does not mean that students have a greater understanding of the impact of diversity issues on clients. Supervisors must continue to help students recognize diversity beyond multicultural events to better understand power, privilege, and oppression (Broido, 2004) and to better understand their clients’ collective histories and how those impact them at present. For supervisees this may begin with looking at themselves as cultural beings, as well as how their own unique culture impacts the counseling relationship. Supervisory literature has suggested that it is important to have cultural discussions regarding the supervisory relationship as well (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). Bernard and Goodyear suggested that it is the supervisors’ responsibility to incorporate discussions of culture into supervision. If the supervisor is willing to engage in the discussion, the result will be more positive.
Address Supervisory Relationship “Ruptures” that Arise

Students will also need help from a supervisor to develop the skills to effectively respond to and resolve conflict (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Comfort with initiating conversation to resolve conflict and the skills required to do so may not come naturally. Due to the hierarchical nature of the supervisory relationship, students could easily fail to address any discomfort, questions, and concerns about supervision and then struggle to be honest or open about their needs in supervision. Again, supervisors may need to conduct regular “check-ins” with supervisees and set clear expectations that addressing any ruptures is critical to the supervisory relationship and subsequently, students’ progress.

Summary

This article has provided some key characteristics of the Millennial generation particularly as they relate to counselor training programs. The Millennial generation is very different from preceding generations and thus, it is important for supervisors to consider such generational differences. This article has provided some practical suggestions for addressing this new generation in supervision. However, it seems that research needs to be conducted to further explore the impact of generational differences on counselor training. Since the literature base is primarily theoretical, the field of counselor education would benefit from more research centered on this important topic.
References


Retrieved from http://chronicle.com/article/The-24-Hour-Professor/25750/