

Interview Schedule
Clergy Peer Group Study Focus Groups
Wednesday, August 8, 7-9 PM

Introductions

1) (Round Robin) Please tell us your name, your position, and the name of the SPE project that you represent.

Questions

2) What questions do you have about clergy peer groups that a national study might answer?

Description

3) Describe an especially successful peer group in your program.

Probes (if necessary): What is/was the socio-demographic makeup of the group? How were members recruited? How was leadership selected, trained, or did it otherwise emerge? What is/was the content or curriculum of group gatherings? If group members were responsible for creating their own curriculum or learning plan, how did they tackle the problem of finding resources? How often does/did the group meet and for how long? How do/did group members communicate between meetings, including phone, email, or other face-to-face encounters? What is/was the impact of group travel, if a feature? How much do/did members (or their congregations) contribute financially to the group experience? What was the involvement, if any, of family members or congregational members in the peer group process?

4) Think of a clergy peer group that was particularly unsuccessful. Tell us about the group and describe those factors that you believe led to this outcome.

Probes (if necessary): What about the social or demographic makeup of participants; their recruitment; group leadership, meetings, curriculum, or process; their personal or professional lives; and/or their financial obligations or constraints made this group different from other, more successful groups?

5) If you were to organize your “clergy peer group” program today, what would you do differently?

6) How did you discover needed changes in your program? In other words, what kinds of formal evaluation or informal feedback led to your current convictions about the program?

Conclusions

7) What theological understandings of “pastoral excellence” are emerging in your program? (A question from the last SPE annual report)

8) What are your hunches about the ways peer groups promote “pastoral excellence”?

9) (Round Robin) Do you think that clergy peer groups are an effective form of continuing theological education? In one sentence or two, tell us why or why not.

10) What did we forget to ask?

If you finish early, ask the following question: Of all the things we have talked about tonight, what to you is most important?