

# Supervisors' experiences and reflections with co-supervision in genetic counseling training

Elizabeth Francisco, MS, CGC; Jaime Follmer Blanchard, MS, CGC; Jennifer Dickerson, MS, CGC  
Labcorp, Boston, MA

## Background

In genetic counseling education, a co-supervision rotation is when two or more supervisors facilitate a rotation. A study was created to examine the effects of co-supervision on supervisors.

## Methods

The anonymous survey included eight multiple-choice and two open-ended questions focused on supervisors' perspectives on benefits and limitations of co-supervision, and how they manage stylistic differences between supervisors; it was distributed to 110 genetic counselors. Inclusion criteria were supervisors who led at least one solo supervised rotation and participated in at least one co-supervised rotation.

## Results

Seventeen responses were received. Perceived benefits of co-supervision included willingness to take on more students, increased support and learning supervision techniques from colleagues. While most did not experience any drawbacks to co-supervision, a few reported issues with unequal student-supervisor relationships, conflicting assessments and difficulty tracking student's progress. Additional findings included a heightened sense of companionship among colleagues, but suggested a strong working relationship should exist before co-supervising a student. Finally, 100% of respondents would recommend co-supervision to colleagues.

## Discussion

Data suggests co-supervision reduces the time commitment and stress of supervisors, often allowing them to take on more students. One supervisor elaborated, "An unexpected benefit has been learning about my co-supervisor's style through the eyes of the student [such as] how she handles certain parts of a session or phrasing she might use." Another respondent noted, "An unexpected benefit is developing a closer relationship with my co-supervisors since we share a common goal." Respondents stated it was important to acknowledge to the student that these differences may exist. All agreed that differing styles are an advantage for the student and encouraged celebrating learning distinct styles.

## Conclusions

Co-supervision has advantages for supervisors and may lead to supervisors taking on additional students, while also allowing those with lower patient volume to supervise. Data suggests that an optimal co-supervisory relationship is with individuals who have shared a previous positive working relationship and a willingness to engage in frequent communication. Supervisory groups should establish clear communication regarding expectations, styles and clinical differences.

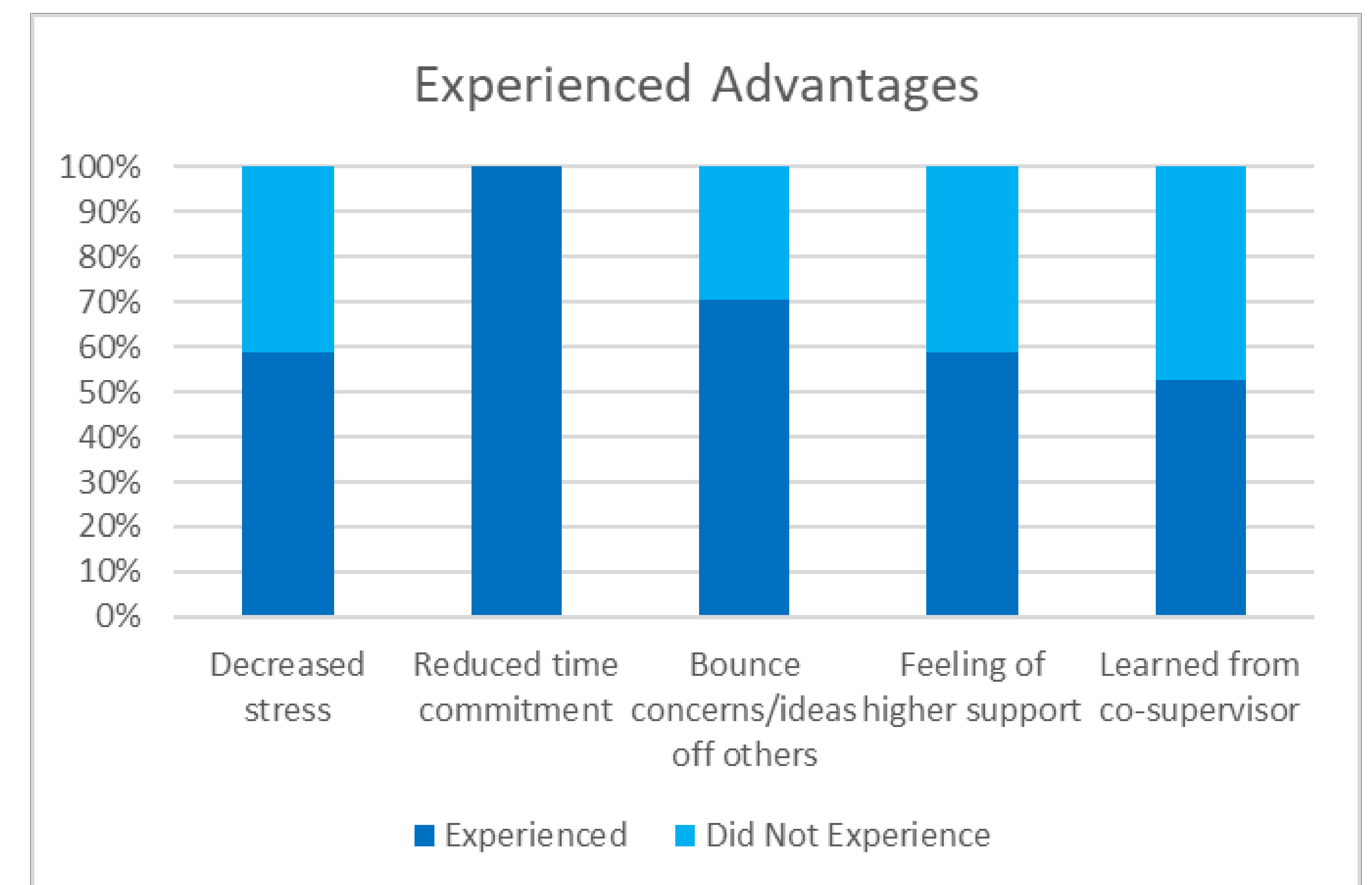


Figure 1. Experienced advantages of co-supervision during genetic counseling.

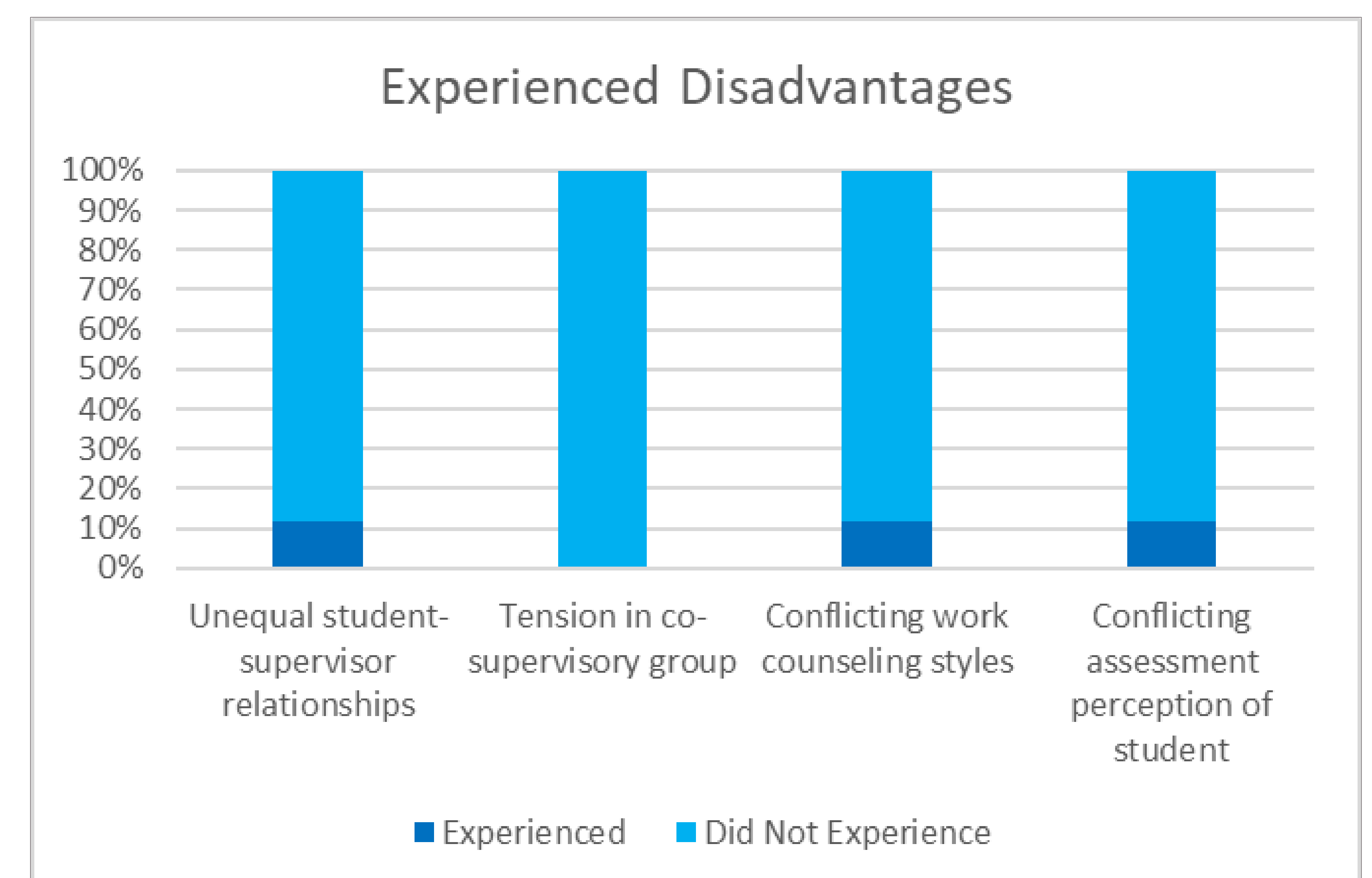


Figure 2. Experienced disadvantages of co-supervision during genetic counseling.