Supervision of Beginning and Advanced Graduate Students of Counseling and Psychotherapy

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The purpose of this article is to present a comprehensive picture of supervision for the beginning and the advanced graduate student of counseling and psychotherapy. Even though early-level supervision is generally characterized by high levels of structure, a didactic orientation, and a skill focus, it is argued that supervision should encourage continuous reflection at all levels of expertise. For the beginning student, the impact of performance anxiety and the advantages and disadvantages of modeling are examined. For advanced students, tension in supervision is considered and the rationale for an explicit contract is explained. For both levels, the quality of the supervisory relationship is considered critical for effective supervision.

The purpose of this article is to integrate information about supervision and to present a comprehensive picture of supervision for beginning and advanced graduate students of counseling and psychotherapy. More specifically, we have asked the following questions: On the basis of existing literature, which parameters, perspectives, and issues are particularly relevant to consider in the supervision of the beginning and the advanced graduate student? Second, what are the supervisory implications of assuming a developmental perspective?

It has been during only the last 15 years that the developmental paradigm has dominated the study of counselor-psychotherapist professional functioning and supervision. The developmental paradigm has explicitly or implicitly influenced the study of issues such as relationship aspects (Cross & Brown, 1983; Heppner & Handley, 1982; Hess, 1987; Lambert, 1980; Worthington, 1984; Worthington & Stern, 1985); expectations (Friedlander & Snyder, 1983; Heppner & Roehlke, 1984); didactic-instructional aspects of supervision (Friedlander & Ward, 1984; Miars et al., 1983; Worthington, 1984); the role of feedback and support (Heppner & Roehlke, 1984; Ronnestad, 1976; Worthington & Roehlke, 1979; Worthington & Stern, 1985); process issues (Stoltenberg, 1981); and issues such as goal definition, assessment of learning and developmental needs, expertise, and conceptual level (Borders, 1986; Borrers, Fong-Beyette, & Cron, 1988; Hillerbrand, 1989; Hillerbrand & Claiborn, 1990).


These works have contributed to improving the pool of knowledge on professional development and supervision within the field of counseling and psychotherapy. There is reasonable validity to the perspective that what is good supervision depends on the developmental level of the candidate. Less attention has been placed on the impact of the supervisor. There is a need for studying the impact of the developmental level of the supervisor on counselor-psychotherapist development. We anticipate that this will be a research area that will attract interest in the near future. A supervisor who has stagnated professionally (Ronnestad, 1985; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 1991) may likely facilitate stagnant processes in the student who is being supervised.

The use of the developmental paradigm to understand changes in supervision and counselor perception and behavior has been questioned and criticized (Holloway, 1987). She pointed to serious shortcomings in existing research concerning methodology, methods of measurement, and sources of data. More specifically, cross-sectional design has been used extensively; there has been a heavy use of structured self-reports; and there has been an overemphasis on studying change within the supervisory context and a lack of attention to studying actual counselor behavior.

Most of the existing perspectives and findings on supervision within the fields of counseling and psychotherapy is generated within academic or internship settings. In the United States, different from what typically occurs in Europe, the student engages in practicum early in training. This practicum experience is typically supervised. This early exposure in the United States may make it difficult to separate early-level supervision issues from issues of basic academic training.

Much of the supervision research is carried out with supervisors with limited professional experience who are typically advanced graduate students. This is natural, because much research is carried out by advanced students completing their theses or dissertations. Thus, much supervision research is carried out by student researchers studying student supervisors supervising student counselors working with student clients. We do not know what impact this relatively speaking "inexperienced academic interchange" has on the body of supervision knowledge that it generated. One may only guess that if very mature researchers studied the practice of seasoned supervisors, the body of knowledge may be different.

**EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION OF THE BEGINNING GRADUATE STUDENT**

There is general consensus that the beginning student is experiencing many hardships in graduate school. In our research study (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992a, 1992b), we noticed the large theory-practice gulf experienced by the student. The student is immediately exposed to extensive new theoretical and empirical information and is then expected to perform adequately in practicum. The student at this level naturally lacks the competency to perform professionally and is gener-
ally painfully aware of it, even though much energy is invested in concealing it. The student is eagerly looking for ways to narrow the gap, to be able to perform well, and to do this as quickly as possible. There is an urgency and often an intensity in the quest to master the demands of meeting clients and interacting in a professional way.

An Instructional and Skill Focus

The theory-practice gulf so intensively experienced by the beginning student makes this a "teachable moment" for focusing on specific counseling skills. The effective supervisor at this level often assumes the role of a teacher, a role different and more limited than at later stages. The student is typically eager to learn specific skills, and supervisors who emphasize this are highly valued. Supervisors who do not have this skill focus are generally criticized and often disappoint their students. This is consistent with the general tendency of beginning students to want high levels of structure and direction in their training. Using the Gestalt concepts of figure and ground, with what is predominant as figure and what is secondary as ground, the figure is on acquisition of skills and not on ground, the reflective processes characteristic of later stages.

Data from all sources converge in a perspective of supervision at this early level as being directive and instructional. Worthington and Roehlke (1979) found that students who were beginning training liked their supervisors to teach and provide support and encouragement. Feedback was regarded as essential for effective supervision. Heppner and Roehlke (1984) reported three studies of supervision using self-report data and found that beginning students rate support and skill training as being of most help. This is also consistent with the "discrimination model" of Bernard (1979) where the supervisory role changes from that of a teacher role through a counselor role to a consultant role.

The effectiveness of the highly structured methods such as modeling and feedback in the acquisition of specific therapeutic techniques has been abundantly documented during the 1960s and 1970s (Cash & Munger, 1966; Payne & Gralinski, 1968; Payne, Winter, & Bell, 1972; Payne, Weiss, & Kapp, 1972; Ronnestad, 1977). Modeling has continued to be an important theme for investigation (Newman & Fuqua, 1988).

Reising and Daniels (1983) found that students who were beginning supervision were more anxious, dependent, and technique oriented than were more advanced students. They also found that the beginning students were less ready for confrontation. Rabinowitz et al. (1986), in an analysis of both process and outcome variables for students in training at three levels (beginning practice, advanced practice, doctoral intern), found differences and similarities between experience levels. These investigators found that security and support were considered more important at the beginning and middle level than at the intern level. Furthermore, they found that beginning practice students were more likely to be dependent on the supervisor than were students at more advanced levels.

In a factor analytical inquiry of supervisory behaviors with students in training at three levels of expertise, Cross and Brown (1983) found four factors that, in turn, were analyzed against perceived supervisory effectiveness. These factors were evaluative support, time/structure, method of supervision, and rapport. Method of supervision changed as those receiving supervision gained experience. For the initial-level students in training, supervisors engaged in more emotional supportive behavior and were less confrontational than they were for more experienced students in training. The study supported, in a general way, the developmental framework when a teaching role is more effective with students in training who have limited experience.

Fisher (1989) found that students beginning to receive supervision preferred a relationship with their supervisor that was more authoritarian than egalitarian. This is consistent with a study of students in both beginning and advanced supervision by Nelson (1978) who found that students beginning to receive supervision preferred a supervisor who was somewhat more domineering.

Grater (1985) has formulated a four-stage model emphasizing a changing supervisory focus. Focus at the initial stage is on teaching basic attending, listening, and responding skills (i.e., replacing social patterns of interacting with professional therapeutic responses). Grater suggested that supervisees' fear of failure be addressed. The supervisor should also provide support and information and carefully select clients and communicate that mistakes are expected. We fully endorse Grater's (1985) recommendations:

...helping the new therapist develop sensitivity to the nuances of client statements, use appropriate expressive language, and establish a pace of responding to clients that is neither too slow nor hurried are examples of skill refinements that should be developed during the first interviews (p. 606).

Teaching methods that are labeled "systematic training" programs (Baker, Daniels, & Greeley, 1990), such as human resource training developed by Truax and Carkhuff (1967) and expanded by Carkhuff (Berenson, 1990), the microteaching method developed by Ivey (1971, 1990), the procedures described by Egan (1990), and the interpersonal process recall method (IPR) developed by Kagan and associates (Kagan & Krathwohl, 1967; Kagan & Kagan, 1990), are particularly relevant and can be applied at these early levels. Characteristics of these teaching methods are (a) observation of a model; (b) immediate feedback by supervisor, by other students, and by clients; and (c) guided inquiry into counselor's and client's emotional reactions during sessions. The student is told what to do, is shown what to do, tries out what to do, and receives immediate feedback on performance.

In a study on supervision in Norway, Ronnestad, Winje, and Lunder (1984) investigated how experienced and inexperienced clinical psychologists assessed different supervisory methods and foci for candidates at different experience levels. Results showed that experienced and inexperienced practitioners generally agreed on the relative importance of selected supervisory methods. Demonstration, didactic instruction, and support were considered important for candidates with limited professional experience and as linearly less important for candidates with more extensive experience. Even though the highly structured methods such as demonstration and didactic instruction were considered as important at the beginning level, the study also showed that the methods of "clarification" and "facilitate reflection" were considered important at all experience levels. These methods were the only methods that did not vary significantly in importance as the experience level of the candidates varied: "These methods may reflect the 'sine que non' of supervision, the reflective process that is relevant throughout the candidate's development. These methods may constitute the creative, explorative and integrative process of supervision" (Ronnestad, Winje, & Lunder, 1984, p. 12).

The findings and perspectives converge in a picture of early supervision as having an instructional, didactic, and skill focus. Supervision with such a singular focus, which does not also emphasize the role of continuous professional reflection (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992a, 1992b), however, may not be optimal. In our research study, students were perceived as becoming increasingly rigid and as assuming an
external orientation throughout training. A different development might have occurred if graduate programs focused more on the personally based and integrative processes that are fostered through clarification and reflection on one’s experiences.

The Impact of Anxiety

One of the striking findings in our research (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992a, 1992b) supports the presence of intense anxiety at the graduate student level. We labeled this “pervasive anxiety” and conceptualized it as diminishing markedly over the years for most individuals. This conclusion was reached through interviews with senior practitioners, those with 20 to 40 years of professional counseling and psychotherapy experience. The interviews with these individuals clearly revealed that they experienced a high degree of anxiety as beginners. The investigators were less able to access this anxiety from student-level informants. Factors here may include the students’ unwillingness to indicate insecurity and the students’ need to maintain professional competence. A student’s own internal denial of the current anxiety level may help the person function in a threatening school environment. Also, as stated earlier, most counseling students are interpersonally skilled and, therefore, may be able to cloud the remaining residual angst.

The supervisor must keep in mind how threatening the practicum may be for the student. The student is interchanging with several clients and for many, it is the most intense opportunity to check out the validity of one’s career choice. The threatening aspect is exaggerated by the achievement orientation of the academic culture and also by an awareness of the unique personal demands of the counseling and psychotherapy professional role. The threatening aspect of student supervision is reflected in the work on parallel process by Doehrmann (1976) who wrote, “Supervisors are thus not only admired teachers but feared judges who have real powers” (p. 11).

The dependency and vulnerability of the beginning student is documented in a supervisory analogue study of master’s practicum students (Ronnestad, 1976). In this study the researcher examined the effect of supportive and nonsupportive analogues of supervision on introverted and extraverted counselors’ rating of counseling performance. Limited and general supportive and nonsupportive supervisory statements, within a deception design, had surprising and noticeable effects on counselors’ rating. “Counselors rated themselves as less adaptable, less objective, and as manifesting less direction and purpose after the nonsupportive treatment . . . .” (p. 59). Introverted counselors changed their performance rating more than did extraverted counselors.

Graduate student stress may be lessened through the positive values placed on self-awareness and affective and emotional expression (i.e., students are told that these demands are difficult and are encouraged to express their fears). Despite this, supervisors should be aware that many students have learned that it pays to conceal their self-doubts. Also, students in the helping professions are generally interpersonally skillful and are often able to conceal their anxiety.

The high level of pervasive anxiety at the beginning student level suggests that the supervisor must be sensitive to the effect of student anxiety on supervision. For example, the effective supervisor is able to see and understand the impact that this may have on the selection of themes for discussion and on the mode chosen by the student for presenting data (videotape, audiotape, one-way mirror). In supervision, the anxious student may tend to discuss in supervision only clients who show good progress, choose themes in which he or she is functioning well, or choose a mode of presenting data that allows full control over what the supervisor learns. For example, video or audiotaping may be resisted. This is a delicate area that demands tactful handling by the supervisor. Fortunately, this change with increased experience:

As the candidate goes through a development towards higher degrees of professional individuation, the relationship to the supervisor will change in character. The candidate will be able to select for discussion the most challenging clients as these provide the best foundation for a genuine professional/personal learning. (Ronnestad, 1983, p. 23).

At the beginning level, however, the effective supervisor may, to some extent, allow the student to select distort data. At the same time, the supervisor must encourage student disclosure of areas of weak functioning. For the student counselor and psychotherapist, a realistic assessment of one’s limitations may be a powerful motivator for development and may also be an impetus for considering and selecting other career routes. The vulnerability and dependency at the initial student level, however, entails the student’s often actively seeking support and confirmation. This confirmatory feedback is different from the corrective feedback more actively enlisted at later levels.

Even though there is a natural emphasis on method application (use of techniques such as reflection of feelings, confrontation, self-disclosure) at this level, the effective supervisor should be open to address other learning needs of the student. For example, although the student’s attention tends to be on trying to do the right thing, the supervisor’s attention should also be on broader themes regarding client dynamics. Through also insisting on focusing on understanding client dynamics, the supervisor may be able to prevent the interchange from assuming a superficial and impersonal quality. This is difficult, because a sense of comfort and safety from the perspective of the student is typically associated with mastering a method (i.e., knowing specifically what to do). The supervisor must assist the student to keep in mind that “the phenomenology of the therapy situation is superordinate to its methodology” (Larsen, 1981, p. 287).

Supervisors at the early student level are often more experienced students who, by definition, are supervisors with limited professional experience. These individuals have, in a parallel way, an equivalent amount of anxiety as supervisors. They experience performance anxiety and worry about what the student feels about them. This supervisory anxiety can have an impact on a strong desire to feel competent. For some, this may be attained through focusing on the acquisition and application of technical competency. The discomfort of the inexperienced counselor and psychotherapist arising from struggling and handling the many intense demands of counseling may be expressed and transferred to the supervisory situation. There it may create a tension and anxiety that the supervisor may be incapable of handling. Inexperienced supervisors, who, for example, are not aware of and have not previously professionally handled the process of projective identification, may easily and quickly resort to giving suggestions as to how to act, instead of engaging in the more difficult task of dwelling on understanding and unravelling the complexity that is being expressed.

We may tentatively conclude that the high anxiety level among students probably facilitates the external orientation and rigidity in role and working style that we found in our student sample (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992a, 1992b). This, in turn, may lead to a temporary stagnation or to changes in professional behavior that may be described as “pseudo-development.” Hess (1987) has recognized how supervisors may focus on what is concrete as a coping strategy. The supervisor may, without knowing it, assist the students to close off too much of the complexity, and thus enter a stagnant route rather than a developmental route.
Our research suggests that for normative development, the central task for the beginning student is to have an open stance while also developing competence in specifics (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992a, 1992b). A situation involving high-student and high-supervisor anxiety can lead to a strong focus on competent performance in a limited repertoire of techniques and a foreclosing of the broader search process, which is part of the essential task at this student level. When there is a strong demand to perform competently, there is a push toward closing off the searching process prematurely. This process can be avoided by the supervisor's nourishing and encouraging the student to try out behavior and by supervisor tolerance and permissiveness. Mistakes, instead of being thought of negatively, should be regarded as positive in the broader open stance and searching context. Too much supervisor and student anxiety can lead to the stagnation route of development. In the short run, there may be a sense of competence, yet the premature closing off of the search tends to ultimately lead to stagnation.

Even though supervisors with minimal experience, such as advanced students, are limited in what they have to offer, the most senior and expert counselors and psychotherapists also have limitations in their supervision of the beginner (McCarthy, DeBell, Kanuha, & McLeod, 1988). One limitation relates to the differences between the expert and the novice. Reviewing differences between experts and novices, Hillerbrand and Clairob (1990) wrote, "Psychology experts (compared to the novices) would be expected to engage in qualitatively different reasoning processes, accessing different knowledge in memory and focusing on different case information" (p. 684). In our research (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992a, 1992b), we discovered a major gulf in the method of functioning between the beginner and the senior practitioner. The beginner uses context-free concrete and specific techniques that he or she has been taught, whereas the senior practitioner operates out of an embedded and internalized gyroscope that we have labeled "experience-based generalizations" and "accumulated wisdom." These internalized data may be hard to articulate or explain. Working with the Dreyfus and Dreyfus's (1986) conceptualizations, Benner (1982) investigated skill development and wrote:

It is very frustrating to try to capture verbal descriptions of expert performance because the expert operates from a deep understanding of the situation, much like the chess master who, when asked why he made a particularly masterful move, will just say "Because it felt right. It looked good." (p. 405).

Given the high need of the beginner for specifics, the vague, abstract quality of some experts' advice will be frustrating and disappointing for the new student. The challenge for the senior practitioner is to adjust one's knowledge base and make it more usable for the beginner.

Finally, the beginning student's vulnerability and anxiety make it important for the supervisor at this introductory level to create a relationship that is characterized by support and understanding. Even though the main focus is on skill acquisition, the supervisor needs to structure the relationship so that the student maintains an open and exploring attitude. If the supervisor does not communicate permissiveness and openness to theories and methods at this level, the premature closure process and dogmatic one-theory affinity may occur.

The Hazards of Modeling

Researchers have convincingly demonstrated that modeling facilitates learning at the beginning student level (e.g., Newman & Fuqua, 1988). Modeling may be conceptualized as varying on different degrees of internalization with the concept of identification and imitation as subcategories of modeling. In imitation, there is a low degree of internalization or affective intensity because the emphasis is more on rote behavioral copying. In identification, there is a high degree of internalization expressed through emotional and affective intensity. There are several conditions, however, that need to be carefully assessed to determine if the process of modeling facilitates student development. The following concepts may assist in this analysis:

1. The concept of the good model. One needs to ensure that the model is indeed a good model—not all models are. As observed by Worthington (1987), supervisors age like wine. We know that some supervisors get better, whereas others get worse with age. Nonetheless, experience is a logical prerequisite for expertise. The often inexperienced supervisors and teachers in practice are probably strong in some ways and weak in others. Some of our informants told us about the impact of negative models early in their early careers (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992b).

2. The concept of the potent model. Research in the Bandura tradition has demonstrated that characteristics such as age, perceived expertise, and prestige have an impact on model potency (Bandura, 1969; Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963; Rosenbaum & Tucker, 1962). At the beginning student level, it seems that the counselors and psychotherapists with the strongest modeling power are the established international experts. The highly popular Three Approaches to Psychotherapy (Shostrom, 1965) films at the introductory level are an expression of this. As the students get more experienced, the informants in our research told us of a change toward using as models the acknowledged local experts who are the experienced and respected counselors in the community (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992b). One may see this as a movement from an idealistic to a more realistic position.

3. The concept of the wrong model. Although there are some general core characteristics of good counselor and psychotherapist models, someone who is generally perceived to be an expert model is not necessarily a good model for all students. Here one enters domains such as the student's developmental phase (Benner, 1982; McCarthy et al., 1988). Senior practitioners are often not the best supervisors for the beginner, because the senior usually operates, as stated earlier, from her or his experience base, which is difficult to translate into the concrete step-by-step procedures preferred by the beginner. Other parameters, such as style of language, language focus, directness, and emotional expressiveness, may render some expert models invalid for some students. Gysbers and Ronnestad (1974) stated, "We are suggesting that modeling is desirable if two conditions are met. The first is that the supervisor's style of counseling be demonstrated to be effective; the second is that the style to be emulated be congruent with the mode of operation of the counselor-candidate" (p. 138). In our research, counselors at the advanced student level expressed a high awareness of this concern (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992a). Many students had rejected previous models either totally or partially (i.e., rejecting aspects of a model's way of conceptualizing or behaving). We describe aspects of this as the use of "negative models."
investment. This is humorously portrayed in a Time magazine advertisement for two original Russian brands of vodka. The text was as follows: "To all other vodkas that try so hard to look Russian. Thank you. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery." The quote portrays the danger when the supervisor emphasizes modeling and identification with oneself as the primary mode of learning. The vain and narcissistic supervisor, meeting one's own countertransference needs, may, together with a dependent and admiring student, engage in a pas de deux, in which the supervisor's needs for confirmation blocks student learning. Even more destructive is the boundary violation involved in a supervisory relationship that becomes a sexual relationship. Conroe and Schank (1990) have outlined the destructive qualities of this boundary violation within supervision.

The aforementioned discussion supports in a general way a perspective of effective supervision at this early student level as having the following characteristics: Focus is on the acquisition of methods and techniques, a didactic and instructional emphasis, the importance of feedback and support, and the still greater importance of a trusting and respecting relationship. In our research study (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992a, 1992b), however, we repeatedly encountered great variation among the beginning students in terms of age, previous paraprofessional training, and previous human service experience. Previous education in an allied field (e.g., teaching, nursing, physical therapy) and profound experiences such as parenting, being personally traumatized, suffering intense personal stress, or having a major loss or addiction adds to the heterogeneity of students and modulates the specific recommendations for supervisory method and focus.

**EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION OF THE ADVANCED GRADUATE STUDENT**

At the advanced student level, an essential characteristic, according to our informants and other formulations, is the students' variable confidence, the duality of feeling confident and professionally uncertain at the same time (Loganbill, Hardy, & Delworth, 1982; Stoltenberg, 1981). This creates a tension in supervision, a tension usually more intense than at any other stage of development. The gulf between feeling confident on one hand and professionally insecure and vulnerable on the other makes supervision at this level extremely complex. The supervisor needs to be aware of the contributing components of this tension.

**Tension in Supervision**

Being influenced by the "rombe model" of Ekstein and Wallerstein (1958), we are suggesting a tension matrix that highlights the major contributing components that have an impact on the supervisory interchange (see Figure 1). By institutional culture, we mean the conscious and unconscious assumptive sets, attitudes, values, conceptualizations, and methods of a given social system. The institutional culture may have a potentially strong impact on supervision. In cases where the institutional culture is well defined and is shared by both supervisor and student, the culture provides direction and guidance. In institutions with a vague or diffuse culture, however, the structure is not present to guide student development through this turmoil. We have also become aware of difficulties that can arise if either the supervisor or the student does not identify with the institutional culture. This can be particularly tense in cases in which the reference groups of either supervisor or the student represent culture characteristics that are antagonistic to the culture of the institution. Unresolved professional power struggles—with manifestation such as disputes about whether or not to use certain procedures or techniques (e.g., a specific approach to childhood abuse, use of the Rorschach, or behavior modification techniques)—might easily ruin the supervisory relationship.

Transference and countertransference reactions may be identified if supervision occurs within a power relationship as, for example, when the agency director within an institution supervises a younger colleague who, as a new professional, is on a probationary appointment. This may have various consequences. For example, the supervisor and the student being supervised might overemphasize the evaluative aspects of supervision that, in turn, might foster defensiveness in the student; the student might screen excessively those clients or concerns that are being processed in supervision or resist dealing with delicate weaknesses or difficulties. These issues bring into question the common practice in which a senior practitioner within the institution supervises a junior colleague. It is the principle involved that is being questioned and not the competency level of the senior. (There may be one exception to this. In cases when the work setting or role work is unfamiliar to the junior, it may be desirable for a senior within the institution to supervise a junior colleague.)

The tension at the advanced student stage, where the student vacillates between feeling confident and professionally insecure, cannot be emphasized too much. The student has now actively assimilated information from many sources but has still not had enough time to accommodate and find her or his own way of behaving professionally. Thus, the tension is, in part, a function of belonging, but not totally belonging, to the profession.

Conflict and dissatisfaction with supervision may be at its peak at the advanced student level. Moskowitz and Rupert (1983) studied conflicts in the supervisory relationship from the supervisee's perspective and found that 39% percent of students enrolled in a doctoral program had experienced a major conflict with a supervisor. Type of conflicts tended to fall into three categories: conflicts resulting from differences in personality styles or because of personal issues, conflicts resulting from a difference in theoretical orientation or therapeutic approach, and conflicts resulting from dissatisfaction with style of supervision. As could be expected, personality-based conflicts were most resistant to change, whereas supervisory-style-based conflicts were least resistant to change.

From many sources of data, it is evident that the advanced student wants and actively enlists feedback from the supervisor. "There is
evidence that the wish for feedback takes on a different character as the candidate gets more experienced" (Ronnestad, 1982, p. 544). We have described a movement from seeking confirmatory feedback to seeking corrective feedback. "As the candidate's experiential base is expanded, it appears that the confirmatory aspect of feedback is substituted with a dialogue-aspect where feedback is enlisted to generate a more genuine comprehension" (Ronnestad, 1982, p. 544). At the advanced student level, feedback serves the purpose of aiding the student to clarify one's own position or perspective on conceptual and methodological issues. One may call this "clarifying feedback." The supervisor should not be surprised if the feedback provided is rejected by the advanced student. Other expressions of the clarifying process, so important at this level, are the active challenging of the supervisor and student dissatisfaction with supervision.

Throughout our research (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992a, 1992b), we have repeatedly been struck by the nuanced and different perspectives of our informants on many professional issues. We have increasingly come to realize the complexity of perspective and the need to continually address questions relating to differences in perspectives. A study by Krause and Allen (1988), for example, which examined the actual behavior of supervisors at selected American Psychological Association approved clinical and counseling programs throughout the United States, found interesting differences in how supervisors and students assessed supervisory behavior. Using Stoltenberg's model (1981), they found that supervisors reported collegial and consultative relationships with increasing frequencies as students got more experience. They also found that supervisors reported less structuring and directing for students assumed to be at higher competency levels. Students at different developmental levels, however, did not report any differences in perceived supervisory behavior. The authors speculated that either there may be no differences in actual behavior or the candidates may not have sufficient experience to make discriminations between levels of supervision. The authors argued for a position where the general assumptive set and attitudinal stance of supervisors may have an impact on the student in training more than technique, structure, and format. They also found that satisfaction and impact were related to the supervisor and student in training agreeing on the competency level of the student. They stated, "When supervisor and trainee agreed on the trainee's developmental level, trainees rated the supervision experience highly in terms of satisfaction and impact" (p. 80).

THE SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIP AT BOTH LEVELS

The qualities of the supervisory relationship have an impact on learning at all levels of expertise. We know that the conditions of good counseling and therapy, such as empathy, respect, and a trusting and permissive attitude, have validity in supervision. Carifio and Hess (1987), after a review of the literature on the ideal supervisor stated, "In conclusion, it seems that the ideal supervisor is a person who shows respect, empathy, genuineness, concreteness, and self-disclosure in his or her dealings with supervisees." (p. 245). Existing literature, however, reflects a greater concern with relationship issues at the advanced student level. This may mirror the higher tension at this level.

The supervisory relationship has been investigated from different perspectives. Kadushin (1974) found that as students get more experience, the relationship between the supervisor and the student being supervised can become more "consultative." Reising and Daniels (1983) found that advanced students were more ready for confrontation than were beginning students. Fisher (1989), in a supervision study with students within a marriage and family therapy training program, found that advanced students in training preferred an egalitarian relationship with their supervisor, whereas beginning students in training preferred a relationship that was more authoritarian.

Rabinowitz, Heppner, and Roelhke (1986) reported:

The process ratings of important supervisory issues revealed that trainees from a more advanced level were more open to examining personal issues in supervision. Specifically, interns were much more likely than the less experienced trainees to acknowledge dealing with issues of transference and countertransference. (p. 298)

Heppner and Roelhke (1984) suggested that such willingness may reflect greater exposure to psychoanalytic theory, increased conceptual awareness, or both. They said:

Thus, the pattern seemed to portray for all trainee groups the importance of establishing a working relationship, followed by a movement from dependency toward autonomy, as postulated by many developmental theories... (p. 299)

In our research, we heard many informant statements confirming the positive impact of professional elders who cared, were engaged, and became respectfully involved with their graduate students (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992a, 1992b). The general nature of our data underscores a picture of the supervisory relationship as a fundamental component in the students' professional development. Our data also support a tendency among students toward greater degrees of autonomy. This autonomy, however, is conditional. We have also observed, in our research, a gradual awakening to the concerns of transference and countertransference phenomena and a greater willingness (as they get more experience) among students to explore personal assets and limitations. The strong emotional activation that may occur during supervision at this stage and the focus away from technique and toward a relationship and counselor focus necessitate making explicit similarities and distinctions between counseling and supervision. This comparison can be made with reference to objectives and to interpersonal processes (Ronnestad, 1983).

With regard to objectives, both counseling and supervision make possible personal development, attitudinal changes, awareness of assets, and limitations in interpersonal functioning. The self-awareness perspective in supervision is implicit in striving toward developing a personal and congruent therapeutic style. In counseling, the self-awareness perspective is explicit. Although similar objectives may be reached in both processes, the supervisor needs continually to ascertain that supervisory activities are primarily aimed at professional and not personal development. The intertwining of these objectives necessitates differentiating focus and emphasis. A counselor may assist the client toward increased self-awareness, which may be an aim in itself. The supervisor may assist the graduate student toward increased self-awareness as this relates to professional functioning.

Counseling-psychotherapy and supervision are similar and different with regard to interpersonal processes. In both processes, interpersonal phenomena such as transference, countertransference, and resistance unself themselves (Doehman, 1976). There is often a focus on the impact of unconscious processes in the human interchange. Greben (1985) has addressed the issue of similarities between supervision and psychotherapy and has emphasized the common element of mutually respectful engagement, which provides a sense of genuine teamwork, and the enlightenment that comes from understanding. Despite these similarities, however, the effective supervisor will address these phe-
nomens with a different emphasis than will a psychotherapist, where the focus is on the interchange with clients.

The Parallel Process Perspective: An Instrumental Focus

The parallel process perspective on supervision may have particular relevance at this stage of development. This perspective refers to a phenomenon of correspondence and similarity between the processes occurring in the therapeutic and the supervisory relationships. This perspective was originally described by Searles (1955) in his article on the "reflection process," where he emphasized the therapist's unconscious communication of client dynamics to the supervisor. Ekstein and Wallerstein (1958) regarded this phenomenon as an expression of the student-therapist's contribution to both the therapeutic and the supervisory situations. "It is as though we work with a constant 'metaphor' in which the patient's problem in psychotherapy may be used to express the therapist's problem in supervision—and vice versa" (p. 180).

The parallel process perspective has been widely adapted and, in the process, lost its conceptual clarity. We suggest, in line with Horan's (1957) early work, that the concept be reserved for unconscious and intentional "re-actions" in the "other" relationship. This suggests that traffic can go both ways, from the supervision relationship to the counseling relationship and from the counseling relationship to the supervisory relationship. For example, a comprehensive study of parallel processes was conducted by Doehran (1976) who found that therapists developed intense transference reactions toward their supervisors. In this research, these reactions had a strong impact on the therapists' work and needed to be addressed to resolve impasses in the therapeutic setting. Friedlander, Siegel, and Brenchock (1989) recently documented the parallel process phenomena in counseling and supervision.

We do, however, want to convey a word of caution as we have observed the indiscriminate use of this perspective, where the intention for the supervisor may have been "to play clinician," and as such produce a countertransferential reaction. When taking on and applying this perspective, one enters a domain that demands tactful handling by the supervisor. There is a need to pay particular attention not to trespassing on the personal domain of the graduate student and to carefully respect the supervision contract. A supervisory relationship that becomes a counseling relationship is considered to be a dual relationship. According to ethical guidelines, it is unethical (Bernard, 1987).

The Need for a Contract

Factors such as tension, complexity, variation in experience, maturity level, and expectations at the advanced student level make it urgent to structure the developmental milieu of supervision. The consistency, stability, and predictability of the supervisory role assist in providing this structure. Analagous to what occurs in counseling and psychotherapy, the supervisory relationship serves a structural function. The establishment of a supervision contract further facilitates this structural function. It is our experience that supervisors differ highly on the degree to which they emphasize establishing a supervision contract and on the degree of specificity if a contract is established. According to our view, there are four cornerstones in any supervision contract. They are the following: (a) student developmental needs, (b) supervisor competencies, (c) opportunities provided by the work setting (e.g., client characteristics and client needs), and (d) supervisory goals, methods and focus.

Regardless of level of specificity of the contract, any contract should minimally address these four issues, which are presented in Figure 2.

Students' developmental needs. To arrive at an understanding of the student's developmental needs, careful attention should be paid to the student's educational and work experiences. Different perspectives on professional development provide the necessary conceptual lenses for the supervisor to observe and understand the specifics of the student's developmental needs. In addition to providing a base for establishing supervisory goals, it is our view that the process of clarifying developmental needs also aids the student in creating an understanding of the demands of the profession.

Supervisor competencies. Many barriers to learning could be avoided if supervisors paid close attention to making explicit to themselves and to their students their professional competence. Falling into the traps of either underestimating or not seeing their own limitations, supervisors repeatedly create learning barriers in the supervisory endeavor.

Opportunities provided by the work setting. It is also our contention that unrealistic supervision contracts are often established, because insufficient attention is paid to the limitations of the work setting. Examples of these are establishing goals relating to long-term intervention in an agency that does mostly evaluative and diagnostic work, or developing diagnostic skills in a setting where this is alien to the professional role.

Supervisory goals, methods, and focus. Practicum students appreciate the establishment of clear and explicit supervisory goals (Rotholz & Werk, 1984). We would, however, like to emphasize the traps relating to level of specificity and goal permanence. Level of specificity concerns the balance between phrasing goals in terms general enough to be meaningful and specific enough to be capable of being assessed. Goal permanence concerns how long it takes before goals are changed. The traps here are that (a) goals are changed so often and quickly that they do not provide a steady framework for the interchange and (b) that goals are rigidly maintained in situations where a redirection is warranted or needed. It is important to find a middle ground here.

Supervisory methods can be conceptualized on many different levels. They may concern techniques such as the use of written summaries, videotape, audiotape, one-way mirror, or bug-in-the-ear. They may concern interventions, such as modeling, feedback, confrontation, interpretation, support, or didactic instruction. They may concern more

![FIGURE 2](image)

Four Cornerstones of the Supervision Contract

Journal of Counseling & Development • March/April 1993 • Volume 71
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pervasive issues such as the use of the supervisory relationship as the prime agent for change.

By “focus,” we mean that which is the primary attentional object of the supervisor and the student throughout supervision. We differentiate between main focus and instrumental focus. By “main focus,” we mean the primary attentional objects that the supervisor and student are trying to understand. The main foci are (a) the counselor; (b) the client; and (c) the relationship and interchange between the counselor and the client. By “instrumental focus,” we mean the tools that the supervisor uses to understand the objects of the main focus. The instrumental foci are the supervisor’s conception of (a) the counselor, (b) the relationship and interchange between the supervisor and counselor, (c) the relationship between the counselor and the client, and (d) the client. Figure 3 illustrates a situation where the supervisor uses his or her perception of the counselor (A) and the client (B) as instrumental foci to better understand the main focus, which is relationship and interchange between the counselor and client.

The supervisor, in addition to processing the narratives of the counselor, continually has the option of reflecting on and processing data from the relationship and the client when he or she is trying to understand the counselor. Different aspects of the counselor’s functioning—cognitive, affective, and so forth—may be emphasized. Examples are cognitive and conceptual, affective and relational, method and technique skills, and so forth. We may apply the same scheme in depicting how the supervisor may apply her or his knowledge of the counselor and his perception of the therapeutic relationship to arrive at a better conception of the client.

By presenting the model of main foci and instrumental foci, we are making explicit different options and different preferences among supervisors. Likewise, students come to supervision with expectations about what will be the focus during supervision. A supervision contract needs to encompass issues relating to focus. We have observed detrimental supervision interchanges where, for example, the supervisor has placed a strong emphasis on her or his relationship with the student, without this being agreed upon as an instrumental focus. We have also observed the disappointed, but professionally mature, graduate student who has expected and would have profited from a focus on relationship skills, when the supervisor focused instead on client dynamics. We have presented a conceptual model that supervisors and students may use in making explicit the main focus and instrumental focus in supervision.

SUMMARY

We have differentiated between the beginning student level and the advanced student level. This distinction is not arbitrary, as we see a pronounced shift in concerns and complexity for the advanced student. We have highlighted what we see as the essential themes at each level but recognize that a highlighted theme may also be relevant at the advanced level. This means, for example, that even though the learning process of modeling is presented as a predominant feature at the beginning student level, it may certainly occur at the other level also.

We have presented a picture of supervision with the beginning level as highly instrumental and didactic and as having a technique focus. Modeling is a potent learning process, although there are hazards connected with this process. The high level of anxiety reported for the beginning student level has major implications for supervision. The supervisor at this early level should provide much encouragement and support, much feedback, and generally high levels of structure. We have also suggested caution because of the great variation among beginning students in terms of age, work, and educational experience. These modulate the specific recommendations. At this early level, the supervisor must be aware of the natural tendency of students to simplify a complex professional world. We have argued that a major task for supervisors is to assist in maintaining an open and exploratory stance even when the focus may be on mastering techniques and methods.

For the advanced student, we have highlighted the high level of tension and have presented a model (the tension matrix) that can assist one in understanding some of the contributing factors to this tension. We have painted a picture of supervision at this level as being complex and have argued for the supervision contract as a means of structuring the interchange with a student who typically varies between feeling professionally insecure and professionally competent and autonomous. At the advanced student level, in particular, the supervisor needs to take responsibility to create, maintain, and monitor the relationship with her or his student. The relationship can provide a structuring and process mediating role through the turmoil experienced by the student in practice. It is particularly important at the advanced student level to distinguish clearly between the interpersonal processes of counseling and supervision. The four cornerstones of the supervision contract provide a conceptual tool that may assist in the process of structuring the developmental process of the student. We have emphasized, in particular, the concepts of main focus and instrumental focus and have recommended that this be made explicit when tailoring the contract. Finally, we presented the parallel process perspective as a potential instrumental focus in supervision.

We have in our presentation highlighted some of the difficulties and traps that one might confront in supervision. We have paid less attention to the rewarding aspects for the supervisor. Indeed, supervision can be rewarding. To interact with students who are generally highly motivated to learn, often insightful, and always stimulating provides supervisors with rewarding opportunities to expand their knowledge and continue developing as professionals.

FIGURE 3
Instrumental and Main Focuses in Understanding the Counseling Relationship
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