

EDITORIAL

Introduction to the Special Issue: Supervisee Perspectives of Supervision Processes

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In this introduction to the special issue on Supervisee Perspectives of Supervision Processes, we overview salient extant research findings and provide a theoretical grounding to provide a supportive context for the collection of articles in this curated issue. The enclosed articles provide first person narrative examples of several extant research findings: clinical expertise unfolds developmentally; multiculturalism impacts supervision; the supervisory relationship is highly important; supervision can benefit supervisees; and supervision may impact client psychotherapy outcomes. While encouragement is broadly offered for pluralistic methodological contributions to the underresearched area of supervision, care in avoiding known limitations from the extant research literature (inattention to discipline-specific effects; poor vigilance in thwarting Type II errors) are also discussed in this introduction to the special issue.

Public Significance Statement

This article provides a conceptual framework and research grounding for the *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration's* special issue on Supervisee Perspectives of Supervision Processes. Two key research findings informed the call for submissions to this special issue: (1) multicultural variables impact the experience of supervision, and (2) supervisee perceptions of the alliance with their supervisor impact supervision outcomes. Drawing from the lived experiences of the student authors themselves, the articles across the special issue provide multiple examples of each of these findings. Use of these personal narratives to inform supervisory practices is encouraged.


Keywords: supervision, supervisor, supervisee, training, psychotherapy

Supervision may be the most ubiquitous training process by which capacity is developed to competently practice psychotherapy. Yet, empirical studies informing supervision are relatively

rare and supervisee perspectives are largely absent. This special issue is intended to provide voice to those perspectives. Within each article of this special issue, deidentified and paraphrased exchanges between supervisee and supervisor illustrate the impact of supervision processes and experiences, for better or worse, on the development of emerging professionals.¹

Coedited by Patrick Love, a doctoral candidate, and Jennifer Callahan, current Editor of

Editor's Note. This is an introduction to the special issue "Supervisee Perspectives of Supervision Processes." Please see the Table of Contents here: <http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/int/30/1/>.—JK

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¹ Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research methodology that could be applied to these first-person accounts (Kim, 2015). In this issue, we do not provide analysis, seeking instead to reflect authors' voices unfettered while promoting their heuristic value.

the *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*, this special issue stems from a call for brief articles authored by supervisees detailing their perspectives of supervision processes. That call for papers was met with an overwhelming response from trainees at every level, resulting in a total of 124 submissions and a competitive rejection rate (75%). The first installment of articles was published the August, 2019 issue of *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*. The second installment comprises this special issue of *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*, which showcases 18 brief articles detailing supervisees' experiences of supervision within psychotherapy-specific and/or international settings. To ensure the inclusion of genuine peers during blind review, 35 doctoral students from diverse backgrounds were trained in the peer review process to serve alongside seasoned, expert reviewers. We would like to sincerely thank all of the reviewers for their feedback throughout this process. This resultant special issue features diverse perspectives reflecting the breadth and depth of supervisory experiences as well as supervision processes in first person narratives from the perspective of supervisees. We believe this issue is truly must-read material for anyone engaged in supervision of psychotherapy.

Supervision and Psychotherapy: A Mutualistic Relationship

Albeit an oversimplification, the developmental unfolding of psychotherapy competencies may be illustrated by a prototypic growth curve.² As shown in Figure 1, future psychotherapists are already making small incremental gains in salient professional competencies, some via life experiences and others via instruction, even before entering formal training (for a review that supports this conclusion, see Hatcher & Lassiter, 2007). Thereafter, a marked period of exponential professional growth is observed under closely supervised training conditions (see Price, Callahan, & Cox, 2017 for empirical evidence of that effect). Unfortunately, postdegree attainment, development of psychotherapy expertise typically stagnates (for a comprehensive review that reaches that conclusion, see Tracey, Wampold, Lichtenberg, & Goodyear, 2014). Taken together, it appears that maximization of professional gains during the zone of proximal development (the formal

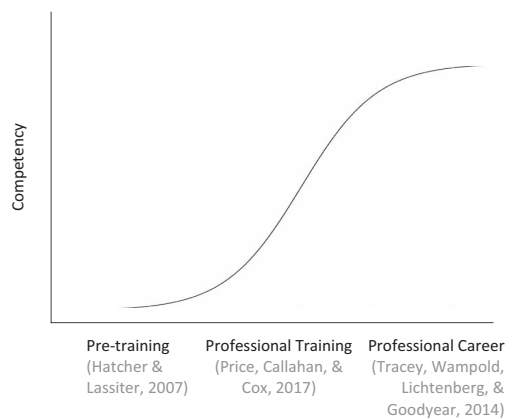


Figure 1. Prototypical growth curve of psychotherapy competency development.

training period in Figure 1) is critical to optimizing subsequent career performance as a psychotherapist. Not only does supervision and mentorship inherently underlie the entire zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), supervision transcends training structures and is utilized worldwide in psychotherapy training.

Despite the widespread and longstanding use of supervision as a primary process for psychotherapy training, empirical investigation of supervision is a relatively nascent area of research (Milne et al., 2012). Theory abounds, but few empirical studies emerge into the literature in any given year (Ladany & Inman, 2008). By publishing this special issue, we hope to stimulate ideas and promote interest in furthering empirical inquiries of supervision.

² As stated, this is a prototypic growth curve and not everyone follows this same trajectory. The existence of variable trajectories likely contributes to some fundamental misapprehensions of the literature pertaining to the effects of supervision. For example, the findings of Strupp and Hadley (1979; often referred to as Vanderbilt I) illustrated the issue of variable trajectories (some psychotherapists were better than others). Unfortunately, the finding of variable trajectories was ignored, and the study was errantly cited and repeatedly mischaracterized as evidence that training does not impact client outcomes. Strupp (1998) clearly appreciated the adverse impact and, after nearly 20 years of citations involving mischaracterization, attempted to clarify some of the most salient issues. However, the earlier article continues to be misunderstood and speciously cited (for a relatively recent example, see Widdowson & Cornell, 2017).

Fit of Special Issue Articles With the Extant Empirical Literature

Improvements in the emotional bond between supervisees and supervisors have been found to be associated with greater supervisee satisfaction with supervision (Ladany, Ellis, & Friedlander, 1999). While a fairly intuitive finding, the importance of a strong foundation should not be dismissed. As illustrated by the narratives in this special issue, a strong supervisory alliance can foster confidence (Mammen, 2020), facilitate important disclosures that impact quality care (Guttman, 2020), reduce problematic feelings of burnout (Aggarwal & Bhatia, 2020), and promote exploration of countertransference as impacting supervisee interactions with clients (Cucco, 2020). Despite these benefits, there is strong evidence that supervisors may not be sufficiently attending to development of strong positive relationships with supervisees.

Supervisees report that they *routinely* withhold important clinical, personal, and supervision-related issues and/or clinical errors from their supervisor (Mehr, Ladany, & Caskie, 2015; Yourman & Farber, 1996). Negative supervision experiences including, but not limited to, boundary issues, dishonesty, disrespect, lack of supervisory competency, and/or perceived supervisor ethical misconduct/violations (January, Meyerson, Reddy, Docherty, & Klonoff, 2014; Ladany, Lehrman-Waterman, Molinaro, & Wolgast, 1999), are cited as the most common reason for not making important disclosures to supervisors (Mehr et al., 2015). Although nondisclosure is highly prevalent and clearly tied to negative supervision experiences, these aggregate reports contain minimal descriptive content. The personal narratives in this special issue are not intended to replace those aggregate findings, but rather to complement them by breathing life, and voice, into them. Boyle and Kenny's narrative on self-disclosure (Boyle & Kenny, 2020), for example, fosters immediate appreciation of the complex role supervisors play in supervisee decisions concerning self-disclosure. Our hope is that, as a field, we will find it difficult to intellectualize or otherwise distance ourselves from even the most unflattering articles in this special issue so that we may use that discomfort to collectively

work to better understand and improve psychotherapy supervision processes.

Across the articles in this special issue, there are some commonalities that suggest areas for growth. For example, despite the increasing emphasis on multicultural considerations in psychotherapy (Gatmon et al., 2001; Phillips, Parent, Dozier, & Jackson, 2017; Soheilian, Inman, Klinger, Isenberg, & Kulp, 2014), many of the personal narratives in this special issue reflect upon microaggressions, discrimination, and otherwise marginalizing comments during supervision that negatively impacted supervisees (Hagler, 2020; Thompson, 2020; Valmas, Himrich, & Finn, 2020; Williams & Raney, 2020) and their work with clients (Williams Kaptan, 2020). Consistent with those narratives, recent research has found that supervisees from underrepresented groups are much more likely to experience their supervisor as insufficiently valuing diversity and in need of improvement in multicultural competencies (Gregus, Stevens, Seivert, Tucker, & Callahan, 2019).

Similarly, research findings have revealed an increased risk of negative gender-related events in psychotherapy supervision among female supervisees (Walker, Ladany, & Pate-Carolan, 2007), that adversely impact the supervisory alliance and perceptions of supervisor competency (Bertsch et al., 2014). In this issue, Conrasto (2020) captures the complexity and confusing nuances associated with professional boundary crossing by a supervisor and highlights the consequent impact on the supervisory alliance. Further, across the personal narratives in this special issue, multiple supervisors are recalled as having a negative impact on female supervisees' professional development, and their ability to respond to inappropriate client sexual behaviors (Thompson, 2020) or other boundary violations in psychotherapy (Valmas et al., 2020).

As coeditors, we realize there is risk that the personal narratives of negative supervisory experiences in this issue will be summarily dismissed as outliers rather than considered representative. To be clear, the intention of this special issue is not to establish base rates of occurrence, but to elucidate the phenomenology of experiences when they do occur. When considered in tandem with published empirical findings, it becomes undeniable that supervision is too often experienced as hindering, unhelpful,

or even harmful (Enyedy et al., 2003; Gray, Ladany, Walker, & Ancis, 2001; Gregus et al., 2019; Henry, Schacht, Strupp, Butler, & Binder, 1993; January et al., 2014).

In obvious contrast, supervision experiences can also exert a positive impact in terms of supervisees' skills acquisition and implementation, treatment knowledge, self-awareness, self-efficacy, and working alliance (Beutler & Kendall, 1995; Goodyear & Guzzardo, 2000; Holloway, 2012; Holloway & Neufeldt, 1995; Inman & Ladany, 2008; Ladany & Inman, 2011; Wheeler & Richards, 2007). There is also emerging evidence that exceptionally good supervisors (as opposed to typical ones) may exert a positive effect on client outcomes (Bambling, King, Raue, Schweitzer, & Lambert, 2006; Callahan, Almstrom, Swift, Borja, & Heath, 2009; Wrape, Callahan, Ruggero, & Watkins, 2015). In this issue, these impacts are brought to life via Bird and Jonnson's (2020) narrative detailing the role of supervision in skill acquisition. Similarly, Simon (2020) provides several examples of how a supervisor's scaffolding of self-awareness led to better case conceptualizations and improved delivery of specific psychotherapy techniques. Bedford, Repa, and Renouf (2020) further describe improved communication with clients as a function of supervisory feedback. Strong supervisory alliances are credited across the special issue with increasing supervisee willingness to explore countertransference (Cucco, 2020), improving self-efficacy among supervisees (Mammen, 2020), and reducing feelings of burnout (Aggarwal & Bhatia, 2020).

As is made clear from the articles in this special issue, good supervisors are mindful of their power to create an open, accepting, and warm atmosphere that is facilitative of positive supervision experiences (Gomez, 2020; Hagler, 2020; Jain & Aggarwal, 2020) as well as being capable of tailoring supervision to the needs (Schumann, Farmer, Shreve, & Corley, 2020) and developmental level of individual supervisees (Poncy, 2020). Good supervisors are also described as modeling cultural humility while validating and honoring the intersectional identities of supervisees (Valmas et al., 2020). Creation of mutual empathy, relational authenticity, and mutual empowerment in supervision are described as key to understanding the interplay of relational, contextual, and sociopolitical factors across the supervi-

sion triad (client/supervisee/supervisor; Williams & Raney, 2020).

The Process of Curating This Special Issue

Regardless of whether personal narratives reflect positive or negative experiences, all articles in this special issue are notable for their grounding in scholarship and promotion of evidence-based supervision processes. Supervisor identities have been altered, within supervision exchanges paraphrased and/or aggregated, and nonessential details changed for the purpose of de-identifying the enclosed narratives. We hope the experience has been a positive one for all authors.

As coeditors, finding a pathway for supervisees to provide their highly personal narratives without causing further harm, or stimulating disclosure regret, was a major challenge that we did not take lightly. In some cases, potential authors were counseled out of submitting their narrative for consideration of publication. Although we strove to be respectful of supervisees' power, authority, and right to decision making in reclaiming any endured negative supervisory experiences, we cannot be certain we navigated the razor's edge effectively. We offer our sincere apologies to those whose narratives were not published out of an abundance of caution. Among those narratives of adverse experiences that were selected for publication, a range of settings are represented to capture the remarkable nonspecificity of such encounters.

An Opportunity for Psychotherapy Researchers

Given the mutualistic relationship between supervision and psychotherapy expertise development, it would seem that psychotherapy researchers are well prepared to usher growth of empirical inquiries pertaining to supervision. Routinely gathering client outcome data can result in improved quality of care (e.g., Lambert, 2017), but may also hold value in supervision for psychotherapist training purposes (cf. Lappan, Shamoan, & Blow, 2018; Swift et al., 2015) and empirical investigations of supervision effects.

Admittedly, small sample sizes, lack of longitudinal data, use of questionably valid measures, overreliance on self-report, and limited attention to either supervision process or client outcomes

are all known shortcomings woven across much of the extant supervision research (e.g., Freitas, 2002; Hill & Knox, 2013; Inman et al., 2014; Lambert & Ogles, 1997; Watkins, 1998, 2014). Studies of supervision are inherently triadic (supervisor, supervisee, and client), with client data typically nested by supervisee as well as supervisor, creating additional methodological challenges. While daunting, psychotherapy researchers are well prepared to address those issues. Psychotherapy researchers have led the way in partnering with others for multisite studies that foster larger samples and more robust findings, use of appropriate scale validation procedures, rigorous analyses, and/or longitudinal investigations that draw from archival data. Beyond drawing from the existing skill set of psychotherapy researchers, a few additional suggestions may be useful to those planning inquiries.

First, consideration of discipline-specific variability in findings is important as there is some evidence that supervision impacts vary by provider discipline (Callahan & Watkins, 2018). Second, risk of Type II error must be fully appreciated in supervision research moving forward (Callahan & Watkins, 2018).³ Third, a pluralistic approach to supervision research may open up possibilities that broaden and advance the supervision knowledge base (Hill & Knox, 2013; Watkins, 2014).⁴

Again, our explicit hope is that the articles in this special issue will seed ideas and generate research to more fully explore and further develop the supervision evidence-base. It was an absolute honor to work with trainees in all aspects of curating this special issue, from authors to reviewers, and throughout the coediting process together. As the rising generation of supervisees emerge into their early career years, it is clear the entire profession will benefit. Please enjoy this issue for a sampling of this highly talented emerging workforce.

³ Client outcomes must vary sufficiently both within and between supervisors to be elucidating. Even large sample sizes without adequate variance may be inadequately powered for analyses.

⁴ Arczynski and Morrow's (2017) careful inquiry into the complexities of power in feminist multicultural supervision may be a useful example of an informative and rigorous approach.

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Introducción al tema especial: Perspectivas del supervisado sobre el proceso de supervisión

En esta introducción a la edición especial sobre las perspectivas del supervisado en procesos de supervisión, presentamos un resumen de los hallazgos de investigación sobresalientes y brindamos una base teórica para proporcionar un contexto de apoyo para la recopilación de artículos en esta edición curada. Los artículos adjuntos proporcionan ejemplos narrativos en primera persona de varios hallazgos de investigación existentes: la experiencia clínica se desenvuelve de manera progresiva; el multiculturalismo impacta la supervisión; la relación de supervisión es muy importante; la supervisión puede beneficiar a los supervisados; y la supervisión puede afectar los resultados de la psicoterapia del cliente. Si bien se alienta ampliamente a las contribuciones metodológicas pluralistas en el área de supervisión muy poco investigada, cuidado al evitar limitaciones conocidas de la literatura de investigación existente (falta de atención a los efectos específicos de la disciplina; poca vigilancia para frustrar los errores de tipo II) también son discutidas en esta introducción a la edición especial.

supervisión, supervisor, supervisado, entrenamiento, psicoterapia

特刊引言：被督导者视角下的督导过程

我们为本期特刊精心挑选的主题为《被督导者视角下的督导过程》，在本引言中，我们回顾了目前关于此主题的主要研究结果，并为本刊的各篇文章的背景提供理论基础。特刊中的文章为已有研究的发现，提供了第一人称的叙事体案例，包括：临床专业知识呈现发展性增长；多元文化影响督导；督导关系极为重要；督导对被督导者有益；以及督导可能会影响来访者的心理治疗结果等。本期特刊中的文章也很好地介绍了，督导的普遍理论模型中关键的输入、过程和输出变量。对于督导中仍少有研究的领域，引言虽然广泛鼓励使用多元化方法学的贡献，也同时提醒要注意规避文献中已知的局限（忽略有些领域特有的效果；对第二类错误的警惕性不足等）。

督导, 督导者, 被督导者, 培训, 心理治疗

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