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Fundamentals of Clinical Supervision

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Fifth Edition

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Appropriately, Strong (1968) had not used in his model of counseling a fourth of French and Raven's types of interpersonal power, that of *coercion*. This type of "power is based on H's ability to punish T for failure to conform to H's wishes" (Turner & Schabram, 2012). In this case, *punishment* occurs through negative reviews of supervisees' work when supervisors perform their obligatory evaluative function. Therefore, supervisors *do* have coercive power, whereas counselors do not. However, although this type of power is theirs to exercise—a fact of which their supervisees are keenly aware—supervisors' primary identity is as counselors or therapists, and so having this type of power can feel uncomfortable.

Corrigan, Dell, Lewis, and Schmidt (1980), Heppner and Dixon (1981), and Heppner and Claiborn (1989) all provide important reviews of counseling-related research based on Strong's model; Dixon and Claiborn (1987) review that supervision-specific research on that model. With a few exceptions, most of this research has been analog in nature. The real-life applications that exist suggest that *attractiveness* (which we understand as *relational bonding*) probably is the most robust of the French and Raven power sources from which Strong extrapolated.

Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) elaboration likelihood model (ELM) is a more recent and complex model of attitude change and might be considered the "second-generation" social influence model. This model suggests that people can be influenced through two information-processing routes: either *central* (involving an effortful elaboration of information) or *peripheral* (greater reliance on cues or on simple rules) for information processing. Influence that occurs through the central route is considered more enduring and has more effect on subsequent behaviors.

However, the route by which persuasion occurs depends on characteristics of the person who is the source of the information (e.g., credibility and attractiveness), message variables (i.e., the subjective strength of the arguments supporting a position), and recipient characteristics (e.g., degree of motivation to process the message). When people are motivated and able to consider messages that they perceive to have compelling arguments, they can then be influenced by a central route; otherwise, influence might occur through more peripheral means, such as the perceived expertness of the communicator. Claiborn, Etringer, and Hillerbrand (1995) and Stoltenberg, McNeill, and Crethar (1995) have discussed the promise of the ELM for research in supervision. Significantly, also, is that Stoltenberg et al. attempt to incorporate what we already know about supervisee development into applications of the ELM.

Both the Strong/French and Raven and the Petty and Cacioppo models of social influence use a more formal *scientific* language and structure than much of what we discuss in this text (see Blocher, 1987, and Martin, 1988, for discussions of distinctions between models to guide practice versus those to guide inquiry). However, they are important models for supervisors to understand because they provide supervisors with valuable explanations of how power operates in their relationships with supervisees. Supervisors interested in learning more about their practice implications should consult articles such as those of Claiborn et al. (1995), Kerr, Claiborn, and Dixon (1982), and Stoltenberg et al. (1995).

An Interpersonal Perspective. A second perspective on interpersonal power is more explicitly interactional. It is concerned especially with the dynamic give and take between people and is grounded in the assumption that people always are negotiating their status (i.e., relative power) with respect to one another.

Gregory Bateson and Timothy Leary made two of the seminal contributions to this perspective. Bateson (1936/1958) proposed that *status* (which also has been referred to variously as *dominance, control,* or *power*) influences all human relationships and communication. Leary (1957) later used Sullivan's (1953) interpersonal theory of personality to develop a circumplex model in which behavior can be plotted according to its placement on a circle with two orthogonal dimensions. One of those dimensions is that of

power (dominance versus submission). In this way, his model is similar to that of Bateson.

However, Leary's inclusion of *affiliation* as the second dimension (i.e., hostility versus nurturance) was a significant additive step. Leary's assumption that any given behavior can be described according to how it maps on these two dimensions has come to inform a great deal of current personality research. The model has proved to be robust (cf. Tracey, Ryan, & Jaschik-Herman, 2001); most people tend to organize their perceptions of their interpersonal worlds along those two dimensions.

This model can be used to describe the characteristic interpersonal behavior of any one person, often in ways that correspond to diagnostic categories. However, the model also provides a way of understanding how any two people might interact with one another.

Bateson (1936/1958) proposed that interpersonal interactions can be characterized as of two basic types:

> complementary *(where there is an unequal amount of status) and* symmetrical *(where there is equal status). In a complementary interaction, each person is agreeing on the relative status positions (i.e., who determines what is to occur and who is to follow along). If the behaviors of the actors complement each other, there is a smooth interaction that is productive as the dyad agrees on what is to be done. In essence, one actor initiates and the other follows. However, if the behaviors of the two actors indicate equal status, resulting in a symmetrical interaction, there is more tension in the interaction and there is less accomplished.* (Tracey, 2002, p. 268)

Tracey (2002) characterizes the degree of complementarity in a relationship as one index of *between-participant harmony*. It indicates that the two individuals are similarly defining their relative power within that relationship. Variants of Leary's circumplex model (e.g., Benjamin, 1974; Carson, 1969; Kiesler, 1983; Strong & Hills, 1986; Wiggins, 1985) have been used in studies of complementarity. For example, Figure 4 reproduces the Tracey, Sherry, and Albright (1999) variant.

The interpersonal perspective assumes that "every behavior carries information regarding how the other should respond, and thus, each behavior elicits or constrains subsequent behavior from others" (Markey, Funder, & Ozer, 2003, p. 1083); that is, any behavior will elicit a reciprocal (complementary) response from the person with whom we are interacting. Complementarity occurs if, for example, a supervisor were to make a leading statement (e.g., "Would you turn on your tape so that we can listen to some of what you have been describing?") to which the supervisee responds with a docile behavior (e.g., "Sure, let me pull out my tape recorder"). As Figure 4 indicates, leading behaviors are high on dominance, whereas docile behaviors are low; both leading and docile behaviors are moderate in level of friendliness. The figure also indicates that nurturant behavior elicits cooperative behavior; self-enhancing behavior elicits self-effacing behavior; and critical behavior elicits distrustful behavior.

One variant of Leary's model that has been especially important to supervision researchers is that of Penman (1980). Although not organized as a circumplex, this model uses the same two dimensions of *power* and *involvement* to characterize interpersonal behaviors. At least four studies (Abadie, 1985; Holloway, Freund, Gardner, Nelson, & Walker, 1989; Martin, Goodyear, & Newton, 1987; Nelson & Holloway, 1990) used Penman's system to analyze supervisory interactions. This model was useful, for example, in the Nelson and Holloway (1990) finding that supervisors were more likely to reinforce high-power statements by male supervisees than those by their female counterparts, thereby demonstrating that gender role affects how power is used in supervision. Holloway's (1995) model of supervision is grounded in this interplay between the dimensions of supervisor power and involvement.

Drawing from his and others' research, Tracey (1993) proposes a three-stage model of counseling based on the notion of complementarity. In the initial phase, level of therapist and client complementarity is high; in the middle or working phase, it becomes lower as the relationship becomes more
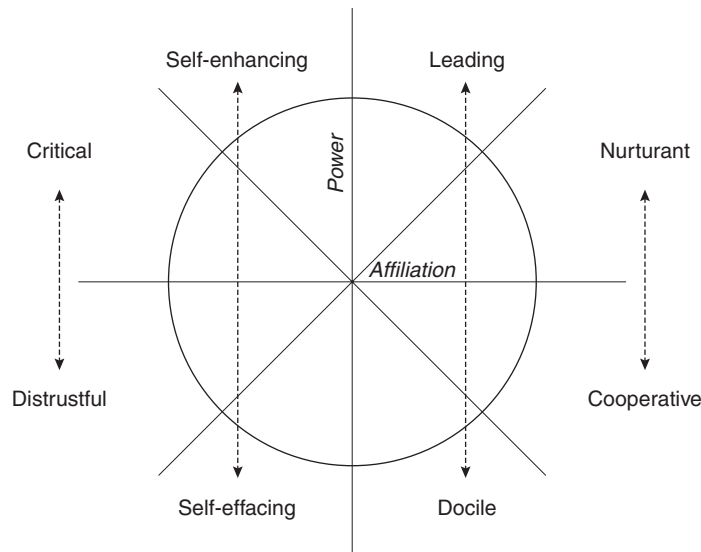
FIGURE 4 Complementary Behaviors of the Interpersonal Circle

Note: Arrows Connect Behaviors Hypothesized to Be Complements.

Source: From "The Interpersonal Process of Cognitive–Behavioral Therapy: An Examination of Complementarity Over the Course of Treatment," by T. J. G. Tracey, P. Sherry, & J. M. Albright. 1999, *Journal of Counseling Psychology,* 46, pp. 80–91. Copyright 1999 by the American Psychological Association.

conflictual; and in the final stage, the relationship returns to a situation of higher complementarity. Yet, although there seems to be generally solid support for this model in therapy, the one supervision study of this type (Tracey & Sherry, 1993) found no support for it. The authors speculate that their results might call into question the application of therapy models to supervision. It was, however, only a single study, so the question about whether Tracey's (1993) stage model of counseling applies to supervision is yet to be fully considered.

Implications for Supervisors. Power often is thought to involve dominance or control by one person over the other. But to use social psychological conceptions of power as the social influence by one person of another importantly broadens understandings of it. All behavior is communication, and communication is an act of influence (Watzlawick & Beavin, 1976). This perspective allows for mutual influence: the supervi-

sor and supervisee each influence the other, although the supervisor has the greater role-based power and, therefore, the greater influence.

We once heard a conference presenter assert that the person with greater power in a relationship is able to define reality for the other person. This does seem strong as an absolute statement. Yet, through the types of power we discuss in this section (i.e., expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness), the supervisor is able to persuade the supervisee to look through a particular theoretical lens to evaluate behavior and to adopt particular attitudes. In this sense, the supervisor is using interpersonal power to define (or at least shape) the supervisee's reality.

It is likely that the person with less power in the relationship will be more conscious of this fact. Yet, precisely because of his or her greater power, the supervisor has a responsibility to be aware of it and to use it both effectively and without abusing it.

In short, the fact of the supervisor's greater power in the relationship is not in itself problematic. In fact, the effective supervisor uses this power in its multiple forms as a tool to both protect the client and enhance the supervisee's learning. It can, however, invite supervisee resistance, depending on (a) how the supervisor uses the power and (b) the supervisee's response to it (either by virtue of developmental stage or level of reactance). It also can invite transference responses, either positive or negative. The challenge for the supervisor is to be aware of the power that he or she has and to use it in a way that maximizes effectiveness.

Supervisor Countertransference

[S]upervisor countertransference has been viewed as a complex and inevitable process that involves unconscious and exaggerated reactions stemming from a supervisory interaction customarily related to the supervisor's unresolved personal issues or internal conflicts. (Ladany, Constantine, Miller, Erickson, & Muse-Burke, 2000, p. 102)

Strean (2000) notes that mental health professionals generally recognize that therapist countertransference is as ubiquitous as client transference. He then suggests that, by analogy, supervisor countertransference is likely as ubiquitous as supervisee transference. Ekstein and Wallerstein (1972) note that the mutual evaluation and reevaluation that occur in supervision do not occur at a strictly intellectual level. They are "accompanied by interactions on every level, which would be described, were they to occur in a therapeutic context, as transference reactions of the one and countertransference reactions of the other" (p. 284).

Literature on this topic is relatively scarce. Ladany et al. (2000) note that Balint (1948) and Benedek (1954) apparently were among the earliest authors to acknowledge supervisor countertransference and its potentially harmful effects on supervisees. A number of authors offer their observations about supervisor countertransference. For example, Lower (1972) observes that "the learning alliance . . . is threatened continuously by resistances that derive from immature, neurotic, con-flict-laden elements of the personality" (p. 70). Teitelbaum (1990) suggests the term *supertransference* to characterize the reactions of the supervisor to the supervisee and to the supervisee's treatment. However, we know of only two studies of supervisor countertransference, one published (Ladany et al., 2000) and one unpublished (Walker & Gray, 2002). Each is a qualitative study designed to describe countertransference events.

Walker and Gray (2002) obtained 144 instances of supervisory countertransference during 70 post-supervision session interviews. In their preliminary clustering of these events, they identified four sources of supervisor countertransference: external stress from workload; disappointment that supervisee is not taking work seriously; overidentification with what it is like to be a beginning counselor; and wanting the supervisee to be a better therapist.

An important aspect of this work is that the authors not only were interested in problematic countertransference reactions, but also in those that in one way or another, they facilitated the supervision. Other work treats countertransference almost exclusively as problematic. For example, even positive countertransference is considered problematic when it has erotic overtones (e.g., Ladany et al., 2000).

Ladany et al. (2000) conducted the single published investigation of supervisor countertransference. Their findings provide the most comprehensive knowledge to date about this phenomenon. Therefore, we devote more space than usual to summarizing this study's findings. Theirs was a qualitative study of 11 supervisors at university counseling center internship sites. Raters coded the structured interviews with these participants, all of whom believed that this had affected the supervisory relationship in either positive or negative ways. Ladany et al. (2000) found that most supervisors reported the countertransference lasted more than 2 months. To deal with it, most reported having pursued one or both of two courses: (a) consulting with a colleague (e.g., coworker, the training director, a supervision group) or (b) discussing it with the supervisee as it was appropriate. A few reported using either

personal therapy or developing increased awareness through self-reflection as a means to resolve it.

A particularly useful feature of the Ladany et al. (2000) study was their examination of cues that led the supervisor to become aware of his or her countertransference. There was no single cue that all 11 supervisors reported, but more than half reported each of the following types of cues:

• Having particularly strong positive or negative feelings when they interacted with the supervisee
• Experiencing feelings toward the supervisee that were uniquely different from those toward other supervisees with whom she or he had worked
• Experiencing a gradual change in feelings toward the supervisee or their sessions together
• Discussions with colleagues (especially their own supervisors)

Ladany et al. (2000) were able to identify six sources of supervisor countertransference, of which the following two were reported by all respondents:

1. *Countertransference triggered by the interpersonal style of the supervisee.* In some cases, this was a defensiveness or guardedness; in others, an assertiveness; in still others, passivity, shyness, or vulnerability; and finally, such positive qualities as warmth and being engaging (this last was especially true for erotic countertransference).
2. *Countertransference stemming from some aspect of the supervisor's own unresolved personal issues.* In some cases, this concerned personal and family issues; in others, concerns about his or her competency; his or her own interpersonal style (e.g., having unduly high self-expectations; strong need to be liked); or experiences in the past from work with other supervisees.

To have these two sources identified through an inductive and empirical technique is important. However, because this literature still is small, we also summarize next the four categories of supervisor countertransference that Lower (1972) suggested some years ago.

1. *Countertransference stemming from general personality characteristics.* This type of countertransference stems from the supervisor's own characterological defenses, which then affect the supervisory relationship.
2. *Countertransference stemming from inner conflicts reactivated by the supervisory situation.* Lower's (1972) first category of supervisor countertransference focused on supervisors' characteristic ways of expressing themselves. The second category focused on supervisors' inner conflicts that are triggered by the supervision. Although some of the supervisor behaviors might resemble those of the first category, they have different origins.

The following list of other supervisor responses suggests the myriad ways that supervisors' own inner conflicts can be manifest in supervision. Lower (1972) suggests that they may

• Play favorites with the supervisees
• Covertly encourage the supervisee to act out his or her own conflicts with other colleagues or encourage rebellion against the institution
• Compete with other supervisors for supervisees' affection
• Harbor exaggerated expectations of the supervisee that, when unmet or rejected by the supervisee, lead to frustration and perhaps even aggression
• Have narcissistic needs to be admired that divert the supervisor from the appropriate tasks of supervision

3. *Reactions to the individual supervisee.* The types of supervisor countertransference discussed so far have been triggered by the supervisor's response to the supervisory situation. In addition to these, there may be aspects of the individual supervisee that stimulate conflicts in the supervisor; for example, if the supervisee seems brighter (or more socially successful, or financially better off, etc.) than the supervisor.

Sexual or romantic attraction is a specific instance of this type of supervisor countertransference (Frawley-O'Dea & Sarnat, 2001). Ellis and Douce (1994) argue that issues of supervisor attraction to supervisees have been too little emphasized during supervision training.

Another specific instance of this type of supervisor countertransference (i.e., reaction to the individual supervisee) is cultural countertransference. Vargas (1989) differentiates between this and prejudice: "Whereas *prejudice* refers to an opinion for or against someone or something without adequate basis, the sources and consequences of cultural countertransference are far more insidious and are often repressed by the therapist" (p. 3).

Vargas (1989) notes that cultural countertransference reactions can originate in either of two ways:

- The first, and more common, instance, occurs when the supervisor has limited experience with members of the ethnic minority group to which the supervisee belongs.
- The second is the consequence of potent feelings associated with nonminority people in the supervisor's past with whom the current minority supervisee is associated.

Regardless of the source, however, these cultural countertransference reactions, like many social perceptions, occur at an automatic level, outside the observer's awareness (see, e.g., Bargh & Chartrand, 1999). Research such as that of Abreu (1999) illustrates how this applies in a mental health context using *subliminal priming* (i.e., words flashed at 80 milliseconds, a speed that precludes conscious recognition of them), using 16 words or stereotypes ascribed to African Americans (e.g., Negroes, Blacks, lazy, blues, rhythm), therapists rate a client described in a vignette as more hostile, even though most indicated that they understood the client probably was White. This suggests the importance of ongoing attention to cultural sensitivity, even when at a conscious

level the supervisor is not aware of stereotyping.

4. *Countertransference to the supervisee's transference.* Perhaps the area in which supervisors are at the greatest risk of experiencing countertransference reactions to the supervisee is when the supervisee manifests transference responses to the supervisor. As a vivid illustration, Lower (1972) offers the following example:

A resident had been working in psychotherapy with a . . . young woman for about six months when a new supervisor questioned his formulations and treatment goals and suggested that they follow the patient in supervision over a period of time. The resident responded as though the supervisor were intruding on his relationship with the patient and became more and more vague in his presentation of material. In reaction, the supervisor became increasingly active in suggesting what the therapist should pursue with the patient and at last asked to see the patient together with the resident in order to make his own assessment. Only after the supervisor began the interview by asking the patient, "Well how are you and Doctor what's his name here getting along?" did he recognize the Oedipal conflict within both himself and the resident that had interfered with the learning alliance. (p. 74)

CONCLUSION

Each of the several factors we address in this chapter has implications for, or even direct influence on, the dyadic supervisory relationship. Our intent in presenting these factors is to better equip supervisors with knowledge that permits greater sensitivity to these features in the supervisory process and allows them to offer more prescriptive intervention (e.g., to minimize supervisee anxiety or transference or supervisors' countertransference).

We also are aware that the factors we present in this chapter do not exhaust the range of individual factors and characteristics that might affect supervision; however, they are those that have received particular emphasis in the supervision literature.