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Systemic–Developmental Supervision: A Clinical Supervisory Approach for Family Counseling Student Interns

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Abstract

Supervision models for marriage and family counseling student interns primarily focus on the use of traditional systemic techniques. In addition, a supervisee's level of development may not be considered when utilizing systemic tools. Furthermore, the supervisory relationship has been identified as a significant indicator of quality supervision, including characteristics such as warmth, empathy, and a nonjudgmental perspective from the supervisor. This article presents systemic–developmental supervision (SDS) to promote supervisees' professional growth through self-awareness and skills acquisition. As such, a focus on the supervisory relationship through integration of two developmental models of supervision and systemic supervision techniques is discussed, along with the practical applications of SDS, strengths, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Keywords

family counseling, clinical supervision, counselor education and development

Developmental models of counseling supervision are empirically supported and have grown in popularity (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010). Although there are a variety of developmental supervisory approaches, they all share fundamental tenets including (a) supervisees' move through levels of development based on their interaction with their environment (e.g., educational and supervisory experiences) and (b) supervisors identify and match the supervisees' level of development to promote their growth (e.g., Loganbill, Hardy, & Delworth, 1982; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010). The developmental framework emerged from the work of Hogan (1964), who identified four levels of development for therapists: (a) Level 1—marked by a heavy influence of original training; (b) Level 2—the method learned in training is adapted to fit the supervisees' own style; (c) Level 3—the therapist feels more self-confident and is more insightful; and (d) Level 4—the therapist has become a master, is insightful, and can acknowledge limitations. Hogan described these levels as mutually exclusive and suggested that a therapist can repeat the levels many times throughout his or her career. Developmental levels for supervisees have been empirically supported (e.g., McNeil, Stoltenberg, & Pierce, 1985; Wiley & Ray, 1986); however, the research has been based primarily on the perceptions of either the supervisor or the supervisee, as opposed to measuring more concrete outcomes (e.g., counselor's effectiveness with diverse clients).

Despite the popularity of developmental models of supervision, the majority of marriage and family therapy training programs use systemic theories as their supervision modality (Carlozzi, Romans, Boswell, Ferguson, & Whisenhunt, 1997). Further, a review of the literature revealed publications that discussed the use of specific family-of-origin techniques (e.g., Carlozzi et al., 1997; Desmond & Kindsvatter, 2010; Magnuson, 2000; Magnuson & Shaw, 2003) related to supervising marriage and family counselors. However, no published works were found that presented the use of developmental supervisory approaches within family systems supervision models. Additionally, supervision models for marriage and family trainees do not discuss the trainees' development of systemic concepts, such as differentiation. Traditionally, supervision models for marriage and family trainees are similar to systemic counseling (Montgomery, Hendricks, & Bradley, 2001) and often do not consider the trainees' movement through developmental levels based on their ability to apply systemic concepts (e.g., a genogram) to their own lives. Therefore, this article presents an approach to supervision for marriage and family counselor student interns that incorporates aspects of developmental supervision models. As such, two empirically supported models of developmental supervision

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are reviewed: (a) the integrated developmental model (IDM; Stoltenberg, 1981; Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010) and (b) the life span developmental Model (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 1993, 2003). The central theoretical tenets of these two developmental models are integrated into systemic supervision. The resulting approach to clinical supervision for family counseling student interns is termed as *Systemic–Developmental Supervision* (SDS).

SDS

SDS is designed to support family counseling student interns' professional development and skill acquisition and thus promote their effectiveness with diverse client populations. As with all therapeutic and supervisory modalities, SDS is grounded in theory. Specifically, SDS integrates tenets from IDM (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010); Life Span Developmental Supervision (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 1993, 2003); and systemic supervision (e.g., Bowen, 1978; Minuchin, 1974; Montgomery et al., 2001).

IDM

IDM (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010) has become one of the best known and most used models of clinical supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). Originally developed in 1981, IDM is based on the work of Hunt's (1971) conceptual systems theory. IDM posits that supervisees advance through four levels of counselor characteristics: (a) Level 1; (b) Level 2; (c) Level 3; and (d) Level 3-integrated, which are based on the following three supervisee domains: (a) motivation, (b) autonomy, and (c) self-other awareness (Stoltenberg, & McNeill, 2010). IDM suggests that supervisee growth within domains and movement through the levels occur in a linear direction based on the supervisee's interaction with his or her environment.

The supervisees' minimal level of training characterizes the first developmental level identified within IDM (e.g., supervisee has been introduced to theories of family counseling). As a result, the Level 1 supervisee experiences high levels of anxiety, is highly dependent on the supervisor, and is insecure with little ability for insight. Stoltenberg (1981) recommended that supervisors provide a mix of autonomy, encouragement, and structure to help foster a supportive environment in which the supervisee is encouraged to test hunches with clients, while simultaneously providing a structured environment to help reduce the supervisees' anxiety. Level 2 supervisees are characterized by a "dependency-autonomy conflict" (Stoltenberg, 1981, p. 62). The conflict arises as the supervisee desires more autonomy, while simultaneously relying on the supervisor for guidance. The supervisor should respond by providing more autonomy and less structure to promote increased self-confidence in the supervisee. At Level 2, the supervisor begins to serve as an advisor to the supervisee. Supervisee's demonstration of a sense of self-confidence and identity as a family counselor marks a shift to Level 3. The Level 3 supervisee is more tolerant of clients and other counselors with opposing points of view and is more equipped to provide empathy to clients. Therefore, the supervisor should provide a supervision environment that facilitates more of a collegial atmosphere. At Level 3-integrated, supervisors may acknowledge areas of their own limited knowledge as well as use more confrontation with the supervisee to challenge his or her techniques, or case conceptualization, resulting in increased self-confidence of his or her approach. Finally, the supervisee's movement into Level 3-integrated is characterized by displays of insight with an awareness of limitations. At Level 3-integrated, structured supervision is decreased for counselor development because family counselors who reach this level are aware of when they should seek consultation (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010). Therefore, IDM offers a conceptualization of family counselor development from new trainees through more experienced professionals.

Based on IDM (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010), SDS integrates the tenet that family counselors move through levels of development as growth occurs. Additionally, SDS suggests that supervisors recognize and match the level of supervisee development in order to facilitate a supervisory environment that fosters supervisee growth and therapeutic effectiveness. However, unlike IDM, SDS suggests family counselor growth and development occurs across the professional life span; thus, components of the Life span Developmental Model (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 1993, 2003) are integrated into SDS.

Life Span Developmental Model

Similar to IDM (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010), the Life Span Developmental Model (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 1993, 2003) presented a developmental supervision approach that suggested counselor's move along a continuum of development based upon level of experience. A primary difference in Rønnestad and Skovholt's model, as compared to IDM, is the notion that development continues beyond graduate training and lasts the span of a lifetime. Rønnestad and Skovholt's model (2003) identified 6 phases and 14 themes that characterized counselor's development through a supervisee's professional maturation. The developmental supervisory phases identified were (a) the lay helper phase, (b) the beginning student phase, (c) the advanced student phase, (d) the novice professional phase, (e) the experienced professional phase, and (f) the senior professional phase. The phases and themes that emerged from their data analyses conceptualized supervisory development in concise and descriptive fashion (e.g., the advanced student phase characterizes supervisees during their practicum and internship experiences where they have developed fundamental counseling competencies but are anxious and insecure).

Additionally, Rønnestad and Skovholt (1993, 2003) emphasized the supervisory relationship and described it as a cornerstone component in facilitating supervisee development. Furthermore, they noted that the awareness of transference and countertransference was slow to develop due to the limited ability of beginning counselors to appreciate the complexity of the counseling and supervisory relationships. Rønnestad and

Skovholt identified the distinction between counseling and supervision by stating that the core objective of supervision is to promote self-awareness with the aim of fostering professional but not personal growth. The supervisor may facilitate self-awareness and professional growth through the use of parallel process and interpersonal issues such as resistance, transference, and countertransference. However, the supervisor must be cognizant not to become the supervisee's counselor.

SDS incorporates the constructs emphasized by Rønnestad and Skovholt (1993, 2003) in the supervisory relationship, including (a) the notion that the recognition of transference and countertransference are slow to develop in beginning counselors; (b) the use of parallel process to promote professional self-awareness; and (c) that supervision can be distinguished from counseling by focusing on the promotion of supervisees' professional self-awareness, opposed to personal self-awareness. The constructs emphasized by Rønnestad and Skovholt in the supervisory relationship resemble techniques used by systemic supervisors during clinical supervision (Montgomery et al., 2001). However, SDS differs from traditional systemic supervision because it incorporates Rønnestad and Skovholt's developmental notion that transference and countertransference are slow to develop in beginning counselors. Therefore, SDS suggests that supervisors spend time in cultivating the supervisory relationship to help ameliorate anxiety associated with beginning counselors, resulting in less frequent use of self-reflective techniques, such as genograms. The following sections review the tenets of systemic supervision, present specific elements of SDS, and discuss the strengths and limitations of SDS with family counseling student interns.

Systemic Counselor Supervision

Systemic supervision (e.g., Bowen, 1978; Minuchin, 1974) is synonymous with family therapy supervision in that its underlying focus is on the family of origin and supervisory systems (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). Additionally, the supervisor works to train the supervisee to conceptualize cases from a systemic perspective (Montgomery et al., 2001). As such, the supervisor's aim is to help the supervisee "diagnose the system, not the problem" (Montgomery et al., 2001, p. 307). Thus, the systemic supervisor does not focus on diagnoses related to individual pathology, but rather, views the problem as within and part of the entire systemic unit, as opposed to placing the issue on the shoulders of the client (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2007). Further, there are different approaches to systemic supervision, such as multigenerational family therapy (Bowen, 1978; Framo, 1992) and structural/strategic family therapy (Minuchin & Fishman, 1981). For this reason, systemic supervisors may integrate principles from various family systems theories.

As several models of family therapy supervision have been published, an integrative approach for family therapy supervision is suggested (e.g., Fraenkel & Pinsof, 2001; Kaslow, Celano, & Stanton, 2005). Theoretical eclecticism and assimilative integration are two integrative frameworks that can be utilized for systemic supervision. The use of integrative frameworks in family systems has developed as a result of the abundance of family systems theories (e.g., Bowen, object relations, structural–strategic, etc.) and techniques. Theoretical eclecticism involves teaching supervisees several family systems theories and providing a foundation to identify when to use a particular theory (Kaslow et al., 2005). Conversely, assimilative integration teaches supervisees to identify with one major theory as a means to conceptualize cases while incorporating techniques from various approaches (Fraenkel & Pinsof, 2001). Theoretical eclecticism and assimilative integration provide an approach that allows a systemic therapist and/or supervisor to utilize several different techniques and interventions instead of only using techniques relevant to one identified theory.

Despite the use of integrative frameworks in systemic supervision, a systemic supervisor employs core family systems principles. For example, the notion of isomorphism and parallel process are used to help the supervisee understand how the supervision relationship might reflect the therapy relationship (Friedlander, Siegel, & Brenock, 1989; Kaslow et al., 2005). Parallel process can be used in the supervisory relationship to help the supervisee and supervisor gain insight into transference and countertransference within the client/supervisee relationship. Additionally, supervision interventions that focus on the supervisee's family of origin are used. An example would be using a genogram and incorporating the concept of differentiation (Bowen, 1978). Both the techniques have their roots in multigenerational approaches to family therapy supervision (Montgomery et al., 2001). Systemic counseling techniques are used with supervisees to help strengthen interpersonal relationships; therefore, SDS supervisors should be purposeful in maintaining appropriate supervisory boundaries with their supervisees.

Core components from systemic supervision are integrated into SDS. The principle integrated tenets include (a) maintaining a focus on diagnosing the system; (b) fostering the use of systemic techniques in both supervision and counseling, such as a genogram to maintain focus on the system; (c) encouraging the supervisee to complete his or her own genogram (Emerson, 1995); and (d) utilizing a process-oriented focus (McNeill & Worthen, 1989), such as parallel process techniques to discuss issues related to transference and countertransference (e.g., Friedlander et al., 1989; Kaslow et al., 2005; McNeill & Worthen, 1989). Additionally, SDS supervisors incorporate techniques from different systemic perspectives, utilizing theoretical eclecticism (Kaslow et al, 2005) or assimilative integration (Fraenkel & Pinsof, 2001).

Implementation of SDS

SDS incorporates components from developmental models of supervision (e.g., Rønnestad and Skovholt, 2003; Stoltenberg & McNeill 2010) while working to conceptualize the supervisee's professional experiences from a systemic perspective (e.g., Bowen, 1978; Framo, 1992, Minuchin, 1974). The goal

of SDS is to facilitate the supervisee's professional self-awareness and skills acquisition through systemic techniques while helping the supervisor to support the development of a beginning counselor. The benefits of SDS are that the supervisor does not risk overwhelming a beginning supervisee with process-oriented content and that the supervisor can provide the supportive and structured environment that the supervisee needs in order to develop and grow as a family counselor.

Similar to the primary tenets of developmental supervision models (e.g., Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010), SDS incorporates levels of development based on the supervisee's interaction with his or her environment and asserts that a supervisor facilitates movement through the levels by identifying the level of supervisee development and creating a supervision environment conducive to professional growth. Moreover, components of various developmental models are interwoven into SDS, such as the Life Span Developmental Model (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003) premise that supervisee development and growth are ongoing and the conception that developmental levels are cyclical (Loganbill et al., 1982). SDS integrates developmental tenets with some of the doctrines of systemic supervision. Systemic supervision seeks to promote self-awareness and skill acquisition by helping the supervisee understand the dynamics of the client/counselor relationship and the supervisor/supervisee relationship (McDaniel, Weber, & Mckeever, 1983). Through increased awareness, supervisees are able to conceptualize how they may be responding to client issues in session at a subconscious level (Zorga, 2007). Furthermore, intentionality in work with clients becomes possible for the supervisee, as higher levels of differentiation are attained (Bowen, 1978). However, SDS differs from traditional systemic supervision in that the supervisor remains focused on the supervisee by considering his or her developmental level and readiness to identify issues pertaining to increased professional self-awareness (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). As such, SDS posits that traditional systemic self-awareness skills, such as differentiation, are developed over time by beginning-level counselors. Additionally, beginning counselors' high level of anxiety may hinder a supervisee's readiness for reflection. Process-oriented techniques may engender higher levels of anxiety in new counselors, who often seek more structured content to relieve initial anxiety.

Supervisory Levels of Development Within SDS

Similar to IDM (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010) and other developmental models (e.g., Loganbill et al., 1982; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003), SDS views supervisees as moving through developmental levels based on interactions with the environment and experience. However, there is ambiguity in the literature regarding the exact number of developmental levels (Glidden & Tracey, 1992). For example, Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003) identified six phases of supervisee development, while Stoltenberg (1981) and Hogan (1964) identified four levels of supervisee development. SDS posits three levels of family counselor development: (a) Beginning Family Counselor—characterized by practicum and internship family counseling students, supervisees experiencing generally high levels of anxiety with a movement through the level to decreased anxiety and not typically ready to explore self in supervision; (b) Intermediate Family Counselor—characterized by new graduates through licensure, generally lower levels of anxiety, a desire for more freedom and an increased readiness to explore self in supervision; and (c) Experienced Family Counselor—characterized by licensed family counselors, limited anxiety with a high level of self-confidence, and a strong readiness and desire to explore self in supervision (e.g., Hogan, 1964; Loganbill et al., 1982; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010). Having three SDS levels allows for some variance among development within levels. For example, Beginning Family Counselors may be comprised of students at different times of the clinical preparation (e.g., practicum and internship). As a result, the students may vary in the amount of anxiety they experience during their work with couples and families. Further, the SDS levels describe general characteristics of counselors and may not fit each unique supervisee. For example, a supervisee who is completing internship would typically be at the Beginning Family Counselor level. However, if the supervisee displays minimal anxiety and insightful reflection, then the supervisor may employ supervisory techniques more consistent with Intermediate Family Counselor level.

In addition to the levels of supervisee development, SDS incorporates the Life Span Development Model's perspective that expansion occurs through the course of one's life (Zorga, 2002), and a family counselor may cycle through the levels of development an unlimited amount of times (Loganbill et al., 1982). For example, working with a new client population may evoke anxiety in counselors at the Experienced Family Counselor level similar to that experienced by student interns at the Beginning Family Counselor level. As a result, the Experienced Family Counselor may necessitate increased structure and direction in his or her supervisor. Consequently, the Experienced Family Counselor working with new client issues may temporarily cycle back through the lower levels of counselor development. One difference between the Experienced Family Counselor and the Intermediate Family Counselor might be that the Experienced Family Counselor moves through anxiety and develops self-confidence and autonomy with the new population at a faster rate than the Intermediate Family Counselor. Additionally, supervisors operating from SDS evaluate supervisees' level of self-awareness readiness along with their level of development. The linear relationship between supervisee readiness for self-awareness and the three SDS supervisee levels of development, along with descriptors of each level, and suggested supervisor interventions are presented in Table 1.

Beginning family counselors. Family counselors at the Beginning Family Counseling level experience high anxiety, and consequently, desire structure from their supervisor (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010). At the

Table 1. Application of Systemic–Developmental Supervision (SDS) per Supervisee Level

	Beginning Family Counselors	Intermediate Family Counselors	Experienced Family Counselors
Family counselor descriptors	High anxiety Low self-confidence Low autonomy	Some anxiety Some self-confidence Desire autonomy	Minimal anxiety Self-confident Autonomous
Supervision environment	Encouraging Structured Prescriptive	Encouraging Reflective Insight oriented	Reciprocal or mutual Consultative
Supervisor interventions	Psychoeducation Live observation Modeling Role-plays	Genogram Parallel process IPR Transference and countertransference	Parallel process Active listening
Supervisor considerations	Introduce supervision style Assess level of supervisee anxiety	Maintain process-oriented approach Focus of supervision is on supervisee	May use self-disclosure Supportive and validating statements

Level of Self-Awareness/Differentiation Readiness

Low High

beginning level, the supervisor should encourage the supervisee to be more autonomous while still providing support and structure in supervision (e.g., Lambie & Sias, 2009). Additionally, the supervisor should begin discussing the supervisee's level of systemic knowledge (Montgomery et al., 2001). Discussing the supervisee's knowledge of family systems theory can involve educating the supervisee on the theories underlying systemic approaches to supervision, such as the concept of differentiation. A benefit of having open and clear communication regarding the supervisory approach with the supervisee early in the relationship is to foster a collaborative supervisory atmosphere. Thus, the supervisor and supervisee work together with the shared goal of increasing professional self-awareness and client case conceptualization skills. In addition to psychoeducation, other supervisory interventions for Beginning Family Counselors are (a) maintaining a supportive stance through validating feelings related to anxiety and active listening skills; (b) live observation of the supervisee; (c) modeling the use of suggested techniques, such as the use of reflective questions; and (d) role-plays with the supervisee. As a result of implementing these SDS techniques, the supervisor demonstrates support and encouragement toward the supervisee at the beginning developmental level (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010).

Intermediate family counselors. Counselors at the Intermediate Family Counselor level are in a state of confusion because they yearn for more freedom but still feel dependent on the supervisor's direction (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010). Adding to the confusion, Intermediate Family Counselors place too much emphasis on the feedback they get from clients (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Supervisees at the intermediate level may also move into a state of increased self-confidence and an eventual decrease in dependence upon the supervisor. The Intermediate Family Counselor marks an ideal time for the supervisor to provide less structure in supervision (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010) and focus more on interpersonal interactions of the supervisee and the client, as well as supervisor and supervisee, through the use of process-oriented techniques, such as the parallel process (McNeill & Worthen, 1989). Additionally, supervisory interventions that encourage the supervisee to explore family-of-origin issues pertinent to professional growth may be used for a supervisee at the intermediate level. Additional SDS supervisory interventions with Intermediate Family Counselors include (a) having the supervisee construct a genogram of his or her family of origin (Emerson, 1995) and (b) using interpersonal process recall (IPR; Kagan & Kagan, 1997) to foster supervisee reflection, awareness, and insight. The use of a genogram and process-oriented questions in supervision may mirror counseling. Thus, it is important for the supervisor to maintain appropriate boundaries with the supervisee by remembering that the purpose of systemic techniques is to promote professional growth through self-awareness, not to promote personal growth through counseling of the supervisee.

Because most Intermediate Family Counselors will be graduates working toward licensure, it is not likely that supervisors will have worked with the supervisee during the Beginning Family Counselor level. Therefore, the supervisor would begin the supervisory relationship by describing SDS, as well as the goals of this approach. The supervisee should be asked to complete a genogram around the second supervision meeting. The genogram should initially be processed from a professional development perspective. As such, the supervisor will tie family patterns identified back to the supervisee's counseling characteristics. Further, the supervisor may refer back to the genogram throughout the supervisory relationship as the supervisee's level of self-awareness begins to increase. Other process-oriented techniques, such as IPR, may help the supervisee develop self-awareness during the counseling session, increasing the counselor's ability to become more differentiated.

Experienced family counselors. Counselors at the Experienced Family Counselor level are no longer receiving supervision and

leave the previous level with more insight, self-confidence (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010), and increased in-depth awareness of self. As a result, Experienced Family Counselors have attained high levels of differentiation and may continue seeking higher levels of differentiation of self through the remainder of their professional career (Zorga, 2007). In addition, Experienced Family Counselors display sound judgment and an understanding of their limitations; therefore, counselors at this level of development may seek consultation upon encountering client issues that are unfamiliar. Thus, active listening and appropriate self-disclosure can be effective supervisory interventions with Experienced Family Counselors. Further, consultation may assist Experienced Family Counselors in sorting through any transference or countertransference issues that arise during therapy (Ladany, Constantine, Miller, Erickson, & Muse-Burke, 2000).

Experienced Family Counselors are not likely to be participating in supervision on a regular basis. Therefore, these counselors may need to intentionally seek out consultation as needed. Supervisors may be contacted at irregular times regarding consultation needs from Experienced Family Counselors. Supervisors could consider establishing regular monthly check-in meetings to allow for more consistency with supervision or consultation. Because the supervisory relationship at this level of counselor development is more collegial in nature, the supervision sessions will likely be less formal and more discussion-based. As such, supervisors will use process-oriented questions related to issues brought to supervision and use self-disclosure by sharing relevant experiences. The use of self-disclosure should also include a discussion of potential resolutions.

Case Illustration of SDS

The following case illustration presents the application of SDS with a family counseling student intern. James (fictitious name) is a graduate student intern in the Marriage and Family Therapy program completing his second semester of internship at a University-based counseling center that specializes in working with couples and families. As James had the same clinical supervisor for both semesters of his internship, he was familiar with the supervisor's approach to supervision. James meets with his supervisor once a week to discuss his current caseload. During individual supervision, James presented the case of a married couple that he has seen for two sessions. The couple has been married for 10 years and was experiencing marital distress due to infidelity in the relationship, resulting in a lack of trust in the relationship and the couple hoped to restore trust through counseling. After discussing the presenting issues, James reported struggling with the couple and described them as one of his most difficult clients. James reported that he has been working to help the couple communicate more effectively in their relationship with the hope that they would be more effective in sharing their thoughts and feelings, enhancing their trust through understanding one another.

Utilizing the SDS approach, the supervisor recognized that James was at *Intermediate Family Counselor* despite the fact that he was still in graduate school because he demonstrated an ability to be reflective and self-aware about his counseling sessions during his second semester in internship. Additionally, the supervisor developed rapport and a trusting relationship with James over the past two semesters. As a result, James completed a genogram at the beginning of his second semester of supervision, and the supervisor frequently referred back to his genogram to help James process any countertransference during his counseling sessions. The supervisor asked James to express more about how he was struggling with his couple. James described feeling disconnected from the husband (Tim) because Tim frequently questioned the purpose of the techniques James was implementing. As a result of Tim's questions, James reported that he engaged Tim in more small talk during the session to help build rapport. The supervisor suspected that James was experiencing countertransference and that James did not appear to know his interventions were changing as a result of his desire to be liked. The supervisor used a process-oriented approach by asking James how he would define success in the relationship with the hope that James would make the discovery for himself. Upon reflection, James mentioned that success would be achieved if he knew the couple liked him. James and his supervisor spent the remaining supervisory time processing how James' approach might be different if he was not concerned with being liked by Tim. Further, the supervisor asked James to review his genogram prior to their next supervision session to identify where his need to be liked originated. During the next supervision meeting, James acknowledged that his need to be liked was a result of his disgruntled relationship with his father; he frequently sought the approval of other men. James and his supervisor began processing how their own supervisory relationship may have also been influenced by James' need for approval from other men.

Discussion

SDS provides a framework for supervisors to foster supervisees' professional growth and skill acquisition through a focus on the supervisory relationship. Supervisees value the supervisory relationship and use it as a measure of quality supervision (Worthen & McNeill, 1996). Further, quality supervision has been defined as one in which the supervisor displays warmth, empathy, and a nonjudgmental attitude (Borders & Brown, 2005; Martin, Goodyear, & Newton, 1987). SDS incorporates systemic supervision techniques, such as process-oriented supervisor approaches that address transference and countertransference issues that arise within the supervisory relationship and that may augment the supervisory relationship. The use of transference, countertransference, and parallel process within SDS supervision may help enhance the supervisory relationship because the supervisee feels more comfortable addressing issues in supervision (Ladany et al., 2000). Thus, ignoring transference and countertransference issues that arise may have the opposite effect and create unwanted tension within the supervisory relationship.

In addition to benefits within the supervisory relationship, using a systemic supervision approach that carefully considers the development of the supervisee may create a trusting counseling relationship between the supervisee and his or her

clients. Counseling students with more effective family-of-origin relationships correlates with increased counselor effectiveness (e.g., Trusty, Showron, Watts, & Parrillo, 2004; Watts, Trusty, Canada, & Harvill, 1995; Wilcoxon, Walker, & Hovestadt, 1989; Wolgien & Coady, 1997). Trusty, Showron, Watts, and Parrillo (2004) concluded that "perhaps counselor-trainees who are more real with themselves are more real with others and therefore more attractive (i.e., friendly, likable, sociable, and warm) in counseling" (p. 11). Supervisors of family counseling student interns can foster genuineness between trainees and their clients by utilizing an approach like SDS that works to increase supervisees' level of differentiation, while also considering their readiness to address family-of-origin issues contributing to transference or countertransference.

Ethical Considerations and Limitations

The use of systemic techniques in supervision creates inherent ethical considerations. For example, SDS supervision may resemble counseling with the supervisee. Thus, the SDS supervisor should not address family-of-origin issues in supervision that do not contribute to the promotion of professional self-awareness within the supervisee. The SDS supervisor can educate the supervisee about systemic supervision at the beginning of the supervisory relationship so that appropriate boundaries can be established immediately.

In addition to ethical considerations, limitations exist within SDS supervision. For example, although research findings support developmental levels of counselors (e.g., McNeill et al., 1985; Wiley & Ray, 1986), there is limited research to support the use of systemic techniques in supervision. However, the significant influence of a strong supervisory relationship (e.g., warm, empathic, and nonjudgmental attitude) in effective supervision with supervisees at all developmental levels has been supported (Borders & Brown, 2005; Martin et al., 1987; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 1993). Systemic supervision techniques, such as transference and countertransference, enhance the supervisory relationship (Ladany et al., 2000) and help prevent important supervisory relationship issues from being neglected.

Although not well researched, the use of systemic techniques in supervision has merit. Nevertheless, future research should focus on the use of systemic techniques in supervision. More specifically, research should seek to identify developmental characteristics of supervisees appropriate for professional self-awareness through family-of-origin exploration. Finally, outcomes research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of supervisory techniques on the well-being of the clients being seen by the supervisee (Holloway & Neufeldt, 1995). In addition to ensuring quality supervision is being provided to supervisees, outcomes studies may help identify the effect of supervision on clients' outcomes in counseling.

Conclusion

Supervision of marriage and family counseling student interns has traditionally utilized systemic techniques that mirror family systems counseling. Further, marriage and family counseling supervisors have yet to incorporate the principles outlined in developmental approaches to supervision. SDS is a supervision approach that integrates developmental components with systemic supervision. The aim of SDS is to help supervisees increase their level of differentiation, while also considering their readiness to address factors contributing to transference and countertransference. SDS also maintains a focus on the supervisor/supervisee relationship by suggesting that the supervisory relationship can be enhanced when supervisors employ systemic techniques while being mindful of supervisees' level of development.

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