

MOMENTS OF REAL RELATIONSHIP IN PSYCHOANALYTIC SUPERVISION

C. Edward Watkins Jr.

What role does the real relationship play in psychoanalytic supervision? While the real relationship's role has long been and continues to be considered with regard to psychoanalysis, it has received virtually no attention in the supervision literature. In this paper, using Horney's construct of the *real self* as conceptual anchor, I attempt to: (1) situate the real relationship squarely within the borders of the psychoanalytic supervision relationship; (2) examine the relevance of real relationship phenomena for the supervision experience; (3) provide some simple, ordinary yet meaningful examples of case dialogue that illustrate moments of real relationship in supervision; and (4) introduce the concept of real relationship rupture and consider its potential ramifications for and impact upon the supervisor-supervisee relationship. Just as ruptures can occur in the supervisory alliance, I propose that ruptures can also transpire in the supervisory real relationship, have the potential to reverberate throughout the entirety of the supervision experience, and depending upon how they are handled, can prove either constructive and relationally energizing and enlivening or enervating and eviscerating to supervision process and outcome.

KEY WORDS: Karen Horney's real self; supervision real relationship; supervisory real relationship ruptures; real relationship in psychoanalytic supervision; real self in psychoanalytic supervision; constructive forces.

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In this paper, I wish to examine the role of the *real (or personal) relationship* in psychoanalytic supervision. The *real relationship* has long been considered an integral part of the analyst-analysand relationship (Adler, 1980; Greenson, 1967, 1968; Greenson and Wexler, 1969; Menaker, 1942), and in the past generation of analytic scholarship, interest in and attention to that construct have dramatically increased practically and empirically (Couch, 1999; Duquette, 2010; Frank, 2005; Gelso, 2009a, 2011; Viederman, 1991). Relevance of the *real relationship* for psychoanalytic supervision, however, has largely been ignored; it has not crossed

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over from the analytic to supervisory situation. Yet for anyone who has assumed the position of either supervisee or supervisor, it is hard to deny the palpable presence of some sort of real or personal relationship between analyst and supervisory analyst. In what follows, using Horney's (1950) construct of the *real self* as conceptual anchor, I would like to explore the significance of the real relationship for the analytic supervision endeavor, provide some simple examples to illustrate its potential importance for the supervisory experience, and introduce the idea of real relationship rupture as a problematic event that can have negative impact on the supervision relationship. My subsequent discussion is grounded in two fundamental assumptions: (1) the psychoanalytic supervision relationship is tripartite in nature, consisting of the supervisory alliance, transference-countertransference configuration (including parallel processes), and real relationship; and (2) the real relationship serves a substantive, pivotal, and crucial complementary role in the supervisory process, with the power to ultimately enliven and fructify or deaden and stultify intrapsychic and interpersonal processes between supervisor, supervisee, and patient (Watkins, 2011).

THE REAL RELATIONSHIP AS REAL SELF MANIFESTATION

From where does the possibility of real relationship in supervision emerge? How are we to understand the real relationship as an affecting, impacting force in the psychoanalytic supervisory process? Horney's construct of the *real self* seemingly provides a most useful, instructive starting point from which to begin answering those questions. She considered the *real self* to be the "original force" or "central inner force" from which growth emanates. In a highly poetic rendering, she beautifully described the *real self* as follows:

... it provides the "palpitating inward life"; it engenders the spontaneity of feelings, whether these be joy, yearning, love, anger, fear, despair. It also is the source of spontaneous interest and energies, "the source of effort and attention from which emanate the fiats of will"; the capacity to wish and to will; it is the part of ourselves that wants to expand and grow and to fulfill itself. It produces the "reactions of spontaneity" to our feelings or thoughts, "welcoming or opposing, appropriating or disowning, striving with or against, saying yes or no." All this indicates that our real self, when strong and active, enables us to make decisions and assume responsibility for them. It therefore leads to genuine integration and a sound sense of wholeness, oneness. Not merely are body and mind, deed and thought or feeling, consonant and harmonious, but they function without serious inner conflict... little or no attendant strain. (Horney, 1950, p. 157)

In Horney's vision, the *real self* was deemed to be the center of authentic, genuine experiencing, action, and interaction—the integrating nucleus that breathed life, hope, and promise into personal and interpersonal space. Where the *real self* was “strong and active”, psychological health could indeed be expected to reign preponderant over non-health (i.e., the search for glory; Horney, 1950). It was viewed as a *constructive organizing center* that was proactive, protective, and buffering in nature and effect.

I would like to propose that Horney's *real self* can be especially valuable to our understanding of the supervisory real relationship. When manifested in supervision, the *real self* can also be seen as the source of authentic, genuine experiencing, action, and interaction between supervisor and supervisee. Constructive, vital and vitalizing in effect, it can be considered to provide the very heart or core that makes supervisory real relationship phenomena possible. Extrapolating from Horney, *real self* can be viewed as the *central inner force* that leads to supervisor/supervisee expressions where integration, wholeness, being *without serious inner conflict*, and *little or no attendant strain* are predominant. To my knowledge, the *real self* has not been considered relative to the real relationship in analytic supervision; Horney's construct will be used here to provide the substrate that underlies my subsequent discussion. I am contending that all real relationship considerations—to be most meaningfully and concretely understood and explicated—would be best anchored within a *real self* context.

THE REAL RELATIONSHIP: CONSIDERING ITS PLACE IN PSYCHOANALYTIC SUPERVISION

While Greenson's (1965, 1967, 1968, 1972, 1974, 1978; Greenson and Wexler, 1969) vision of the *real relationship* is not without criticism (e.g., Frank, 2005), I would like to specifically draw on his substantive contributions to inform my effort here for the following reasons: (1) his view seems highly consistent with and reflective of a *real self* conceptualization; (2) his multi-component perspective of the analytic real relationship incorporates what, in my opinion, are also two significant experiential dimensions in the supervision encounter—realism and genuineness (cf. Horney, 1950; Kelman *et al.*, 1953); and (3) his theoretical view has been extended to include additional dimensions of value (magnitude, valence, and Self or Other; Gelso, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2009a, 2011) and has begun to receive increasing empirical support (Ain and Gelso, 2008; Fuertes *et al.*, 2007; Gelso, 2006; Gelso *et al.*, 2005; Kelley *et al.*, 2010; Marmorosh *et al.*, 2008).

Defining the real relationship

In many respects, the concept of *real relationship* has proven difficult to precisely define; yet it has endured in analytic ideology seemingly because it captures recognized, felt experiences—essential to the treatment relationship itself—that resonate with many analytic practitioners. Greenson (1967) conceptualized the *real relationship* as follows:

The term “real” in the phrase “real relationship” may mean realistic, reality-oriented, or undistorted as contrasted to the term “transference,” which connotes unrealistic, distorted, and inappropriate. The word real may also refer to genuine, authentic, true in contrast to artificial, synthetic, or assumed. At this point, I intend to use the term real to refer to the realistic and genuine relationship between analyst and patient. (p. 217)

Thus, realism was viewed as the transference-free or undistorted element of the analyst-patient relationship; genuineness was defined as authentic relatedness between analyst and patient. While the *real relationship* could be conceptualized as discrete, Greenson proposed that it was interwoven throughout the whole of treatment—commingling with the working alliance (devoted to the *work* of treatment) and transference-countertransference experience (the distortions and defensive projections of both patient and analyst). Yet he never wavered in attributing a place of supreme significance to the *real relationship* in psychoanalysis: It existed from beginning to end, it was the bedrock upon which the entire analysis was built, and it operated silently but was loudly powerful throughout.

Much of the criticism with the concept of *real relationship* has tended to center around the word *real* itself (Couch, 1999; Wachtel, 2006). After all, what exactly does *real* mean? And who ultimately makes that determination? Struggle with the word *real*, however, is nothing new: “This is a complex problem with a venerable history in the annals of philosophy going back more than 2,000 years. Concerns over what can be justifiably claimed as real did not arise recently nor are they unique to the postmodern world. Some arguably fine minds, from Plato to Nietzsche, had a go at what claims... may warrant the label ‘real’ without being granted the final word” (Horvath, 2009, p. 274). We do not appear to be any closer to having that “final word” now.

And as Frank (2005) has also compellingly indicated, there is yet another issue with the *real* that derives from a past chapter in the history of psychoanalysis itself: “The ‘real’ concept relies on an anachronistic philosophical assumption of a discernable ‘objective’ reality and positions the analyst as arbiter of the real and unreal aspects of the patient’s experience” (p. 42). Postmodern psychoanalytic perspectives understandably have taken issue with that seeming conception of the analyst as a separate, supreme, and

infallible oracle of the *objective* and have pushed for a co-constructed, intersubjectivistic vision of the analytic encounter. While Greenson may have been ahead of his time in some ways (e.g., encouraging analysts to dosage interpretations, accommodate to special circumstances in patients' lives, and admit to any and all errors; Greenson and Wexler, 1969, pp. 36–37), the postmodern narrative on this matter is worth heeding. As Frank (2005) has stated, “every interaction of the analytic relationship, every analytic moment, can be usefully regarded as manifesting both past and present influences on both parties, and in that sense, at least, as being both real and unreal” (p. 34). Although that *reality* need not prevent our consideration of Greenson's concepts for psychoanalytic supervision, these postmodern criticisms can serve as useful cautions to guide our thinking in that process. For my purposes here, I will conceptualize the *real relationship*—as with the transference-countertransference configuration—as existing along a continuum that includes both real and unreal, non-distorted and distorted strands of experience. As indicated earlier, however, the preponderance of *real relationship* experiencing will be defined as tending toward non-distortion; conversely, the preponderance of transference-countertransference experiencing will be defined as tending toward distortion.

Applying the real relationship to psychoanalytic supervision

In terms of the *realism* component, the *real relationship* in psychoanalytic supervision can be viewed as giving voice to two crucial *real self* processes: (1) the supervisor's and supervisee's relatively transference-free, non-distorted, conflict-free intrapsychic and interpersonal experiences—perceptual, cognitive, affective, and behavioral—that occur as a part of the supervision relationship, either during or outside of the supervisory situation; and (2) the supervisor's and supervisee's relatively transference-free, non-distorted, conflict-free fantasies or internal experiences that are inspired by the supervision situation but occur outside of it (cf. Greenson, 1967). In terms of the *genuineness* component, the *real relationship* can be viewed as giving voice to: Authentic and true (as opposed to artificial or synthetic) relatedness that is manifested—either during or outside of the supervision situation—from supervisor to supervisee or from supervisee to supervisor (cf. Greenson, 1967). The *real relationship* construct, then, is relational at its core and always contains both Self and Other perspectives (see Gelso, 2011); that would be so not only for analysis but for analytic supervision as well. Some examples of *real relationship* phenomena or events in supervision—where the influence of the *real self* are readily reflected—include: Greetings and salutations, parting comments, shaking hands, tact, courtesy, friendly interest, self-expression, warmth, liking, “clicking,” trust, expressing

feelings about events that impact the supervisee's life (e.g., birth of a child, death of a parent), and the genuine and appropriate feelings the supervisor and supervisee experience toward one another as a part of the supervisory process (e.g., sadness over supervision's termination, happiness over supervisee successes; cf. Couch, 1999; Duquette, 1997, 2010; Freud, 1954; Freud, 1937; Gelso, 2002, 2009a, 2011; Menaker, 1942; Sharpe, 1930; Viederman, 1991). In my view, those *real self*, *real relationship* examples capture a sector of the supervision situation that, while seemingly critical to the effective functioning of the overall relationship, has yet to be given any consideration as an important dimension in its own right.

The check and balance of real relationship in psychoanalytic supervision

In one way or another, the *real* or *personal relationship* between analyst and patient has been a subject of potential concern since the very beginnings of psychoanalysis itself. I contend that *real* or *personal relationship* is also every bit as important to the process and outcome of the psychoanalytic supervision endeavor. Greenson, in my view, accentuated the *real relationship* because he wanted to recognize, celebrate, and legitimize the more conflict-free, non-distorted, transference-free possibilities within analytic patients—to depathologize what then was perhaps a tendency to too readily pathologize any and all patient expressions as conflict laden, distorted, and transference. His punctuation of *real relationship* phenomena provided a pivotal check and balance for the analyst-analysand relationship: Patients indeed had moments of realism and genuineness within psychoanalysis, and those moments deserved to be recognized as such and capitalized upon in the analytic relationship (Couch, 1999). The *real* or *personal relationship* gave attention to those relatively non-distorted relational (*real self*) experiences that lay outside the work of analysis (the working alliance) and the preponderantly distorted relational experiences of transference and countertransference; it was the missing complement to what was then a dualistic treatment vision. Once the *real relationship* component was added, this tripartite vision—*alliance*, *transference-countertransference configuration*, and *real relationship*—then offered us a much more complete picture of the analytic encounter.

Unfortunately, that tripartite vision has largely been absent from psychoanalytic supervision. We have lacked for the requisite check and balance there. Our vision of supervision has largely continued to be mired in a dualistic conceptualization that emphasizes alliance and transference-countertransference configuration only (e.g., Berman, 2000; Coburn, 1997; Dewald, 1987, 1997; Fink, 2007; Fleming and Benedek, 1966; Gill, 2001; Kernberg, 2010; Wallerstein, 1981; Werbart, 2007; Zachrisson, 2011).

Is the *real relationship* not also a crucial component of the analytic supervisory relationship? On the one hand, it may well be that supervisors have long recognized the importance of the *real relationship* for psychoanalytic supervision, incorporated that relational facet into their supervisory conceptualization and practice, and been fully aware of its ramifications for the totality of the supervision experience; on the other hand, however, we have virtually no mention of nor any attention given over to considering the implications of this construct in the supervisory context. From my perspective, that oversight bears correction.

We need a vision of supervision that acknowledges the significance of *real relationship* phenomena for supervisory conceptualization and practice, meaningfully integrates the *real relationship* into our current dualistic view, and meaningfully places the *real relationship* on a par equal to the learning alliance and transference-countertransference configuration. Extrapolating specifically from Greenson's (1967, 1968, 1972, 1974, 1978) thoughts about the *real relationship* in psychoanalysis and, more generally, from the substrate provided by Horney's conceptualization of the *real self*, we could maintain, then, that the real relationship in supervision: (1) endures from beginning to end; (2) is the constructive bedrock upon which the supervisor-supervisee relationship is built; (3) exerts a substantial influence upon the development and maintenance of the learning alliance in supervision; (4) exerts a substantial influence upon the unfolding and utilization of transference-countertransference processes in supervision; (5) serves as needed complement to and check and balance for our contemporary alliance-transference/countertransference dualism; and (6) is the forever silent yet forever loudly present and powerful foundation of change in the supervisory context. In its own way, psychoanalytic supervision can be conceptualized as a broad-based, developmental-educational process that, to a great extent, is a cognitive, affective, and behavioral *corrective experience* for supervisees (extrapolating from Alexander and French, 1946, and Scaturo, 2010). Some corrective examples that would apply specifically to the supervision situation would include: Helping supervisees learn to cognitively let go of inappropriate views on treatment (e.g., rescue fantasies); learn to affectively tolerate ambiguity or tolerate *optimally frustrating* patients; and learn to behaviorally apply facilitative analytic skills (e.g., the how of mutative interpretation). The *real relationship*, I assert, is a *sine qua non* component of and pivotal contributor to the successful prosecution of such a corrective supervision relationship and its ultimate outcome. Although long neglected and overlooked in psychoanalytic supervision, the real relationship—when added to the learning alliance and transference-countertransference constellation—provides us with a more complete tripartite vision of supervision that seemingly better addresses the elements of

real, unreal, distortion, and non-distortion between supervisor and supervisee and their potential impact on the *supervision-in-treatment* and *treatment-in-supervision field* (Filho *et al.*, 2007).

EXAMPLES OF REAL RELATIONSHIP IN PSYCHOANALYTIC SUPERVISION

In what follows, I would like to provide a few simple, brief illustrative examples of *real relationship* interactions in supervision dialogue. These examples are quite ordinary, non-dramatic, and can be even commonplace; yet as I see it, they constitute a vital part of the supervisory experience and are integral to the overall functioning of the supervision relationship itself. Furthermore, as I hope to consider shortly, *real relationship* interactions—if ignored, mishandled, or dismissed as unimportant and inconsequential—have the potential to prove disruptive, even deteriorative, to the tenor of the psychoanalytic supervision enterprise.

The subsequent examples of supervisory dialogue reflect moments of *real relationship* transactions (as opposed to specific instances of behaviors, such as greetings or warmth). While the supervisory *real relationship* can be enacted from supervisee to supervisor or vice versa, these interactions focus upon supervisee *real relationship* expressions directed toward the supervisor and the supervisor's response. These snippets of dialogue have been reproduced from memory post session. While they should be viewed as recollective approximations at best, they each capture the essence of the supervisor-supervisee interaction and its possible supervisory significance.

Example 1: The breakup

The supervisee, a young, talented female in her late twenties, was being supervised by a seasoned male supervisor in his early sixties. She was relatively new to the treatment endeavor, had been seeing patients for about a year, and had been actively working within an object relational framework. She was also in her own analytic treatment and, as a result of that, had been made increasingly aware of how her personal issues intersected with the patient care that she provided. At the beginning of a supervision meeting, as she neared the end of her first year as a treatment provider, the following interaction occurred:

Supervisee (SVEE): What I'm doing here is very, very important to me.

Supervisor (SVOR): Yes, very important.

SVEE: And there's something that has happened that could affect my work, and I felt that it was something about which I would like for you to know.

SVOR: All right. Please feel free to tell me.

SVEE: I've been with my boyfriend for about three years now, and we have had plans all along to be permanent. When I moved here for training, he moved across country with me so we could remain together. That was how seriously committed that we both were—or thought we were. But all that has not been well for some time now, and we've split up. I'm coping fairly well I think. I've seen this coming. Yet right now, I realize that I am carrying this loss with me, and it hurts a lot. So I'm asking you to please keep that in mind as we review my cases. I don't want what has happened to compromise my work, but I know that it well could do so. I would like for you to help me see what I may not be able to see for myself right now.

SVOR: I'm really sorry to hear that your relationship has ended. It clearly sounds like it was very important to you both for a long time, and I'm sure you are hurting quite a bit with what has happened.

SVEE: Yes.

SVOR: But I appreciate your concern for your patients and your wish to continue to provide them with your best. With your breakup in mind, I'll be happy to help you keep careful watch on how your work is progressing with your patients and monitor closely what you are doing in session. I know how passionate you are about your work and providing high quality care.

Comment: In this situation, the supervisor acknowledged and validated the supervisee's concern, expressed regret, and indicated that he would follow up as the supervisee requested. The supervisee's concern was treated as a realistic, genuine expression and was responded to as such by the supervisor.

Example 2: The proposal

The supervisee, a young male in his late twenties, was being supervised by a male supervisor in his mid fifties. The supervisee had been working with two long-term patients in analytically oriented treatment, had done a very nice job overall across the course of his patients' treatment, and had handled and been highly receptive to supervision throughout. After about six months into the supervisory relationship, the following interaction occurred at the beginning of their supervision meeting:

SVEE: Before we get started today, I've got something important—not supervision related—that I'd like to share with you. Is that all right?

SVOR: Yes, of course. What would you like to tell me?

SVEE: My girlfriend, Julie, and I are going to be getting married! I proposed over the weekend, she accepted, and we'll be setting a wedding date soon. We've been going out for quite some time now and have been thinking

about this for a while. It just seems so right to both of us. I'm really excited and am letting some people know about our good news. You've been so helpful to me this year and have taken a real interest in my career. This was a piece of important news that I wanted you to know.

SVOR: I think that that is wonderful news. Congratulations to you both! I'm sure that you are excited. I'm happy for you. And I appreciate you telling me. Thanks for letting me know.

Comment: The supervisor shared in the elation of the moment with his supervisee and expressed his appreciation for being told about the good news. The supervisee in turn very much appreciated that his supervisor took time to share in his joy.

Example 3: The termination

The supervisee, a young female in her early thirties, had been supervised by a female supervisor in her mid fifties. The supervisee had worked with two long-term patients for over a year. She seemed quite gifted analytically and had helped her patients considerably over the course of their treatment. As her year as a supervisee drew to a close, she and her supervisor met for their last scheduled session—to review progress, reflect upon areas of needed growth, and to terminate their supervision relationship. The following interaction occurred as their session concluded:

SVOR: In my view, you have really committed yourself to this whole analytic endeavor—being the best that you could be, putting in the time to make that happen, and letting your passion and dedication shine.

SVEE: I have truly felt myself grow here. I think so much of it had to do with you respecting me, believing in me, and giving me the freedom to come into my own. I can't begin to tell you how much having that space to move around and find myself analytically has meant to me here. I always felt that what we did here was highly constructive, and you helped me to see potentials and possibilities that I never knew existed.

SVOR: Good. I'm glad that that has been the case. I'm happy to know that what we have made and done here together has helped you grow as an analyst in some way. That is what I had hoped would be so.

SVEE: I will miss you. And I'll miss the constructive support that you have consistently made available to me. I thank you for helping me move ahead in my analytic training.

SVOR: And I'll miss you, too. Your attitude and approach to our work together has been exceptional. I thank you as well.

Comment: A successful supervision was drawing to a close. Both parties expressed that they would miss each other and the beneficial professional

relationship that they had enjoyed. The supervisor acknowledged the supervisee's feelings and affirmed her in all that she had done over the course of their supervision relationship together.

Some thoughts about the examples

In examining these three examples, why would it be important to consider what indeed appears to be this rather ordinary, non-treatment-related material in the supervisory encounter? What would be the significance of responding to and recognizing these matters as a part of the psychoanalytic supervision experience? While I realize that varying analytic interpretive considerations could be brought to bear upon these brief examples (e.g., speculating about the presence of supervisee dependency or narcissistic needs), I present these instead as some possible ways in which *real relationship* phenomena can be manifested in the supervisory situation—where realism and genuineness, non-distortion, and conflict-free mentation, affect, and behavior (*real self* manifestations) can predominate the supervisor-supervisee interaction. In each example, an important personal issue from the perspective of the supervisee was raised (e.g., a breakup, supervision termination, marriage), and that issue was addressed accordingly by the supervisor. Such situations are by no means uncommon, are very much a part of most any supervision experience, and will constitute a portion of the interactions that routinely occur between supervisee and supervisor. Furthermore, as indicated earlier, it may well be that supervisors have long recognized the importance of the *real relationship* for psychoanalytic supervision and incorporated that relational facet into their supervisory conceptualization and practice. But within our current vision of supervision, supervisees' (and supervisors') realistic and genuine supervision expressions (for example, that occur outside the working alliance itself) lack a voice. In my view, we need to make room within our current conceptual scheme for real relationship behaviors, events, and phenomena and their potential impact on the psychoanalytic supervision situation.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROBLEM AND POSSIBILITY OF REAL RELATIONSHIP RUPTURES IN PSYCHOANALYTIC SUPERVISION

These types of *real relationship* issues and interactions—deceptively simple, non-dramatic, unsurprising, and even expected—merit particular supervisor attention because, in my clinical experience, they have the potential to reverberate loudly throughout the supervision relationship and significantly impact its tone and tenor. Appropriate supervisor response to such *real relationship* matters (as in the preceding examples) can favorably affect the

supervisor-supervisee bond, whereas a dismissive or inattentive supervisor response can have an unfavorable, even potentially disastrous, effect on the supervision relationship. In the latter situation, I propose that a sort of *real relationship* rupture can occur, wherein a tear that originates in the *real relationship* gets actuated and the entirety of the supervision relationship can be accordingly affected. Thus far, the theoretical construction and empirical study of ruptures and their repair have focused exclusively on the working alliance (e.g., Eubanks-Carter *et al.*, 2010; Muran *et al.*, 2010; Safran *et al.*, 2009; Safran *et al.*, 2008). But I am suggesting that breaks or tears can also occur in and originate from the *real relationship*.

A *real relationship* rupture, much like Safran and Muran's conceptualization of working alliance rupture-repair processes, could be profitably conceptualized as a sort of: "... strain or breakdown..." "deterioration in the quality of relatedness..." "deterioration in the communicative situation," "failure to develop a collaborative process from the outset" (Safran *et al.*, 2009, p. 210; cf. Safran *et al.*, 2008).

For instance, if we return to our three supervision examples, how could these interactions—if they had proceeded differently—have resulted in ruptures that emerged from the *real relationship*? Supervisor responses that in some way ignored, minimized, or dismissed the genuine expressions of the supervisee (e.g., through rigidity, arrogance, or close-mindedness; Damsa *et al.*, 2010) would in all likelihood have substantially increased the possibilities of a real relational break. Moments of supervisee joy, heartache, or concern that routinely go unrecognized or are subjected to *over-analysis* can have a festering presence in supervision. In making this observation, I am not calling for supervisors to suspend their attention to transference and countertransference processes in the supervision relationship; but I am asking that we make room for the realities of the *personal* or *real relationship* in psychoanalytic supervision. To some extent, supervision involves the humanity of teacher and student touching each other—or, as Slavin (1998) has put it, a process of mutual influence and vulnerability between parties. As supervisors, we have the privilege to share to some degree in the growth and development, agonies and ecstasies, and triumphs and tragedies of our supervisees. The success of supervision process and outcome seems to largely be affected by our ability to willingly and appropriately enter into, engage in, and facilitate that supervisee growth process in its totality. Over the course of psychoanalytic supervision's history, differing approaches to the supervisor's stance in supervision—patient-centered, analyst-centered, or relationship-centered—have been presented (Frawley-O'Dea and Sarnat, 2001; Gordan, 1996; Lane, 1990; Wallerstein, 1981; Zaslavsky *et al.*, 2005). While the supervision stance that I am describing here would seem most consistent with a relationship-centered

approach, genuine *real relationship* supervisor response would not seem inconsistent with any supervisory position. The *real relationship* and its supervision implications, then, would seemingly cut across the patient-centered, analyst-centered, or relationship-centered perspectives and their theoretical substrate (i.e., classical, ego psychological, object relational, or self-psychological).

From my clinical viewpoint, it is useful to think of *real relationship ruptures* as: (1) potentially affecting, interacting with, and reverberating throughout the supervisory alliance and transference-countertransference configuration; (2) varying in their magnitude and relational impact, from minor, negligible to major, irreparable; and (3) providing points or opportunities of transition whereby growth or deterioration possibilities in the supervision relationship become increasingly ascendant (cf. Safran *et al.*, 2001, 2002, 2008, 2009). Thus, *real relationship ruptures* can be for better or for worse—all depending upon how they are addressed in supervision. Sufficiently problematic ruptures: (1) can have a positive, enhancing, even regenerative, impact upon the supervision relationship when successfully repaired; and (2) can have a negative, disruptive, even deteriorative, impact on the supervision relationship if their repair is ignored or proves unsuccessful (cf. Safran *et al.*, 2001, 2002, 2008, 2009). A minor, negligible *real relationship rupture* may involve, for instance, a simple misunderstanding between supervisor and supervisee that can be easily corrected and has minimal to seemingly no relational impact. Conversely, a major and potentially irreparable *real relationship rupture* could readily emanate from flip-pant, intrusive, or insensitive remarks (e.g., sexist in nature) that repeatedly betray and reflect a supervisor's inner reality to the supervisee from the outset of supervision. Perhaps, then, we could profitably think of a rupture event much like a "germ": (1) in some cases, it would be of such insufficient impact that it affects us hardly if at all in supervision and requires little to no attention; (2) in other cases, it would be of such sufficient impact that it has the potential to infect and cross-contaminate the supervisory alliance and the whole of the supervision relationship if left unaddressed, with the worst-case scenario being eventual breakdown and collapse; and (3) where a sufficiently affecting germ event is successfully addressed, it has the potential to serve a strengthening, protective, corrective function that contributes to and boosts the condition of the supervisory system as a whole.

How might the process of *real relationship rupture and repair* unfold in psychoanalytic supervision? There unfortunately is no empirical precedent for answering that question. But as I have attempted to consider this matter conceptually and clinically, *real relationship rupture and repair*—in a manner consistent with the alliance rupture-repair process—often seem to follow a confrontation or withdrawal strategy (cf. Safran *et al.*, 2008).

Where supervisor-perpetrated (or even supervisee-perpetrated) ruptures occur, the aggrieved party tends to either speak up constructively or aggressively or disengages (advance versus retreat). But from my observations and clinical scrutiny of supervision process, disengagement/withdrawal is often the strategy of choice for which supervisees opt, at least initially. The power differential between supervisor/supervisee and the supervisor's charge of evaluating the supervisee may be the reasons that make that strategy seemingly more probable and appealing. Fears of retaliation understandably become all the more concerning for supervisees because supervisors often possess evaluatory authority. Any repairs of *real relationship ruptures* would ultimately involve a process whereby the unacknowledged is acknowledged, the unprocessed is processed, the ignored or minimized is given its due, and feelings of hurt, disappointment, or anger are affirmed and jointly worked through. Admittedly, any repair process—which will require some measure of supervisee and supervisor insight, openness, willingness to speak up, honesty, and receptiveness—can be both taxing and testing. The real danger for any supervision experience, however, lies in the undressed rupture that ultimately stagnates, stultifies, and enervates the promise and possibility of the supervisor-supervisee relationship.

Although my thoughts are clinically based, I caution that they lack empirical foundation or other clinical corroboration. However, I believe that they at least reflect conceptual/practical considerations that merit attention and review. The *real relationship* indeed seems to have consistently been the much ignored, neglected, even forgotten sector of the psychoanalytic supervision experience; the concept of *real relationship rupture* has understandably been ignored as well. Perhaps, to borrow from Gelso (2009b), “their time has come” for critical examination as potentially substantive elements of supervision process, practice, and study. I present these constructs as complementary to our current psychoanalytic supervision focus on learning or supervisory alliance and transference-countertransference configuration. Indeed, the *real or personal relationship*—reflective of and guided by *real self* experiencing—appears to be very much a part of the psychoanalytic supervision endeavor, and in this paper, I have wished to introduce and explore that possibility.

CONCLUSION

To more fully and completely conceptualize and apprehend the supervision experience, I propose the use of a tripartite system that includes: The *supervisory alliance*, *transference-countertransference configuration*, and *real relationship*. Over the course of supervision's one-hundred year history, the *real relationship* has gone virtually unconsidered as a part of the psychoanalytic

supervision endeavor. Yet the *real relationship*, I maintain, provides the *anlage* (see Couch, 1999) for and is integral to whatever supervision is to become. With this paper, I have introduced the possibility of rupture and repair in the supervisory *real relationship*. All supervision ruptures need not occur only in the alliance; I have proposed that they can also occur in the *real relationship* and ultimately prove highly impactful in their overall effects. While the supervision alliance and transference-countertransference configuration matter greatly in our understanding of the supervision experience, the *real relationship* matters greatly as well: It appears to be a crucial component in our efforts to better understand, conceptualize, and successfully prosecute the psychoanalytic supervision relationship, provides the matrix out of which the whole of the supervisor-supervisee bond emerges, and deserves a place of preeminence in our current vision of supervision. Horney's construct of the *real self* was used here to provide conceptual anchor for our *real relationship* considerations. The *real self* appears to offer an eminently useful and usable means by which to frame and apprehend *real relationship* manifestations in psychoanalytic supervision.

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