

BRIEF REPORT

THE SUPERVISION GENOGRAM: A TOOL FOR PREPARING SUPERVISORS-IN-TRAINING

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The purpose of this article is to introduce the supervision genogram as a training tool that can be implemented in supervisor training. The supervision genogram is a unique training tool that may be used to enhance supervisors'-in-training self-awareness and understanding of the supervisory process. Psychological trainers who are responsible for training supervisors may also find that the supervision genogram can aid them in assessing the needs of supervisors-in-training and in creating corresponding supervisory environments and experiences. A detailed account of how to develop and process the supervision genogram is given. An overview of supervision genogram symbols and a completed supervision genogram are also provided. Implications for training, such as flexibility of application, ethical and professional issues, and developmental considerations for using this tool are discussed.

Keywords: clinical supervision, professional psychology education, profes-

sional psychology training, supervisors-in-training, supervision training

Supervision is becoming a prominent role among professional psychologists in academic and practice settings (Goodyear & Guzzardo, 2000; Watkins, 1997) and is considered a functional competency of professional practice (Falender et al., 2004; Rodolfa, Bent, Eisman, Nelson, Rehm, & Ritchie, 2005). Psychologists-in-training are often encouraged to assess their reasons for becoming a therapist, skill level, past experiences, and identify training needs and goals (Madson, Chapman, & Wood Barcalow, 2005). Supervisors-in-training should be encouraged to do the same. Hawkins and Shohet (2000) state that a necessary first step in the process of becoming a supervisor is self-assessment with a specific emphasis on reflecting on past experiences. This reflection can include thinking about the relationship between feelings as a new supervisor and those associated with the first clinical experience as well as reviewing one's various supervision experiences as a trainee or professional under supervision.

Several tools have been used to aid self-reflection of psychology trainees. For example, the genogram has begun to be used in training psychotherapists (Magnuson & Shaw, 2003) to develop cultural awareness and sensitivity (Hardy & Laszloffy, 1995), explore ethical decision making processes (Peluso, 2003), and enhance comfort in working with spirituality (Wiggins Frame, 2001). Despite the advances that have been made in applying the genogram in the training and supervision of psychotherapists, little emphasis has been placed on using the genogram in preparing supervisors-in-training. Thus, the purpose of this article is to introduce the supervision genogram as a training tool.

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The Supervision Genogram

The supervision genogram is a symbolic representation of supervisees' supervision relationships and experiences. The goal of the genogram is to highlight complex patterns and influences, which may promote self-reflection and self-awareness as well as understanding of the supervisory process. More specifically, this training tool may help supervisors-in-training recognize the influences and impact of their prior supervision relationships on their current professional roles and relationships.

The supervision genogram originally evolved out of a 2-day supervision continuing education training seminar with therapists. The first author, while leading the seminar, noted that throughout the first day of training, the majority of participants frequently discussed the influence of their previous supervisors on their emerging roles as supervisors. This led him to study of several training genogram articles after the training (e.g., Wiggins Frame, 2001) and adaptation of similar protocols, symbols, and self-reflection questions for supervision. The training tool was introduced during the subsequent training day and was met with enthusiasm from participants. Since that initial application 3 years ago, we have personally found the supervision genogram to be helpful in a number of different training settings, including: (a) supervision courses, (b) individual supervision of supervision, (c) group supervision of supervision, and (d) supervision training seminars (e.g., continuing education seminars).

Approximately 40 supervisors-in-training have been trained with this approach. Their anecdotal feedback has been largely positive, and may give some insight into why this approach appears effective. Most reported that this training tool helped them gain greater insight into how their past experiences have shaped the way they conceptualize and approach supervision. These supervisors-in-training have stated that completing the drawing helped them to form visual conceptualizations, allowing them to more readily identify and connect themes and patterns across their experiences.

Role of the Facilitator

The facilitator of the supervision genogram process should attempt to create an open and supportive environment (e.g., Peluso, 2003)

where the supervisor-in-training will feel comfortable sharing and discussing his or her experiences. Instructions and expectations for completing the supervision genogram are articulated at the onset of the exercise. A facilitator needs to be prepared and available to answer questions, consult on the construction of the supervision genogram, and to help process any negative emotions that might surface. Similarly, the facilitator may help the supervisor-in-training make meaning and interpretations of the supervision genogram and apply insights garnered to current or future supervision relationships.

Instructions for Completing the Supervision Genogram

Facilitators can instruct that the exercise and subsequent discussion be completed in a time-limited manner (e.g., 30 minutes for construction and 30 minutes for discussion) or leave the exercise open-ended. All professional psychology supervision relationships are to be noted. Time should be taken to discuss how the various components of the supervision genogram could be diagrammed (e.g., symbols and supervisor demographic information). A brief written summary, overview genogram symbols, or example of a completed supervision genogram can be given as handouts. Facilitators should also inform the supervisor-in-training that he or she would be asked to reflect upon and to discuss his or her drawing to identify themes and patterns across supervisory relationships and experiences. To avoid potentially awkward situations (e.g., hearing negative comments directed toward a named colleague), the facilitator may choose to ask the supervisor-in-training to use pseudonyms for former supervisors.

Components and Symbols of the Supervision Genogram

The process of constructing a supervision genogram begins by drawing a horizontal line across the page, which denotes a timeline of training experiences listed in chronological order. Practicum supervisors can be drawn above the horizontal timeline and work supervisors below the timeline. The supervision genogram also utilizes symbols to describe aspects related to persons and relationships, such as demographic information of supervisors (e.g., race/ethnicity). The nature of the supervisory alli-







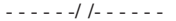
ance can be denoted through lines (e.g., two solid lines for a close relationship). The dates in which the supervisory relationship occurred should be written along the timeline (e.g., 8/05–6/06). Additionally, the type of setting and city and state where supervision took place should be noted (e.g., “CMHC, Chicago” for a Chicago community mental health center). The supervisor-in-training may also list all modes of supervision and indicate the frequency of supervision (e.g., “1x/wk” for weekly). Descriptors regarding the supervisor’s style (e.g., level of directiveness) and evaluation process (e.g., gave structured feedback) can similarly be noted. Contextual variables, such as critical events that may have influenced the supervision experience and/or the supervisory alliance (positive or negative) must also be taken into account (e.g., supervisor medical illness impacted quality supervision). See Table 1 for further details on symbols. Though we would recommend that the majority of these symbols and components be utilized (e.g., because they may give supervisors-in-training a broader un-

derstanding of diverse supervisory processes), at minimum, a timeline, deomographic information of supervisors, and nature of supervisory relationships should be noted.

Reflection Questions

After completing the basic structure of the genogram as indicated above, the facilitator may discuss the supervision genogram with the supervisor-in-training. Examples of questions that facilitators might find helpful include: (a) What factors largely shaped the focus of your supervision experiences (e.g., case presentations)?; (b) What personal/professional characteristics of your supervisors do you admire and want to emulate or dislike and do not wish to emulate?; (c) How were differences in opinion and/or conflicts between supervisor and supervisee handled?; (d) How did these particular supervisory experiences add to your developing/emerging model of yourself as a therapist and/or supervisor?; (e) How did culture impact your supervisory relationships (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender,

TABLE 1. Supervision Genogram Symbols

Demographic information of supervisor	
Gender:	Female  Male 
Nature of supervisory alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normal  Close  Conflictual  Distant/poor  Terminated prematurely 
Professional context (where supervision occurred)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACAD Academic department CMHC Community mental health center or agency HOSP Hospital/VA hospital UNIV University counseling center PRIV Private practice UTC University training clinic RES Residential treatment facility COR Correctional facility MIL Military medical center MED Medical center/clinic SCHL School district/system
Modes of supervision utilized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IND Individual supervision GRP Group supervision CO-TX Co-therapy A/V Review of audio/video taped tx sessions LIVE Live supervision or shadowing PRES Case presentations SUP Supervision of supervision

age, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, etc.)?

Clinical Supervision Case Example

I introduced the supervision genogram to William, an advanced doctoral student, during our initial supervision of supervision session. I provided instructions, examples, and prompts (e.g., “What role did culture play?”) to help him complete his supervision genogram. Once his supervision genogram was complete (see Figure 1), I asked him to take a few moments and reflect on his genogram, and then share his initial reactions.

As he described his previous supervision relationships I was able to gain insight into his prior experience and understanding of supervision. For instance, he brought attention to the fact that most of his supervisors were “cognitive therapists,” but did so with some hesitancy in his voice. I found that his primary therapeutic theoretical orientation was psychodynamic and he was concerned that I may discourage him from sharing his psychodynamic conceptualizations with supervisees. At this point, I was able to discuss my therapeutic theoretical orientation (reality therapy) and to assure him that both perspectives would be respected. I also used this moment to help William see how he could help his supervisees discuss

their clients from their theoretical orientations whereas challenging them to expand their clinical conceptualizations. We went on to discuss and process his other reactions, explore the impact of prior supervision experiences, and discuss what he hoped to gain from our supervision of supervision relationship.

Over the course of the semester William and I worked together, we frequently referred back to his experience of creating and discussing his supervision genogram. On the whole, the supervision genogram provided William and I with a strong foundation for our supervisory relationship and helped us begin to navigate the nuances of supervision.

Implications for Training

Self-Awareness and Self-Reflection

The supervision genogram provides supervisors-in-training with a symbolic representation of their supervision experiences, and may help promote self-reflection and self-awareness that could potentially facilitate the integration of previous supervisory experiences. This exercise might also provide supervisors-in-training with an opportunity to critically examine and decide which characteristics, behaviors, and techniques imple-

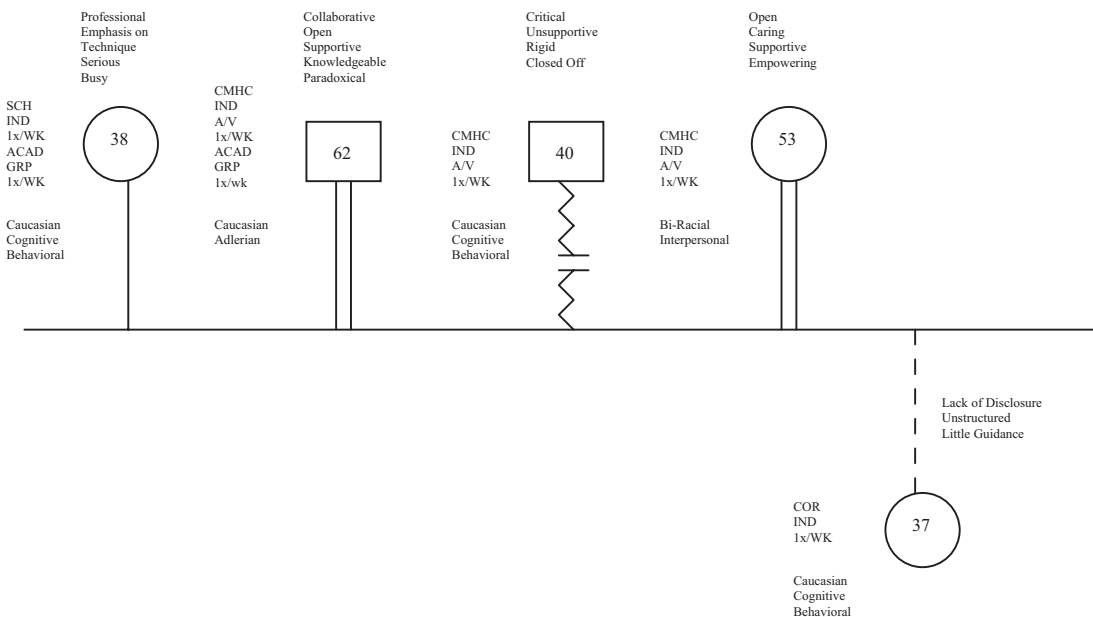


FIGURE 1. Supervision genogram.

mented by former supervisors they found helpful and wish to adopt as supervisors. This is especially important as past supervision experiences have been found to affect how a supervisor provides supervision (Pranata, 2006). The supervision genogram could possibly also be used to avoid problematic situations by identifying negative supervision experiences (e.g., supervisor tried to conduct therapy instead of supervision with a supervisee) and for providing corrective experiences. Negative supervision experiences have been shown to affect supervision relationships, including supervisees' clinical skills, training satisfaction, and career aspirations (Ramos-Sanchez, Esnil, Goodwin, et al., 2002). Examples of counterproductive supervision experiences identified in the literature include supervisors: (a) dismissing supervisees' ideas and emotions (Gray, Ladany, Walker, & Ancis, 2001), (b) not being invested in the supervisory alliance, (c) avoiding responsibility for conflictual actions (Nelson & Friedlander, 2001), and (d) displaying racial microaggressions (Constantine & Sue, 2007). Further, such experiences have been found to have an impact on future supervision experiences (Burkard, Johnson, Madson et al., 2006), and therefore, need to be explored in new supervision situations.

Flexibility of Application

Another potential strength of using the supervision genogram is that it may be applied to a number of different training scenarios, such as one-on-one situations, group situation, or "homework" situations (e.g., the exercise is completed on supervisor-in-training own time). Likewise, the instructions, components, and reflection questions are highly adaptable, and can be modified and changed as needed. For instance, a supervisor-in-training could be asked to only diagram cross-cultural supervision experiences to highlight a lack of diversity experiences.

Ethical and Professional Issues

There appear to be some salient ethical and professional issues to bear in mind to maximize the use of this tool. It is possible that, in the course of completing their supervision genogram, sensitive information may arise about supervisors, training locations and the like. If this occurs, it may create discomfort for the supervisor-in-

training, the facilitator, or both. Ellis (2006) suggested that facilitators might expect critical supervision incidents such as relationship topics, feelings of competence, and personal issues to surface. Though in some situations it may not be possible to mask the identity of a supervisor, it is recommended that supervisors-in-training use pseudonyms or initials for the supervisors depicted in their supervision genogram. Similarly, the potentially revealing nature and potential risks (e.g., becoming aware of perceived negative information about oneself) of this exercise need to be disused from the onset. To reduce potential problems, the facilitator may find it helpful to obtain both verbal and written consent.

If ethical violations are reported, the facilitator should attempt to collect more information, consult the American Psychological Association (2002) *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct*, and seek consultation for developing a plan for addressing such issues. Further, Ramos-Sanchez, Esnil, Goodwin, et al., (2002) suggest "... [ethical, legal, and multicultural] violations be handled swiftly by the training director or program director who has the authority to help the student and remediate the situation" (p. 201). Use of the genogram can raise ethical issues such as dual relationship and confidentiality issues. Therefore, when ethical issues arise, it will be vital that the facilitator model ethical behavior for this supervisee (Barnett, 2007).

Developmental Considerations

There is evidence that the acquisition of supervision skills is a developmental process (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004; Steven, Goodyear, & Robertson, 1998; White, 1998). As a result, those training supervisors will need to consider the appropriate application of the supervision genogram across the developmental process of becoming a supervisor. For example, Stoltenberg and colleagues (1998) suggested that beginning supervisors are often at more advanced developmental stages as a counselor, and depend highly on their recent or current supervision experiences. In these situations, use of the supervision genogram may facilitate the trainee's understanding of their supervision experiences and how these experiences are shaping how he or she provides supervision; important information for supervisors-in-training to be aware of (Campbell, 2006). Still, on the whole, the supervision genogram will likely be

most optimally used with supervisors-in-training who are in more advanced stages of their training or program of study (e.g., upper level doctoral students, predoctoral interns or postdoctoral interns) because of the fact they likely have had a variety of training experiences on which to reflect.

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