

Social Work Students' Feelings and Concerns about the Ending of their Fieldwork Supervision

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This qualitative study examines the feelings and concerns of 80 social work students at the ending of their fieldwork supervision. The findings show that students who described good relationships reported mixed or ambivalent feelings about the ending, deriving from their warm feelings of attachment, on the one hand, and from their drive to grow and develop, on the other. Those who described poor or fair relationships were spared feelings of sadness or loss, but they were also left without good feelings and with little ability to express their bad ones. The paper offers practical suggestions for improving the supervisory process and ending the fieldwork supervision.

Keywords: Ending; Termination; Field Supervision; Social Work Students; Supervisory Relationship

The acquisition of knowledge through hands-on experience is central to social work education, especially to the training of social work clinicians and caseworkers. It is commonly understood that practice learning is necessary to enable students to integrate theory and practice and to contextualize learning. It is the forum in which the beginning professional develops core skills and competence and a critical and reflective approach (Parker, 2007). The supervisor, or practice teacher, is pivotal to these pursuits (Doel and Shardlow, 2005).

This places fieldwork and the accompanying supervision at the heart of most social work education. Accordingly, considerable scholarly attention has been devoted to the processes, problems, and issues in fieldwork and supervision (Munson, 1993; Shulman, 1993; Kadushin and Harkness, 2002). With respect to the process, a great deal of scholarly attention, mainly theoretical but also some empirical, has been paid to the initial phase, when the supervisory contract and relationship are established

(Marziali, 1988; Qborn and Davis, 1996) and to the working phase (Kaslow, 1986; Tosone, 1997).

Almost no scholarly attention, however, has been paid to the ending of the supervisory relationship. This omission contrasts with the existence of literature, albeit limited, on the termination of the relationship with clients by both professionals (e.g. Fortune *et al.*, 1992; Anthony and Pagano, 1998) and student interns (e.g. Gould, 1977; Brill and Nahmani, 1993).

The omission is particularly striking in view of the great importance ascribed to this ending in textbooks on supervision. Textbooks on social work supervision emphasize that the ending of the relationship is a time for evaluation, closure, and working through the separation (Germain and Gitterman, 1996; Clow, 1998; Murdin, 2000; Johnson and Yanca, 2001). They highlight the need to complete placements efficiently and, as far as possible, not to leave unfinished business (Ford and Jones, 1987). Shulman (1993) points out that the absence of efforts to fulfill what he refers to as 'termination tasks' may have particularly deleterious consequences where the supervisory relationship has not been good. Similar observations are found in textbooks on psychotherapeutic (Ekstein and Wallerstein, 1972; Hess and Hess, 1984) and psychiatric (Dewald, 1965, 1987; Ralph, 1980) supervision.

Nonetheless, only two papers published to date relate to the ending of the supervisory relationship. One is a theoretical paper by Wall (1994), which urges that the termination of the supervisory relationship be used to model the proper termination of trainees' relationships with their clients. Wall (1994) points out that insufficient attention to the process of terminating the supervisory relationship impedes trainees' management of the termination of their therapeutic work with their clients. The other is a qualitative study by Gould (1977), which focuses on the ending of the relationship between 10 social work student trainees and their clients. In this study, Gould notes in passing that most of the trainees described the end of their supervision as an unpleasant experience, marked by feelings of anxiety, depression, or uncertainty about their future; that some spoke of a sense of loss at leaving their supervisors; and that a few felt that they still needed their supervisors.

The current study aims to learn more about students' subjective experience of the ending of the supervisory relationship. This is important in view of the possible after-effects of how that ending is carried out and experienced. Although these endings have not been studied, it is not unreasonable to assume that their nature and quality may affect the students' entrance into their next supervision and, as Wall (1994) suggests, their termination of their relationships with their clients. Learning more about their subjective experiences should help us locate difficulties in and, where necessary, to improve the ending of the supervisory relationship.

The study rests on the view of ending of supervision as a parting or separation. The literature on other types of partings or separations shows that their nature and after-effects tend to be closely related to the quality of the relationship as a whole. For example, the literature on divorce shows that where the marriage was characterized by hostility and conflict, the divorce is likely to be as well and that the divorced spouses are often left with feelings of anger and hostility (e.g. Vannoy, 1995; Amato, 2000).

Studies of bereavement consistently show that the functioning and emotional adjustment of the surviving spouse and child are much better where the prior relationship was good than where it was poor or ambivalent (e.g. Klass *et al.*, 1996; Wortman and Silver, 2001). Studies of the termination of the social worker/client relationship show that clients who reported a good relationship with their therapist felt better at the termination of the relationship and reported greater improvement as a result of the intervention (Penn, 1990; Fortune *et al.*, 1992; Quintana and Holahan, 1992; Bostic *et al.*, 1996). Thus, the present study was designed with the assumption that both the nature and effects of the ending of the supervision might be associated with the quality of the supervisory relationship prior to the ending.

Because the study was carried out in Israel, a few words are in order about social work fieldwork and supervision in the country. In the absence of centralized regulations or guidelines, fieldwork training is the responsibility of the country's schools of social work. Each school sets the terms for the training of its own students; selects the agencies where they are placed; and chooses, trains, and oversees the field supervisors. Aside from minor differences, the practices across schools are virtually identical, making it possible to describe a single pattern.

Since the BSW is the entrance level degree in Israel, fieldwork training begins in the first year of study and continues every semester until graduation. It is carried out alongside parallel courses in intervention methods as well as regular one-on-one, out of class meetings with the instructor. In addition, each class has a tutor, an experienced social worker who serves as the liaison between the students and the field supervisor. Prior to each placement, the instructors and tutors provide the students with information as to what to expect from their placement and supervisors.

The fieldwork training is carried out in a large variety of public sector agencies (e.g. municipal welfare departments, hospitals, mental health clinics, probation services, etc.), with students moving to a different agency—and different supervisor—every year. Each student receives an hour-and-a-half of supervision per week, beginning in the first weeks of the academic year and lasting until the end of the year. Thus, the supervisory relationship lasts for about eight months per year.

The field supervisors are agency social workers, most of them long standing professionals. To work as supervisors, they must have a minimum of five years of social work experience and undergo a year-long training course given by the school of social work in question. Their key responsibilities encompass educating their trainees in the application of the assessment and intervention skills they learn in the classroom, socializing them in the values of the profession, helping them to develop their professional identity, and regularly assessing their abilities and conveying the assessments to their tutors.

Method

Sample and Procedure

The subjects were students in a special two year program for persons with at least a Bachelor's degree in another field. The program awards its graduates a BSW, which

enables them to work as licensed professionals in Israel. It resembles American Masters in Social Work programs in that students do fieldwork during both the first and second years of study.

The sample consists of 80 social work students at a major university in Israel, 57 students in the first year of the program and 23 in the second year. The disparity stems from the fact that the questionnaires were administered in class, and one of the second year instructors was unwilling to use class time for this purpose.

The students' demographic data were obtained from the fieldwork office of the School of Social Work. The participants ranged in age from 25 to 45 ($M = 28.2$; $SD = 8.86$). Most (91%) were women. The first year students did their fieldwork either at a municipal social welfare bureau, a government rehabilitation centre, or a general hospital. Most of the second year students did their fieldwork at an ambulatory psychiatric clinic or a psychiatric hospital. Each student had a caseload of between five and eight clients a year.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected two weeks before the end of the academic year. The students were presented with a form that opened with the following statement: 'The ending of supervisory relationships and separation from the supervisor may raise many thoughts and feelings. Please describe them'. This statement was followed by three questions:

1. How would you describe your relations with your supervisor over the course of the year?
2. What issues concern you in your separation from your supervisor?
3. What are your feelings at the separation from your supervisor?

The students were given 20 minutes to answer the questions on the form provided. The questions were answered anonymously. No identifying data were requested.

A qualitative approach was chosen as the best means of learning about the students' subjective feelings and concerns. Open ended questions were asked in order to obtain students' spontaneous responses, unbiased by the prior assumptions that inevitably enter into more specific questions.

The written, anonymous format was chosen over face-to-face interviews as better suited to preserving the anonymity of both the students and their supervisors. Given the students' dependence on their supervisors for their grades, there was concern that they would be reluctant to speak freely to an interviewer, even an external interviewer who did not know them, if they had negative thoughts or feelings about their supervisor. There was also concern that asking them to divulge their feelings and concerns to an interviewer could cause them to feel that they were 'tattling' on their supervisors. It was thus felt that the written format would enable them to answer the questions more candidly and fully than an interview.

In line with the phenomenological method (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Spinelli, 1989), two coders (a social work researcher and the author) each separately performed

cross-case thematic content analysis by identifying and coding themes across the different responses. We first independently read each student's responses line-by-line, writing notes alongside the text to identify initial categories that emerged. In the second separate reading of the transcripts, we gradually identified subcategories related by content. Thus, we each collected and reduced cases or 'instances' and then identified and coded core themes (Strauss, 1987). We then compared the two separate analyses, discussing differences until obtaining agreement on the themes. Inter-rater agreement was 95%. Statements of contention are not included in the findings.

The initial expectation was that the students' 'concerns' and 'feelings', each tapped by a different question, could be analyzed separately. It turned out, however, that the responses did not reflect a consistent distinction. The students wrote of their emotions along with their concerns and of their concerns along with their emotions. The analysis does not impose an artificial distinction, but organizes the data to reflect their various responses to the termination of the supervisory relationship.

Findings

Most (73%) of the respondents wrote that they had either a very good (23) or good (35) relationship with their supervisor. Of these, 11 distinguished their good professional relationship from their personal relationship with their supervisor, which they described as correct but not warm. The remainder of the students (27%) wrote they had a fair (14) or poor (nine) relationship. Two of the students wrote that they had changed supervisors in the middle of the year (one because she didn't get along with the supervisor, the other because the supervisor left the agency) and reported on their relationships with both.

Since the students' responses varied consistently with the quality of their relationship with their supervisor, the responses at the ending of good or very good relationships will be reported separately from those at the ending of fair or poor relationships. Also, since the students did not clearly distinguish between their feelings and concerns, the presentation will not try to impose a distinction but will simply refer to their 'responses'.

Responses to the Ending of Good (35) or Very Good (23) Supervisory Relationships

Most of the good or very good relationships that the students reported were characterized by warm feelings of attachment. Although only some of the students actually used this term, it was apparent from most of their responses that the supervisor had become a significant person for them. Many of the feelings and concerns they reported were closely related to the difficulty of ending a relationship of attachment. One student made the point quite clearly: 'The phase of the separation is a bit difficult emotionally because there was a certain attachment' (#29).

Their most common response to the ending, found in around two-fifths (24) of the students who reported a good or very good supervisory relationship, was ambivalence. As one student put it succinctly: 'I feel ambivalent about the ending of a good

relationship' (#44). Most commonly, sadness at parting was reported alongside happiness and/or relief that the year full of obligations, especially report writing, had come to an end:

I feel both happiness and sadness. Happiness because the difficult year is coming to an end, and I won't have to write any more reports, at least for the next three months. Sadness because she really was there for me, felt me, saw my needs even if I didn't verbalize them. She contained and supported me. It's really hard for me to cut this tie. (#23)

I feel sadness mixed with happiness and relief. On the one hand it was very good to talk to her and on the other hand there won't be any more reports, to my great joy. (#29)

A variant on this mix, repeated by several students, was the desire not to leave the supervisor along with the desire to move on to new experiences:

I had a wonderful year. I feel that I don't want to leave the agency and go over to another supervisor. Along with these feelings, I'm interested in getting to know new work places and in working with different populations. (#20)

I feel a longing and desire to continue with the same supervisor in another place. (#19)

Close to half the students (22) who reported good or very good supervisory relationships also reported various sorts of difficulties in separating from their supervisors. With only two exceptions, all of these were first year students. Twelve expressed the desire to remain in professional contact with their supervisors.

I'd like to keep on consulting with him on professional matters even after we part. (#14)

I'd like her to keep accompanying me and serve as a listening ear in professional life. (#2)

Six reported strong feelings of sadness or loss stemming from either the quasi-therapeutic relationship they had formed with their supervisors or from experiencing their supervisor as parental figures:

I opened myself up to her since her method is very therapeutic. (#2)

Professionally, it's a loss, so much so that I thought of suggesting that she become my therapist, but I think this will remain in the realm of fantasy. (#3)

Our relationships were close . . . I feel a little sad. He also fulfilled a father role from time to time. (#10)

We had a very personal relationship. Sometimes I felt that she's a sort of a mother—supportive, helping and accepting. (#37)

These statements highlight the danger that students may experience the supervisory relationship as more than purely educational or professional. It is difficult to determine from the statements exactly where the supervisor pushed the boundaries of the relationship and where the student fantasized or wished for a more personal or therapeutic relationship.

Four wrote that they could not relate to the ending because of their personal difficulties with separation:

As in every separation I don't really connect to it because it's easier for me not to. (#38)

I tend to forget or ignore the moment of ending, actually ignore it . . . both with my clients and with her. (#46)

Certain responses cannot be described as attachment related. One was the concern, voiced by 12 students, with the supervisors' evaluations of them:

I'm occupied with how I was as a supervisee and how my supervisor evaluates me. (#39)

I'm interested in how my supervisor views my work. (#35)

Another, also reported by 12 students, was that the supervisor served them as a professional model:

My supervisor is a model for me of an excellent professional with good human relationships. (#2)

I feel that I internalized her model as a social worker and human being and I'm sure it will help me in the future. (#66)

Finally, of the 11 students who distinguished the quality of their professional relationship with their supervisor from their personal one, five wrote about this distinction in relaying their feelings at parting: all of them wrote of appreciating their supervisor but not feeling emotionally attached and not expecting to miss her or him:

She gave me a lot, I have a lot of respect for her, but the relationship isn't warm . . . Her guidance did a lot to shape me professionally, and she'll stay with me to a great extent, but I won't miss her or feel her loss on a personal level. (#21)

Our relationship was pleasant and open, but with clear boundaries . . . What we had thus far was interesting and professional, but not something I feel the need for in the future. (#34)

Responses at the Ending of Fair or Poor Supervisory Relationships

The fair or poor supervisory relationships were described as cool, distant, and lacking in candor, empathy, and containment on the part of the supervisor and/or loaded with the student's unexpressed feelings of anger and frustration. In contrast to the students who described good or very good supervisory relationships, those who described fair or poor relationships pointedly avoided describing their feelings directly.

Instead, virtually all the supervisees who described an unsatisfactory supervisory experience expressed concern with the question of how to tell their supervisors that they were dissatisfied. According to their accounts, they were deterred either by the fear of hurting the supervisor or fear of the supervisor's retaliation. Some of them worried that they would not be able to achieve proper closure and be left with their anger and sense of injury unresolved.

I'm very occupied with how to tell her the things that bothered me without hurting her. I suppose I won't say anything, only the compliments ... (#13)

I'm quite overwhelmed with negative feelings and especially concerned with how it will end ... I'm occupied with what exactly to say to her. Is it my place to criticize her? And how much was I at fault for not saying anything till now? ... I don't know yet how I'll talk to her about it or if I will at all. (#16)

I feel that the entire supervisory process ... has left me with very terrible feelings. I feel a very strong desire to open things up and to tell my supervisor everything I feel. But, to my regret, she won't write the final evaluation until after our summing up ... So, on the one hand, I'm afraid to talk frankly about my feelings and, on the other, deep inside I feel that I owe it to myself, so as to free myself from my bad feelings and to work them through with the supervisor. If I don't ... all my bad feelings will remain and won't let me rest. (#28)

Responses to the Ending of both Good and Bad Relationships

Three motifs were identified in the responses of both those students who reported good or very good supervisory relationships and those who reported fair or poor relationships. These are relief, the sense that the ending was not carried out properly, and thoughts about the future. All three motifs took on different colorings among the students who described good supervisory relationships and those who described poor supervisory relationships, however.

Relief was mentioned by somewhat under a fifth (14) of the students. As noted above, those who described good or very good relationships included the sense of relief along with their sadness at parting and wrote mainly of feeling relieved that they would no longer have to write detailed reports of their sessions with their clients. In contrast, those who described fair or poor relationships simply wrote the word 'relief', as though the source of their relief—no longer having to meet with the supervisor—was obvious and required no elaboration.

Thirteen percent of the students (10) reported that their supervisor did not allow them to work through the separation. Five of them described the omission as a significant flaw in an otherwise good relationship:

I'm wondering whether there'll be room for the ending. I feel that my supervisor hasn't made room for this stage. (#73)

My supervisor confessed that the matter is difficult for her and that she evades it. (#34)

Finally, over a quarter (25) of the supervisees expressed thoughts about the upcoming year. Most of the students who considered what the future would bring had good current experiences of supervision (22). The first year students among them (16) expressed fear that their next year's supervision would not be as gratifying or hope that it would:

Since my first experience as a supervisee was very good, I'm concerned about next year. What will be? Will I connect with the new supervisor? Will I be challenged professionally? (#19)

I'm full of hope that next year's supervisor will be as containing, flexible, patient and loving as this one. (#10)

The second year students expressed either trepidation about how they will manage as professionals on their own (three) or the conviction that they will manage well, thanks to what they had learned from their current supervisor (three):

I learned a great deal this year, but I see how much I don't know. I'm scared at the thought that I won't have a supervisor to back me, guide me, and supervise me. (#40)

I'm left with a satisfying experience of good supervision, fruitful learning, and a good professional model that will stay within me a long time. I feel happy that I'll be able to take her with me to my [professional] work. (#56)

Of the students who had fair or poor supervisory experiences, only three referred to their future supervision. All of them hoped for a corrective experience:

I'm left feeling frustrated over the waste of the fieldwork year, that I could have gotten a lot more out of. I hope that other students won't be placed there [with the same supervisor] and hope I'll have a corrective experience next year. (#72)

Discussion

The findings show that the students' responses to the ending were closely linked with the quality of the supervisory relationship as a whole. For the most part, students who reported good or very good relationships and those who reported fair or poor relationships expressed very different feelings and concerns. Most of the students who described their relationship with their supervisors as good or very good reported mixed or ambivalent feelings at ending, deriving from their warm feelings of attachment, on the one hand, and from their drive to grow and develop, on the other. For these students, feelings of loss and sadness at the parting were mixed with a sense of pleasure and closeness in the good relationship, accompanied by pleasurable anticipation of further professional experiences and development. The students who described a good professional relationship but only a correct personal relationship did not show evidence of attachment and did not express loss or sorrow; but they did convey positive feelings about their supervisors (e.g. respect, appreciation) and also looked forward to moving on to the next stage of their professional life. The students who reported a poor or fair relationship were spared feelings of sadness or loss, but were left without good feelings and with little ability to express their bad ones. Virtually none of them wrote directly of their anger, frustration, or pain, and those who expressed relief that their supervision had come to an end refrained from telling why. This finding is consistent with observations (Rosenblatt and Mayer, 1975) and findings (Hutt *et al.*, 1983) that students often remain silent and otherwise avoid dealing with unsatisfactory supervisory relationships.

The findings further suggest that the difference in the relationship quality and the parting it enabled can have implications for the students' professional development. Most of the students who reported a good/very good relationship were able to separate

and move on, while those who reported a fair/poor relationship were not. Those who had a good/very good relationship were around three times as likely to express thoughts about the year to come as those who had a poor/fair relationship (38% versus 13%), and the nature of their thoughts about their futures differed as well. Most of those with a good/very good supervisory relationship were forward looking. They were eager to move on to new professional experiences and were concerned with the quality of the supervision they would have or the quality of the work they would do in the upcoming year. Those with a poor or fair relationship were stuck in time. There were no expressions of eagerness to move on. None of them referred to their future as professionals. Very few referred to their supervision the following year, and those who did expressed hope for a reparative supervisory experience that would correct their current negative one.

The difference in their future orientation seems to be anchored in what each group was left with at the end of the supervision. Both those who wrote of warm feelings of attachment and those who wrote of a satisfying learning experience seem to have been left with an internalized view of the figure of the good supervisor, which they could take with them to their subsequent professional endeavors and which enabled them to let go. Those who wrote of an unsatisfactory supervisory experience were left with their bad feelings unexpressed and unresolved. They were highly conscious of carrying bad feelings inside themselves, frustrated that they could not express them, and troubled by the lack of closure. They were also occupied with what they could tell and could not tell their supervisors. They noted various impediments to disclosure: fear of hurting their supervisor, uncertainty about whether they had the right to criticize their supervisor, uncertainty as to how to go about the criticism, and fear of retaliation since they were dependent on the supervisors' evaluation. The load of bad feelings that they retained seems to have kept the students who carried them from letting go and moving on.

It should be noted that the impediments to expression experienced by students with poor supervisory relationships existed despite various provisions for student feedback in the program. At the start of each placement, supervisors invite the new trainees to come to them with any doubts, complaints, or dissatisfactions that arise regarding their fieldwork and supervision. The tutors inform the students that they can always come to them with their complaints if they find it difficult to approach their supervisors or if they are dissatisfied with their supervisor's response to their complaints. The tutors then help those students find ways of approaching their supervisors or, if this proves too difficult, join them in a three way meeting to discuss their dissatisfactions. Furthermore, in the course of each semester, the tutors hold three meetings with each student, one at the beginning of the semester, one in the middle, and one towards the end, in which they explicitly ask how the student is doing is supervision. Nonetheless, students with poor supervisory relationships seem to have been unable to utilize these provisions effectively. It can be assumed that their sense that it was not safe to take risks impeded what they could learn in their supervision (Doel and Shardlow, 2005).

Among both groups of students, the end of the academic year brought widespread relief. Some of the students with good/very good supervisory relationships explained that they were glad to be free of the burden of constant report writing. For all the

students, the sense of relief probably points to the inherent difficulty posed by the practical and emotional demands made of them in their field supervision.

Notwithstanding their relief, almost all the first year students who described good/very good relationships with their supervisors expressed reluctance or difficulty in parting from them. Around half conveyed their reluctance in the form of the wish that they would be able to continue to consult or talk with their supervisor in the future. The wish was invariably expressed with reference to some vague future, never with reference to the following year, when they knew that they would move on to another supervisor. The other half ascribed their reluctance to part either to the therapeutic or quasi-parental relationship they had developed with their supervisor or to difficulties they themselves had with separations. The reservations seem to be anchored in the fact that, as first year students, they were experiencing their first supervision and facing their first separation from a supervisor. Their reservations seem to reflect their early stage of professional development and the fact that they are still uncertain about their abilities, still feel the need for secure support, and have not yet internalized the difference between professional relationships and personal ones. They may also reflect the fact that the students were writing shortly before the end of their last supervisory session—that is, before the actual separation took place. For the most part, their reservations show their natural pre-separation anxiety (Clow, 1998). At the same time, for about half of these students, the natural difficulty of separating under the circumstances was intensified by personal difficulties with separation in general or by the therapeutic or parental coloring their relationship with their supervisor had reportedly assumed.

A small proportion of both first and second year students complained that their supervisors did not make room for them to discuss and work through the separation. This complaint was made both by students who had reported good/very good relationships and those who had reported fair/poor relationships. The students' complaints support claims by Wall (1994) and findings by Gould (1977) regarding the unsatisfactory manner in which field supervisors terminate their relationships with their supervisees.

The study has three main limitations. One is that while most of the first year students filled out the questionnaire, only around a third of the second year students did. As noted in the Method section, this is because one of the second year instructors was unwilling to distribute the questionnaire in class time. It cannot be ruled out that a somewhat different picture would have been obtained with a larger second year sampling.

A second, and more significant, limitation is that the questionnaires were administered before the final supervisory sessions. This was done because the supervisory relationship and the class instruction ended at about the same time, so that the students would no longer have been around after their last supervisory session. We cannot be sure that precisely the same picture would have been obtained after the actual end of the supervisory relationship.

A third limitation is that the study was carried out among students at only one school of social work. Even though all the schools of social work in Israel follow the same training program and principles, further study is required to determine

how generalizable the findings are to other social work students, whether in Israel or elsewhere.

These limitations notwithstanding, this study contributes to the very limited literature on the ending of the supervisory relationship. In fact, it is the only study in the last 30 years that examines students' experiences of the ending of their supervision in any depth. The study findings convey the variety and intensity of the feelings aroused in the ending, as well as the difficulty of the process for all the students, but especially those in their first year. They also confirm the close relationship posited between the nature and emotional effects of the ending and the quality of the supervisory relationship until then. They show that while those students who had good relationships with their supervisors were able to focus on their own feelings and futures in the course of the parting, those who had poor relationships were fixed on the supervisor, their unexpressed feelings, and their lack of closure. These findings underscore the importance of proper closure of the supervisory relationship (Ford and Jones, 1987; Shulman, 1993; Germain and Gitterman, 1996; Murdin, 2000; Johnson and Yanca, 2001), whatever the quality of the relationship until then, but especially when it was not good.

Suggestions for Practice and Research

The findings have several practical implications for field supervisors and classroom instructors or tutors, as well as for others involved in the training process. To begin with, the findings highlight the difficulty of separation from the supervisor and the need to help students to navigate it (Wall, 1994). The possibility that the separation may be difficult, especially for students in their first supervisory relationship, should be raised with the students in advance. Students who have particular difficulties with separation should be identified and helped to become aware of how these difficulties may affect their parting from their supervisor. Students' wishes to continue the relationship with the supervisor should be acknowledged, but it should also be made clear that holding on to the relationship would impede the formation of any subsequent supervisory relationship. Finally, since the students' testimonies suggest, as does the literature (Shulman, 1993), that at least some supervisors have their own difficulties with parting, it is important to provide supervisors with assistance in this area.

The findings also point to the need to address the quality of some of the supervisory relationships. Judging from the students' reports, some of the relationships seem to have crossed the boundaries of supervision. Some students experienced the relationship as therapeutic, some experienced it as parental. Both experiences have been noted in the literature (Rosenblatt and Mayer, 1975; Itzhaky and Sztern, 1999). Supervisors should be alert to these possibilities. Where they identify them, they should examine whether and how their own behaviors contributed to the students' experience and how much the experience was anchored in the students themselves. They should also take steps to clarify the boundaries of supervision with the students and to make sure that they are not breached again.

More prevalent was the problem of poor supervisory relationships. Although most of the students reported good or very good supervisory relationships, somewhat over

a quarter—much the same percentage as in the United States (Kissman and Van Tran, 1990; Alperin, 1996; Knight, 1996; Giddings *et al.*, 2003) and the United Kingdom (Evaluation of Social Work Degree Qualification in England Team, 2008)—reported poor or fair relationships. It is important to address their problems. Efforts should be made, preferably early on in the supervisory relationship, to identify and resolve the difficulties. Where the relationship cannot be improved, the student might be offered the opportunity to switch to another supervisor. Where the student remains with the same supervisor and the relationship remains fraught to the end of the supervisory period, supervisors should openly acknowledge that the relationship has not been good and attempt to engage the student in an honest conversation about what went wrong (Shulman, 1993). Where necessary, they should be offered guidance or counseling to help them do so. Where the supervision ends without an honest conversation, the students should be given an opportunity to express their bad feelings in another forum, so that they are not left carrying them in the full force of their irresolution.

In general, the findings suggest that it is worth providing field supervisors with ongoing guidance and support to help them with the supervision process in general and the ending in particular. The means may be individual and/or peer group supervision, as well as liaison with the students' tutors or class instructors. The aims should include helping the supervisors to handle dilemmas that arise in the course of the supervisory process, dealing with conflicts with their supervisees, and bringing the relationship to a satisfactory closure.

Help should also be provided to students who had poor supervisory relationships which they were not able to resolve before the end of their placement. At present, students can provide feedback on their placement and supervisor on structured forms filled out after the completion of each placement. They can also discuss the good and bad aspects of their supervision at the end of year meeting held with their tutors and instructors to identify their supervision needs for the next placement. More is needed, however, given the serious consequences of poor supervisory relationships. Among other things, students should be helped to examine how and why the relationship went wrong, including their own contribution, and to work through the bad feelings it left.

Future research is recommended to further explore the issues raised in this study. Among other things, closed question quantitative studies should be undertaken to obtain more details about the endings, as well as to better distinguish between the students' concerns and their feelings. In addition, the study could be continued over the entire period of the students' field training in order to track changes and examine developments in students' perceptions of their supervisors and of the ending of the supervisory relationship.

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