

## **Field Instructor Supplemental Reading**

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## **Criteria to Evaluate Quality of Educational Supervision**

1. Is the focus of the session clearly established at the outset? By whom?
2. Are you prepared? Has your student come prepared?
3. During the session, can you adapt your teaching style to the student's learning style? Is this made explicit?
4. How do you and the student stay focused?
5. Do sessions achieve the mutually-stated purpose? Is this made explicit?
6. Is your student able to present ideas and feelings easily? Able to disagree with you or have an alternative point of view?
7. How comfortable are you in giving straight, honest feedback? In making your negative attributions public? How able is your student in accepting criticism?
8. What are the effects of the differences or similarities on your relationship with your student (gender, age, ethnicity, etc.)?

## Elements of Effective Feedback\*

Given the importance of feedback for learning in the field placement, it is important that feedback is provided in ways that will be accepted by students.

- The goal of feedback in field instruction is learning.
- Students in field are expected to make mistakes and errors in judgment.
- Students can only correct mistakes and improve their practice if these mistakes are identified and suggestions are provided for improvement.
- Field instructors, as educators, must provide critical and constructive feedback to students in order to facilitate learning, to promote ongoing improvement and growth.

**While feedback is a necessary element of supervision, feedback that is needlessly harsh or insensitive can cause damage to the supervisory relationship, limiting the potential for learning and improvement.**

1. Clear Guidelines for Performance
  - Effective feedback must be preceded by clear guidelines of what the field instructor expects from students in terms of their performance.
  - Without these guidelines, student may feel they are being unfairly criticized as expectations for their performance were not made clear.
2. Direct Observation
  - Feedback is best received when it is based on direct observation of student's performance, rather than comments from others.
3. Empathy
  - Students are likely to response well to feedback when they believe their field instructor understands them
  - It is important to analyze situations from your student's perspective to try and understand his/her actions and to then communicate this understanding to your student.
4. Timeliness
  - Feedback is most effective when it is provided immediately following the action it concerns.
5. Regularity
  - Feedback should be given after every direct observation of student's performance.
  - When feedback is provided regularly, students will expect this and be more open to discussing their performance.
6. Balance
  - Feedback is best received when it is balanced with both positive and negative comments.
  - It is often best to begin providing feedback by identifying some of the positive elements of the student's performance, and the addressing the areas that need improvement.
7. Conciseness and Directness
  - Feedback should be clear and east to understand.
  - Specific and concrete suggestions for change should be provided.
8. Follow up
  - Effective feedback involves regular follow-up on the student's use of the feedback.
  - When suggestions for change or improvement are provided, tasks and assignments should be developed that offer the student the opportunity to utilize the suggestions. This allows the student to correct mistakes and practice new skills.

\*Alan J. Dettlaff, 2003, *From Mission to Evaluation: A Field Instructor Training Program*, Council on Social Work Education, Alexandria, Virginia.

## Essential Social Work Knowledge, Values and Skills

### Instructions

This handout provides a list of the essential social work knowledge, values, and skills that students are generally taught in a social work curriculum

Use this handout as a reference and as a reminder for the theory that should be integrated into each practice experience in which your students participate.

### Social Work Knowledge:

- Diversity
- Human Behavior and the Social Environment
- Populations-at-risk and Social and Economic Justice
- Research
- Social Welfare and Policy Services
- Social Work Practice and Interventions

### Social Work Values:

- Competence
- Dignity and Worth of the Person
- Importance of Human relationship
- Integrity
- Service
- Social Justice

### Social Work Skills:

- Attending Skills
- Building Rapport
- Clarifying
- Confrontation
- Contracting
- Educating
- Empathetic Communication
- Establishing Goals
- Focusing
- Identifying Tasks
- Minimal Encourages
- Paraphrasing
- Partializing
- Probing
- Reflecting Feelings
- Reframing
- Reviewing and Evaluating
- Seeking Concreteness
- Starting Where the Client Is
- Summarizing
- Terminating Skills
- Verbal Following



## *Framing the Experience: The Developmental Stages of an Internship*

*Internship is like a diamond, in that it is multifaceted; it is also like a roller coaster with its highs and lows.*

*Allowing the stages to happen allows the intern to learn and have positive learning experiences.*

### STUDENT REFLECTIONS

Each intern's experience is unique, and yours will be, too. You may have an experience that's different from those of other interns at the same placement or from any other previous field experiences you have had. Placement sites differ, too; you may be in a seminar with peers who are doing very different work, with very different groups of people, than you are. We continue to be amazed and enriched by the diversity of experiences that interns have; it is one of the factors that makes working with interns gratifying, even after many years. Over time, though, we have noticed some similarities that cut across these various experiences. Some of the concerns and challenges that most interns face seem to occur in a predictable order. Our experience, plus our study of other stage theories, has yielded our own theory of internship stages (Lacoursiere, 1980; Sweitzer & King, 1994, 1995).

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### THE DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE MODEL

*The focus (of the week) has been for me to normalize my feelings and allow the process to happen.*

### STUDENT REFLECTION

There are five developmental stages of an internship: Anticipation, Disillusionment, Confrontation, Competence, and Culmination (Table 2.1). The stages are not completely separate or discrete; concerns from earlier or subsequent stages can often be noticed in any of the stages. However, certain concerns and issues are apt to be particularly prominent during each stage, along with associated feelings or affect.

Each stage has its own obstacles and its own opportunities. You will have certain concerns during each stage, and to some extent, you must resolve those concerns in order to move forward and continue learning and growing. The process of resolving the concerns is also a learning experience in and of itself. In each stage, there are important tasks that will help you address the concerns; however, we cannot predict how quickly you will move through the stages.

An important distinction for understanding the stages is that between morale and task accomplishment (Lacoursiere, 1980). The term *morale* refers to the interpersonal and intrapersonal tone of your experience at the agency. High morale is characterized by positive feelings about yourself, your work, and the agency. The tone is one of hope, optimism, and enthusiasm, and there is movement toward goals, even in the face of obstacles. As much as you would probably like to have high morale at all times, that is not usually what happens. The good news is that morale can often be recovered when it drops, and there is great learning in the process that only occurs if you fully experience both the drop and the recovery.

The term *task accomplishment* refers not so much to the specific tasks assigned by the placement site, but to the attitudes, skills, and knowledge that you hope to acquire. Of course, there may be considerable overlap between the tasks you are given and your learning goals. Here again, you might hope that the growth of this dimension would follow a steady, linear, upward path, but both our experience and some research suggest that this is not the case (Blake & Peterman, 1985). There will be periods when you are learning and growing at an incredible pace. There will also be periods where you feel stuck, and you may be tempted to think you aren't ever going to get where you want to go or that you aren't learning anything. You are always learning, though, or at least the opportunity is always there; paying attention to what you are learning rather than dwelling on what you are not will help you get back on track.

As we mentioned earlier, your rate of progress through the stages is affected by many factors, including the number of hours spent at the agency; previous internships or field experiences; your personality; the personal issues and levels of support you bring into the experience; the style of supervision you receive; and the nature of the work you do, including the emotional issues stimulated by a particular client population.

### *Stage 1: Anticipation*

*Before I read this chapter, I thought that I was the only one experiencing these anxieties.*

*This stage reminded me of my first year in high school and college. I just wanted to be accepted and didn't know how to do that. Although I am starting to gain a sense of what is expected from me in the internship, I am still wondering what*

*staff members and clients think of me. Do they think I am stupid, lazy, ignorant, etc.?*

#### STUDENT REFLECTIONS

As you look forward to and begin your internship, there is usually a lot to be excited about. Students often eagerly wait for an internship for several semesters; it is your best chance to actually get out there, do what you have wanted to do, and make a contribution to others. For most interns, however, along with the eagerness and hope, there is inevitably some anxiety. It may not be very visible, even to you, but there are enough unknowns in the experience to cause some concern and anxiety in anyone.

For interns, this anxiety generates the first set of concerns, which generally center on the self, the supervisor, clients, and coworkers. We often refer to this as the "What if...?" stage because interns wonder about things like: What if I can't handle it? What if they won't listen to me? What if they don't like me? or, What if my supervisor thinks I know more than I really do? You will probably be concerned about what you will get from the experience and what it will really be like to work at this site. Many interns wonder whether they can "really do this" and what will be expected of them.

Some interns report fears that they are not competent, that they have gotten this far only by great luck, and that in their internship they will surely be found out. You may also wonder about your role; you are not in a student role while at the placement, but you are not a full-fledged staff member either. Depending on your personal situation, you may also be concerned about your family and the effect that your participation in such a demanding experience will have on them.

You are going to interact with a number of people during your internship, and it is natural to wonder what to expect from them and whether they will accept you in your new role. You may, for example, be unsure of the role and responsibilities of the site supervisor; you will be unusual if you don't wonder what your supervisor will think of you and whether he or she will care about you. Those working directly with clients inevitably wonder about how they will be perceived and accepted by clients and just what kinds of behaviors and problems clients are going to exhibit. Finally, most interns are concerned about the reception and treatment they will receive from agency staff members. You may also wonder how you are going to manage the other responsibilities in your life and who is going to be there to support you.

The level of task accomplishment at this time is often relatively low, meaning that you may not be learning the specific things you went there to learn, and that can be frustrating. What is most important at this stage, however, is that you learn to define your goals clearly and specifically and begin considering what skills you will need to reach them. You must also develop a realistic set of expectations for the experience. Since you have not yet actually experienced the internship, but have probably thought and maybe heard a lot about the agency where you will be working, it is inevitable that you will make assumptions, correctly or incorrectly, about many aspects of the internship (Nesbitt, 1993). Some of these assumptions come from stereotypical portrayals in the media of certain client groups (such as the mentally ill) or agencies (such as detention centers); others may come from your own experience with certain issues or problems. As much as possible, these assumptions and expectations need to be made explicit and then examined and critiqued. Finally, you need to work on be-

ing accepted by and developing good relationships with your supervisor, coworkers, and clients.

### Stage 2: Disillusionment

*Issues concerning doubt and confrontation are conflicting for me. I cannot imagine having my expectations crushed...*

STUDENT REFLECTION

Sooner or later, you will probably reach a time when you are not as certain or as positive about your internship as you would like to be. You may find that you are having trouble getting up and going to the internship or that you are mumbling under your breath or complaining to friends. It is an unusual but not unheard of intern who does not experience some kind of disappointment at some point. Consider these two very different perspectives on this experience:

*The most critical learning incident of the week was by far the decision to review the stages...most particularly stage 2...dissatisfaction...it was right on. It was important because it reassured me that my feelings of confusion, frustration and the emotions were normal...essential in keeping the intern in touch with reality during [the] internship. It allows me to relax and allow the experience to be true and legitimate. Previously I had thought of "where am I going with this...how will this work?"*

*This stage was interesting to me because I could not relate [to it]—I love getting up in the morning for this internship and going on with more education. I have never, so far, complained about it, even though it is still so early in the semester. I truly hope that I skip this stage. I find myself wanting to observe and participate in everything.*

STUDENT REFLECTIONS

When the shift occurs, as it so often does, one reason is that there is almost always a difference between what you anticipated about your internship and what you really experience.<sup>1</sup> The size of this gap, and hence the dip in your morale, will depend on how successfully you accomplished the tasks of the Anticipation stage, but it cannot be avoided altogether. If the concerns of the Anticipation stage have been addressed, you will be less likely to encounter a wildly different reality from what you expected, but there will be some discrepancies, and some of them will be troubling. Furthermore, issues will arise that you simply never considered. For some of you, the change will be subtle and barely noticeable; for others, it will be profound and overwhelming.

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<sup>1</sup>In some cases, the intern's primary focus is not the work of the internship but the location. For example, some students use an internship in part as a way to be in a major city, like New York or Washington, D.C., or even to go abroad. In these cases, disillusionment, if it occurs, is likely to focus on some of the harsh realities of life in a new place. Of course, some interns are focused equally on the work and the location. For them, there may be two possible sources of disillusionment.



T.A.B.L.E. 2 Developmental Stages of an Internship		
Stage	Associated Concerns	Response Strategies
1. Anticipation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive expectations</li> <li>Anxieties</li> <li><i>Self</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Role</li> <li>Appropriate disclosure</li> <li>Self in authority role</li> </ul> </li> <li><i>Supervisor</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisory style</li> <li>Expectations of disclosure</li> <li>Perception and acceptance</li> <li>Assessment</li> </ul> </li> <li><i>Coworkers</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organizational structure</li> <li>Standards of behavior</li> <li>Acceptance</li> </ul> </li> <li><i>Field Site</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Philosophy, norms, values</li> <li>Workload</li> <li>Hiring potential</li> </ul> </li> <li><i>Clients</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acceptance and perception</li> <li>Needs and presenting problems</li> </ul> </li> <li><i>Life Context</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responsibilities</li> <li>Support system</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Realistic, clear, specific goals</li> <li>Clarify and assess expectations</li> <li>Make an informed commitment</li> </ul>
2. Disillusionment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unexpected emotions</li> <li>Frustration</li> <li>Anger</li> <li>Confusion</li> <li>Panic</li> <li>Adequacy of skills</li> <li>Breadth of demands</li> <li>Relationship with clients</li> <li>Operating values of organization</li> <li>Disappointment with supervisor/coworkers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acknowledge gap between expectations and reality</li> <li>Normalize feelings and behaviors</li> <li>Acknowledge and clarify specific issues</li> <li>Acknowledge and clarify feelings</li> </ul>
3. Confrontation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achieve independence</li> <li>Gain confidence</li> <li>Experience effectiveness</li> <li>Changes in opportunities</li> <li>Interpersonal issues</li> <li>Intrapersonal blocks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reassess goals and expectations</li> <li>Reassess support systems</li> <li>Develop specific strategies</li> </ul>

**TABLE 2.1 (continued)**

Stage	Associated Concerns	Response Strategies
4. Competence	High accomplishment Investment in work Quality supervision Ethical issues Worthwhile tasks Home/self/career issues	Share concerns openly Develop coping strategies
5. Culmination	Termination with clients Case management issues Redefine relationships with Supervisor Coworkers Faculty Peers Ending studies Post-internship plans	Identify feelings Recognize unfinished business Meet with supervisor Gather with colleagues Write final reflection

If the Anticipation stage was the “What if . . . ?” stage, then the Disillusionment stage is the “What’s wrong?” stage. Concerns in this stage center on many of the same areas as earlier in the placement: clients, supervisor, the agency, the “system,” or yourself. However, feelings associated with these concerns often include frustration, anger, sadness, disappointment, and discouragement. You may find yourself directing any or all of these feelings toward the site supervisor, your instructor, clients, coworkers, or even yourself.

This stage is the onset of what we refer to as a *crisis of growth*. It is possible to become stuck in this stage, and that can have unfortunate consequences: at best, learning and growth will be limited; at worst, the placement may have to be renegotiated or even terminated. On the other hand, letting yourself feel the impact of these issues and working them through present tremendous opportunities for personal and professional growth.

**Stage 3: Confrontation**

*I recognized, sensed and felt the great struggle exploring change can initiate within others as well [as me].*

*Maybe it was the word confrontation that caught my attention. . . . I was still reflecting on a recent confrontational situation at my site. . . . I began to read [about the stage], but after a few pages, I stopped. I had two immediate reactions: one, I wish I had this material a few weeks ago, it would have helped me greatly . . . and two, I would prefer to read [this] text from start to finish . . .*

*[even now that my internship has ended] . . . to follow the internship process "postmortem."*

*Once I confronted these anxieties, though, everything worked out. I am beginning to confront this situation by making something good of this.*

#### STUDENT REFLECTIONS

As the saying goes, "The only way around is through." The way to get past the Disillusionment stage is to face and study what is happening to you. Some interns resist acknowledging any problems, even when their level of task accomplishment is dropping. You may fear that any problems must somehow be your fault or that you will be blamed for them. You may think that "really good" interns would never have these problems. Paradoxically, though, it is the failure to acknowledge and discuss problems that can diminish your learning experience, your performance, and your evaluation by supervisors on-site and on campus (Blake & Peterman, 1985).

Moving through this stage often involves taking another look at your expectations, goals, and skills. Although your goals may have seemed reasonable when you set them, experience may have shown that some of them were not realistic, or the opportunities may have changed. This is also a time to reexamine and perhaps take the necessary steps to bolster your support system.

There may be interpersonal issues between you and your clients, supervisor, or coworkers that are getting in the way. You may need some help clarifying these issues and developing a strategy for resolving them. You will need to consider intrapersonal factors, such as mounting personal problems or unexpected crises in your outside life. There may also be aspects of your personal makeup that are contributing to the problems. For example, it may be that your reactions to some typical features of an internship (such as criticism, authority, or speaking in or before a group) reflect patterns evident throughout your life that are being exacerbated by the internship. There are many strategies for dealing with these intrapersonal issues, and we will explore some of them in Section Three of this book.

As the issues raised in the Disillusionment stage are resolved, morale begins to rise, as does task accomplishment. Your task at this stage is to keep working on the issues raised. This is a time when you may be tempted to "freeze the moment" and resist raising any more issues for fear of spoiling the progress you have made. The temptation is normal, but if you give in to it for long, you may find yourself stagnating or even regressing. However, with each new round of confrontation, you will feel more independent, more effective, and more empowered as a learner. You will have a sense of confidence that comes not just from what you have accomplished, and not from denying problems, but from your knowledge that you can grapple with problems effectively.

#### Stage 4: Competence

*The Competence stage consists of being confident in myself. I am looking forward to that aspect of my internship. It's not that I have never been competent in a task before. It is just that the sense of professionalism will be much greater.*

*[The site supervisor] gave me some good guidance and lots of space to create what I wanted. This is usually a good thing for me. To be left alone to do what I wish. I felt intimidated by my audience so I want to be perfect in what I present and not look stupid. So, I have had some difficulty getting it all together. While I was aware that I had experienced a difficult day [at work], my focus at the internship at night was to be more attentive. It meant putting into perspective all that occurred during the day in order to be effective at night. Balancing the work during the day continues to be the hard work of negotiating the intellect and the affect.*

STUDENT REFLECTIONS

As your confidence grows, you will forge ahead into a period of excitement and accomplishment. This is the stage that every intern looks forward to—the reason for the internship. Morale is usually high, as is your sense of investment in your work. Your trust in yourself, your site supervisor, and your coworkers often increases as well. You may find yourself thinking of yourself less as an apprentice and more as a professional. You may even wonder why you are not being paid.

As an emerging professional, you have a solid platform from which to expect, or even demand, more from yourself and your placement. You may find that you want more than you are getting from your assignments, your instructor, or your supervisor. Many interns also report that during this time they are better able to appreciate the ethical issues that arise in their placements and are more willing to confront them. These are all positive developments. If taken too far, though, they can lead to perfectionism. You may begin to apply unreasonable standards to those around you, to yourself, or both. Excellence, not perfection, is your goal in this stage.

Another issue that can arise during this time is the stress of juggling your life outside the internship with your increasing commitment to your work. Although you may feel pulls on your time and loyalty throughout your placement, your earlier anxieties and roadblocks may have demanded too much of your attention to think about these conflicts. Now that these earlier crises are past, conflicts between the internship and home, school, or friends can surface more easily. This can become overwhelming, especially if you strive for perfection rather than excellence in all these arenas.

**Stage 5: Culmination**

*I looked forward to entering the Competence stage, but I am not looking forward to stage 5—when placement ends.*

*The end of this experience will be sad, . . . everything is ending . . . but the reflections will be great.*

STUDENT REFLECTIONS

This stage occurs as your internship approaches its ending date. The end of the internship, coupled with the end of the semester and in some cases with the end of the college experience, can raise some big issues for you. You may experience a variety of feelings as this time approaches. Typically, there is both pride in your achievements

and some sadness over the ending of the experience. You may also feel guilty about not having done enough for clients or concern that no one will be as effective with certain clients as you have been (and you may be right about that).

For those of you who are ending your college career, you may be concerned with continuing your education, employment, or economic survival. Relationships with friends, family members, lovers, and spouses that have been organized around your role as a student have to be reorganized. In any case, there are many good-byes to be said. Good-byes are never easy, and for some people, they are very difficult.

Often, interns find ways to avoid facing and expressing these feelings, particularly the negative ones. Avoidance behaviors may include joking, lateness, or absence. Some interns may devalue the experience—they begin saying it hasn't been all that great or find increasing fault with the placement site and/or clients. Many interns find themselves having a variety of feelings and reactions, some of them conflicting and changing by the hour. This can be very confusing and upsetting.

To address the concerns of this stage, you need to focus on your feelings (whatever they may be), have a safe place to express them, and find satisfying ways to say good-bye to clients, staff, supervisors, and in some cases, other interns, both at the site and in an internship seminar on campus.

Of course, if you do not pay attention to the concerns of the Culmination stage, the internship will end just the same. However, you can be left with an empty and unfinished or unfulfilled feeling. In some cases, interns struggling with the Culmination stage actually sabotage their placement by allowing their discomfort about ending to color their perceptions of the entire experience and the affect others' perceptions of their field work.

## SUMMARY

*I am aware that my stages and concerns are not unique to me. . . . One strategy was to respond to the concerns of each of the stages. The vocabulary [of the stages] gave me a way to express myself . . . to work to normalize my feelings and behaviors. . . . this week I acknowledged feelings, reassessed goals, expectations and support systems, and began to develop strategies. And I shared concerns and started to identify unfinished business. These experiences spurred me to make decisions, [to] choose behaviors I would not have in the past. Euphemistically speaking, it was a busy week. (Two weeks before internship ends.)*

### STUDENT REFLECTION

Now you have a sense of what is ahead in your internship and in this book. Remember that even though these stages may hold true for many or even most interns, especially when viewed from the outside, both the pace with which you move through the stages and the phenomenological experience of being in them will vary a great deal from individual to individual. As you move through the stages of your internship, you will find that the following chapters in this book explore each stage in more depth and encourage you to remain focused, as well, on the aspects of yourself you will explore in Chapters 3 and 4.

### *For Further Reflection*

*I am allowing myself some much needed down time. . . I received the academic and professional acknowledgment that I have been working toward . . . truly a bittersweet experience. I never thought that I would regret that it was so short [600 hours]. Now, a time for reflection . . . to catch up on all that I have learned and experienced.*

STUDENT REFLECTION

FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

As you read the description of the stages of an internship, did anything seem remotely familiar? Did the stages remind of you of any other experiences you have had? As you read about the stages, did any one in particular stick in your mind or attract your attention? Why?

SPRINGBOARD FOR DISCUSSION

Think about the issues raised for you by your understanding of the stages, and discuss your thoughts with your peers. Are there issues that the stages do not obviously address? What are your thoughts about knowing about these stages at this point in your placement?

### *For Further Exploration*

Baird, B. N. (2002). *The internship, practicum, and field placement handbook*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Comprehensive and especially useful to graduate students in the helping professions.

Boylan, J. C., Malley, P. B., & Reilly, E. P. (2001). *Practicum & internship: Textbook and resource guide for counseling and psychotherapy* (3rd ed.). Philadelphia: Bruner-Routledge.

Takes a comprehensive approach to many aspects of graduate counseling internships.

Chiaferi, R., & Griffin, M. (1997). *Developing fieldwork skills: A guide for human services, counseling and social work students*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Offers a developmental framework of stages for the intern-supervisor relationship.

Cochrane, S. F., & Hanley, M. M. (1999). *Learning through field: A developmental approach*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Takes a developmental approach to social work field experiences.

Faiver, C., Eisengart, S., & Colona, R. (2000). *The counselor intern's handbook* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Takes a focused, pragmatic approach to counseling field experiences.

- Gordon, C. R., McBride, R. B., & Hage, H. H. (2001). *Criminal justice internships: Theory into practice* (4th ed.). Cincinnati, OH: Anderson Publishing Co.  
Offers the undergraduate criminal justice intern a comprehensive guide to issues specific to a criminal justice internship.
- Kiser, P. M. (2000). *Getting the most from your human service internship: Learning from experience*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.  
Offers a framework for processing and integrating previous learning while engaging the field experiences.
- Lacoursiere, R. (1980). *The life cycle of groups: Group developmental stage theory*. New York: Human Sciences Press.  
Explains Lacoursiere's theory in detail and discusses its application to many kinds of groups.
- Schutz, W. (1967). *Joy*. New York: Grove Press.  
A group development theory that has had an effect on our view of internships. Talks a great deal about acceptance, inclusion, and control issues.
- Switzer, H. F., & King, M. A. (1994). Stages of an internship: An organizing framework. *Human Service Education*, 14(1), 25–38.  
Gives more details of how Lacoursiere's and Schutz's works informed our thinking about our model of developmental stages of an internship.
- Switzer, H. F., & King, M. A. (1995). The internship seminar: A developmental approach. *National Society for Experiential Education Quarterly*, 21(1), 1, 22–25.  
Discusses our general approach to working with interns in a seminar class from a developmental perspective.

### *Models Framing Field Experiences*

- Chiaferi, R., & Griffin, M. (1997). *Developing field work skills*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
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- Inkster, R., & Ross, R. (1998, Summer). Monitoring and supervising the internship. *National Society for Experiential Education Quarterly*, 23 4, 10–11, 23–26.
- Kerson, T. (1994). Field instruction in social work settings: A framework for teaching. In T. Kerson (Ed.), *Field instruction in social work settings* (pp. 1–32). New York: Haworth Press.

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### **Intern Orientation Topics**

1. Agency Mission
2. Client Population
3. Important Agency Personnel
4. Introduction to Key Personnel
5. Policy and Procedure Manual – especially confidentiality, HIPPA, documentation
6. Professional Conduct – cell phone usage (texting, etc.), dress code, reporting in/out, lines of communication
7. Safety Measures – home/facility visits, meeting with clients, potential crisis situations
8. Schedule – time and dates, staff meetings/presentations, agency closures, time management system
9. Student Work Area – supplies, phone, files, computer access
10. Supervision Schedule – individual and/or group
11. Tour of the Facility – lounge, bathrooms, supplies, copier, off-limit areas

### **Ongoing Orientation Topics**

1. Community and Agency Resources
2. Confidentiality and Ethical Dilemmas in Practice
3. Disclosure – boundaries
4. Forms and Documentation, Agency Literature, Brochures
5. Self-Care and Burn-Out Prevention
6. Shadow and Observations – opportunities to network/view other agency staff at work and visits to other agency sites
7. Social Policies Affecting Agency's Target Populations
8. Social Service System
9. Supervision – learning styles with teaching styles

# MSW STUDENTS' SATISFACTION WITH THEIR FIELD PLACEMENTS: THE ROLE OF PREPAREDNESS AND SUPERVISION QUALITY

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A path model predicting students' satisfaction with their field placement was tested on 144 MSW students at a northeastern university. The results showed that supervision was related to satisfaction both directly and indirectly through its influence on efficacy in the field and strain. Amount of preparation for the field affected satisfaction only indirectly by its relationship to higher efficacy. There was no indication that supervision buffered the presumed negative effect of poor preparation on dissatisfaction, strain, or efficacy. Limitations imposed by the cross-sectional design and single-school sample are considered, and recommendations are made to continue attempts to enhance field supervision and increase student preparation. Particular emphasis is given to implementing procedures that address the mediating roles of student strain and efficacy.

FIELD EDUCATION within the school of social work is critically important for increasing the quality of service provided by professional social workers. The quality of social work and of social workers depends in part on the availability and effectiveness of field education opportunities provided within schools of social work. Field placement has a particularly significant role in the MSW program, requiring a student to work in the field for 900 hours while training to become an advanced practitioner who can apply knowledge and

skills at the highest level in specialized areas (as outlined in the 2008 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards by the Council on Social Work Education [CSWE, 2008]). Consequently, students need to receive excellent training in their field placements. Yet, there is some evidence that students often enter their placements with apprehension, stress, anxiety, and unclear expectations, negative emotions that may well interfere with effective learning (Barlow & Hall, 2004; Barlow et al., 2006; Gelman, 2004; Rompf, Royse, & Dhooper, 1993).

Students may enter the field with low confidence in their skill level to work with certain clients, experience role confusion or conflict, and undergo emotional strain as a result of their work (Gelman, 2004). The Gelman review reported empirical evidence and a theoretical rationale for a number of variable relationships studied and discussed in relation to the field placement training experience. These include associations of negative emotion with deficient field preparation, anxiety or strain with poorer performance, and supervision with strain and low satisfaction.

#### **Anxiety and Negative Student Emotions in the Field Setting**

According to previous literature, the foundation-year MSW student has significant anxiety about beginning the first field placement (Royse, Dhooper, & Rompf, 2003; Sun, 1999). Rompf and colleagues (1993) studied the anxiety levels and major concerns of 255 BSW and MSW students before starting placement assignments. Gelman (2004) assessed foundation-year MSW students' anxiety regarding their field placements. In addition, students may be distressed by client reactions of outrage and grief that they may encounter in their field placement (Saakvitne & Pearlman, 1996, cited by Barlow et al., 2006). It might be suggested that students may suffer the type of strain commonly referred to as burnout, compassion fatigue, or emotional exhaustion, reactions commonly found among human service workers who experience intense involvement with clients in their work role.

Some MSW students may experience conflicts with their supervisors in their place-

ments. Barlow et al. (2006) described a case of a student who experienced physical illness in the final weeks of her placement, apparently arising from conflicts in the field context. Thus, mental and physical symptoms and illness might arise as a consequence of field placement stressors, just as it is known to occur from the stress of full-time work.

There is some evidence that negative emotions arising from the workplace might impair learning and work performance (Firth-Cozens & Mowbray, 2001; Haslam, Atkinson, Brown, & Haslam, 2005; Waghorn, Chant, White & Whiteford, 2005). According to Haslam and colleagues (2005), who explored the effects of anxiety on workplace performance through focus group interviews with 74 employees from a range of occupations, research shows that the employees' anxiety symptoms impaired their work performance. Applying this to the field placement context, students with higher anxiety and strain will not learn as effectively or perform as competently.

Also, one of the negative emotions arising from the workplace among social workers, burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment), has been extensively examined by researchers. The work of helping professionals tends to be demanding due to intensive encounters with people, and social workers may experience burnout as a consequence of their work (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Pines, 1993), resulting in negative job performance (Kim & Lee, 2007). However, evidence has indicated that receiving good quality of workplace support, including positive supervisory communication, can reduce social workers' level of burnout feelings

(Ben-Zur & Michael, 2007; Kim & Lee, 2007; Koeske & Koeske, 1989; Mor Barak, Nissly, & Levin, 2001). Also, there is evidence that being well-prepared for the field, including participating in clinical skill-development training, contributes to alleviating social workers' level of burnout, since enrichment of clinical skills can enhance social workers' level of self-efficacy (Cohen & Gagin, 2005; Corrigan, McCracken, Edwards, Kommana, & Simpatico, 1997; Ewers, Bradshaw, McGovern, & Ewers, 2002). Further, social workers' age and years in practice have been recognized as predictors of their level of negative effect (Schwartz, Tamiyu, & Dwyer, 2007). Within the field placement context, students with higher burnout would not be able to learn effectively in the field. Students advantaged by certain conditions, such as receiving positive supervision, might be partially insulated from experiencing negative effect.

#### **Lack of Adequate Preparation for the Field Placement**

One of the main factors possibly responsible for negative fieldwork experiences is the students' level of preparation when they enter the field (Gelman, 2004). In the absence of adequate preparation, the student may enter the field with apprehension and anxiety and become at risk for burnout/strain. Rompf and colleagues (1993) found that the farther along students were in their academic program, the better prepared they were and the less anxiety they experienced about entering the field. They also found greater preparedness and less anxiety occurred for more advanced students who were older and had

more volunteer or work experience than other students. Gelman (2004) also found less anxiety about entering the field among better prepared students.

#### **Quality of Supervision and the Field Experience**

Researchers have focused infrequently on how the quality of supervision and the strength of the supervisory relationship affect the social work students' anxiety and strain occurring in the field setting. However, some researchers have found that the quality of supervision that social work students receive in their field placement is related to their overall satisfaction with the placement (Alperin, 1998; Bogo & Vayda, 2000; Giddings, Vodde, & Cleveland, 2003; Knight, 1996, 2000, 2001; Raskin, 1982). In addition, there is some evidence that strong supervisory relationships between students and their supervisors affect the students' satisfaction with the field (Cohen & Cohen, 1998; Fernandez, 1998; Fortune & Abramson, 1993; Fortune et al., 1985; Freeman, 1985; Siporin, 1982). Fortune and Abramson (1993) found that the quality of field instruction was the most powerful predictor of MSW students' satisfaction in their field placement. In contrast, some research has found that conflicts occurring between supervisors and students were associated with problems within the general fieldwork experience (Benson, 1995; Sawa, 1995). And, problems or conflicts associated with the supervisor-student transaction were related to greater student distress in their fieldwork (Barlow & Hall, 2003; Barlow et al., 2006; Giddings et al., 2003; Tepper, 2000).

### Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to organize the variables that have previously been studied at an essentially bivariate level into a multivariate path model in which satisfaction with the field experience was predicted as the final outcome variable. This causal path model was tested with cross-sectional or static data and the temporal ordering of the variables is based on our conceptualization and presumption, so strong causal inferences are not possible. We can, nonetheless, subject the proposed model to possible falsification, based on the data collected. We will occasionally use causal terms to avoid stilted verbalization, while acknowledging here the limitations of our design and tentativeness of inferences.

A secondary purpose was to evaluate the possibility that supervision quality acted as a moderator of the preparedness-satisfaction relationship. If this were the case, poor preparation for the field would be expected to result in dissatisfaction with the placement, but only or more markedly when supervision was of low quality. High-quality supervision would buffer the negative consequences of poor preparation. This type of buffering relationship was also explored for the relationships of preparedness with efficacy and student burnout as well. Quality of supervision has not been tested in this buffering role, but the expectation of such an effect is grounded in the vast literature on the buffering role of social support in the relationship of stress to negative outcomes (Kim & Stoner, 2008; Lincoln, Chatters, & Taylor, 2005; Madhavappallil & Choi, 2006; Scott & Beth, 2008; Ying, 2008). In this context, supervision is viewed as a resource similar to social

support, poor preparedness as a type of stressor, and dissatisfaction as a negative outcome.

### Model

We propose that quality supervision and higher preparedness for the field experience will increase satisfaction with the field experience, both directly and indirectly, through their salutary effects of perceived efficacy in fieldwork and lessened strain or burnout. Supervision quality and preparedness are independent variables that are not expected to be correlated; efficacy and student strain are co-mediators that are expected to be associated. This model was tested controlling for four background variables: year in the program, current employment, age, and student gender. Year in the program and employment may alternatively be perceived as part of preparedness, but we opted to treat them as separate background variables that were entered as statistical controls.

### Method

#### Sample and Procedure

One hundred fifty-four MSW students volunteered to complete an in-class survey in 17 different classes at the University of Pittsburgh. The study received exempt status after review by the school institutional review board official. Data were analyzed for 144 cases with full data on the test and control variables. The 72 first-year MSW students were roughly in the middle of their foundation field placement experience when they were asked to complete the "Survey of MSW Students' Perceptions of Their Field Placement." The 72 second-year students were approximately in the middle of

their second (concentration) field placement when they were surveyed. Overall, 81% of the students were female; their median age was 25 years. Most students (86%) were in the direct practice concentration and were full-time students (90%), whereas 65% of the students were employed either full- or part-time.

The researcher visited the classes to describe and distribute the survey to students currently in field placements. She described the general purpose of the study and explained that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would be made anonymously. No students refused participation. Although the survey distribution procedure resulted in a convenience sample, the diverse and large assortment of participating classes should have produced a roughly representative cross-section of the school's MSW students participating in field work.

### **The Survey Instrument**

The survey consisted of four sections. Section 1 addressed the students' level of preparation, including questions on BSW/BASW program experience, previous course work, attendance at a field orientation, and previous work experience. In Section 2 ratings of quality of supervision in the field context were solicited. Section 3 contained items measuring "Feelings About My Field Placement," which assessed burnout/strain, perceived efficacy in the field, and satisfaction with the placement. Section 4 provided demographic information, including gender, age in years, type of concentration (direct practice/Community Organization and Social Administration), full- or part-time student status, current employment status, and parental status.

*Index of formal preparation for the field.* An index was developed to reflect the amount of field preparation based on school, volunteer, and work experience. The work of Gelman (2004) influenced aspects of the index development. The index score was obtained by counting/summing 11 dichotomously scored items. A case received a tally or count for the following responses: (1) having obtained the BSW/BASW degree; (2) having completed or being enrolled in at least 2 of 7 listed required skill courses; (3) completion of or enrollment in at least one second-level research course; (4) completion or enrollment in 3 or more skill electives from a list of all such courses in the curriculum; (5) participation in at least one field orientation; (6 through 9) having a past or current position as an intern, volunteer, part-time staff, or full-time staff position in a social service agency; (10) having worked, interned, or volunteered in a human service agency in the same practice area as the current field placement; and (11) having worked with the same type of client population as currently engaged with in the field placement.

Convergent validity for the index was supported by a moderate size (see Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991) correlation of .32,  $p < .001$ , between the index score and a self-rating of perceived (subjective) preparation. The subjective rating ("How prepared did you feel when entering your field placement?") was adapted from Gelman (2004) and given on a 10-step scale from 1=*not at all prepared* through 5=*moderately well prepared* to 10=*extremely well prepared*.

*Supervision quality.* An 11-item Quality of Supervision scale was derived from Shulman

(1981, 1982, 1992) by revising item wording to refer to the field instructor–student relationship that is relevant to the current application. The items were rated on a 5-point frequency scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very frequently*). Higher scores reflected higher perceived quality of the supervisory relationship. Sample items are “My field instructor explains how we would work together and discusses the kind of help s/he would provide me,” “My field instructor is able to sense my feelings without my having to put them in to words,” and “My field instructor encourages me to explore my strengths and weaknesses.” The alpha reliability of the scale was .95 in the current study, comparable to homogeneity reliability estimates reported by Shulman (1981, 1992) for the original application in the worker–supervisor context.

*Satisfaction with the field placement.* Respondents rated the direct report item, “How satisfied are you overall with your field placement?” on a 5-step scale from 1 (*very dissatisfied*) to 5 (*very satisfied*). This direct rating provided the measure of the dependent variable. Single-item global measures of satisfaction have been found to be valid indicators, sometimes outperforming multi-item facet measures that may omit critical facets from the selected item set (Patrician, 2004; Wanous, Reichers, and Hurdy, 1997).

*Student strain/burnout associated with the field placement.* Student strain or burnout arising in the field context was assessed using an adapted version of the Koeske (Koeske & Koeske, 1991) Student Burnout Scale, which was based on the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The respondent

rated how frequently he or she experienced 17 feelings associated with field experience on a scale from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*). Sample items included “I feel emotionally drained from my field placement,” “I feel used up at the end of the day,” “I feel ‘burned out’ from my field work,” and “I feel ‘under stress’ due to my field placement.” Higher scores reflected higher strain, emotional exhaustion, or feelings of burnout. The original general student burnout version of the scale had an alpha reliability of .90 (Koeske & Koeske, 1991). In the current adaptation, the alpha reliability was .92. Theoretical construct validity for the original scale was supported by significant correlations of burnout with stressful events and mental health symptoms (Koeske & Koeske, 1991).

*Perceived efficacy in field work performance.*

Two items were totaled to assess the perceived efficacy felt in performing duties in the field placement. The items were “How confident do you feel that you can successfully perform your field duties?” (1=*not at all confident* to 5=*totally confident*), and “How well do you feel you are performing your role in your field placement?” (1=*very poorly* to 5=*very well*). These items correlated .63, resulting in an alpha reliability estimate of .77.

## Results

### Descriptive Results

The 144 respondents as a whole fell in the middle range of the scales measuring the test variables. The mean for quality of supervision was 3.38 ( $SD=.98$ ), indicating on the 1–5 metric that positive field supervision was perceived to

occur between "some" and "frequently." Burnout or strain-related feelings associated with the field experience were reported "rarely," using the 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*) metric ( $M=3.30, SD=.97$ ). Similarly, satisfaction with the current field experience ( $M=3.84, median=4.0$ ) fell closer to the "satisfied" (4) than "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied" (3) marker on the 1-5 satisfaction scale. Perceived efficacy ( $M=7.67, SD=1.46$ ) was rated somewhat higher than an average or "fair" amount. Finally, the students rated themselves slightly more than moderately prepared ( $M=5.84$ ) on a 1 (*not at all prepared*) to 10 (*extremely prepared*) scale of preparedness for entering the current field placement. The index of objective preparation is difficult to interpret descriptively and specific to the MSW program studied, but it showed a mean in the middle of the 0-11 range ( $M=5.31, SD=2.17$ ); this indicated that on about one half of the 11 dichotomous criteria, the typical student did possess the experience or status reflecting preparedness (coded 1) rather than lacking it (coded 0).

**Test of Path Model**

A conventional path analysis, using least squares multiple regression, was conducted to evaluate the proposed model in which the quality of supervision and amount of preparedness were predicted to relate to higher satisfaction with the field placement, both directly and indirectly (through their impact on greater efficacy and less student burnout/strain associated with the field experience). This model was tested controlling for year in the program (first or second), employment status (any vs. none), gender, and age. Figure 1 shows the path (beta) coefficients of the lines for all relationships that achieved significance at an  $\alpha=.05$  criterion. Lines for nonsignificant effects and the inter-correlation of control variables were omitted to enhance readability of the diagram. Given the nearly saturated nature of this test, fit indices are not informative, and the model must be evaluated primarily on the basis of presence or absence of predicted effects. Table 1 shows the bivariate correlations for the variables in the

**TABLE 1. Pearson Intercorrelations of Control and Test Variables (N=144)**

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Gender (Female=1, Male=2)	—						
Age			.21**	—			
Year (1=1st, 2=2nd)			.02	.16*	—		
Employment (0=no, 1=yes)			-.09	.19*	.19*	—	
Preparation index			.16	-.01	.43***	.24**	—
Quality of supervision			.00	-.00	.13	-.02	-.01
Efficacy			-.01	.01	.06	.06	.18*
Strain/burnout			.05	.13	.16*	.07	.10
Student satisfaction			.13	-.10	-.06	.00	.03
							.50***
							.39***

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

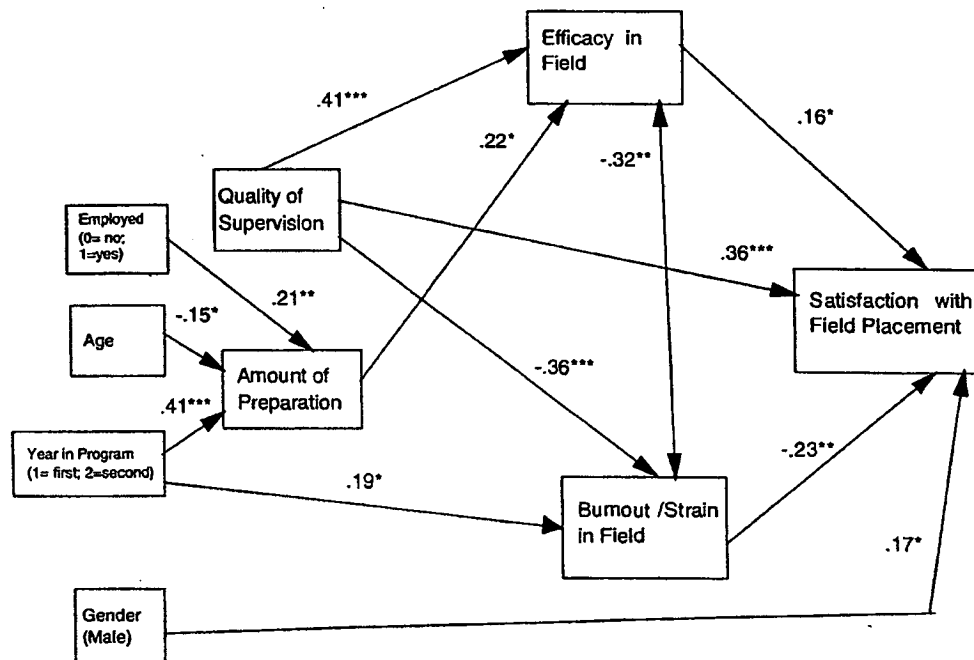


model test. These coefficients were generally consistent with the partial coefficients and a typical redundant system, indicating the system is not complex in the sense of displaying suppressive effects.

Figure 1 shows, as anticipated, that quality supervision seems to facilitate greater satisfaction with the field experience, both directly ( $\beta=.36, p<.001$ ) and indirectly through (1) higher efficacy ( $\beta=.41, p<.001$  and  $\beta=.16, p<.05$ ) and (2) less burnout/strain ( $\beta=-.36, p<.001$  and  $\beta=-.23, p<.01$ ). The size of these indirect effects were  $(.41) \times (.16)=.07$  (Sobel  $z=2.03, p=.04$ ) and  $(-.36) \times (-.23)=.08$  (Sobel  $z=2.64, p=.008$ ). Given the large direct effect of

supervision on satisfaction ( $=.36$ ), the model test reflects partial, rather than full, mediation. Unlike supervision quality, the amount of objective preparation did not directly influence amount of satisfaction, but it did significantly relate to higher efficacy ( $\beta=.22, p<.01$ ), which, in turn, related to higher satisfaction. This indirect effect was marginally significant (Sobel  $z=1.69, p=.09$ ). The model test clearly suggested that preparedness—after controlling for age, employment, and year in program (which significantly affect it)—is much less a contributing factor than supervision to satisfaction with the field experience. Students who were working ( $\beta=.21, p<.01$ ) and in

**FIGURE 1. Tested Model on MSW students' satisfaction with their Field Placement: The role of preparation, supervision, efficacy and burnout**



\* $p<.05$ , \*\* $p<.01$ , \*\*\* $p=.001$ .

their first year ( $\beta=.41, p<.001$ ) scored higher in amount of preparedness, but older students scored slightly lower ( $\beta=-.15, p<.05$ ) in preparedness. The simple correlation of age and preparedness, however, was  $-.01$ . It should be noted that these betas estimate the unique effects of each variable and that some of these background variables were moderately inter-correlated. Student gender was the only background variable to directly relate to satisfaction; males reported higher satisfaction than females ( $\beta=.17, p<.05$ ). Finally, second-year students reported higher burnout ( $\beta=.19, p<.05$ ).

#### **Test of the Buffering Effect of Supervision**

The preceding analyses revealed clear direct and indirect effect of quality supervision on student satisfaction with the field experience. We also expected supervision would buffer the effect of inadequate preparation on low satisfaction. The preceding analyses showed that preparedness did not have a significant direct effect on satisfaction. Moderated multiple regression analyses were done to test the interaction effect, which could reflect buffering by supervision. In this hierarchical regression, the control variables were entered in block 1, followed by the main effects of supervision and preparation in block 2, and the interaction of supervision X preparation was entered in block 3. The interaction ( $F(1,138) < 1.0$ ) was not significant, and less than 1% of satisfaction variance was explained. Similarly, tests for possible buffering interactions of the preparation—efficacy and preparation—burnout relationships yielded no significant

interaction effects. Consequently, there was no evidence that quality supervision acted as a buffer in the process by which preparation might affect satisfaction.

#### **Discussion**

The study provided only very modest support for the expectation that preparation for the field experience would facilitate higher student satisfaction with the field experience, and this contribution was apparent only indirectly when operating through its influence on perceived efficacy or competence. This finding, though attenuated, was consistent with some earlier research (Alperin, 1998; McPherson & Barnett, 2006).

More pronounced was the direct and indirect effect of quality of supervision in the field context on student satisfaction. The results suggest that, when the MSW students working with difficult clients do not have adequate supervision providing concrete instructions and supportive feedback, they are more vulnerable to work-related emotional exhaustion resulting in less satisfaction with the field experience. However, with capable supervision providing helpful directions and positive feedback, they might feel empowered and have a higher level of confidence and efficacy, resulting in better work performance and a sense of satisfaction in the field. Some earlier research had shown a similar benefit of quality supervision to satisfaction in the field (Cimino, Cimino, Nuehring, Raybin, & Wisler-Waldock, 1982; Cole, Panchanadeswaran, & Daining, 2004; Fortune et al., 1985; Fortune & Abramson, 1993; Raskin, 1982), but the current study identified for the first time the

process by which this enhancement to satisfaction might occur. Some elements of the process were evident in earlier work on the relationships of efficacy to satisfaction (Cole et al., 2004; Sharma & Ghosh, 2006), and amount of field preparation with efficacy (Gelman, 2004; Rompf et al., 1993). The role of burnout (strain, emotional exhaustion) in the field of human service has been studied in relation to anxiety (Jayaratne, Chess, & Kunkel, 1986; Wheeler, 1987), satisfaction (Penn, Romano, & Foat, 1988; Rimmerman, 1989; Ursula & Steven, 1998) and supervision (Abu-Bader, 2000; Itzhaky & Aviad-Hiebloom, 1998; Mena & Marguerite, 2001), but it had not formerly been placed in an explanatory context with the other variables identified in the current study.

Our secondary purpose—to examine the possible buffering role of supervision quality—yielded no evidence for a moderating role for supervision in either its relation to satisfaction or the mediating variables of efficacy and strain. Correlational designs lack power in detecting moderated effects, but our sample size was moderate, and the interaction effects sizes were very small and did not approach significance. It would seem that supervision acts prominently only in the direct and indirect manner previously reviewed. In essence, supervision quality was a critical factor in the process by which student satisfaction was determined, but it may not buffer whatever negative consequences occur due to poor preparation for the field. The data suggested, however, that those negative consequences attributable to poor preparation were small relative to the benefits derived from effective supervision of the student.

There were some unpredicted statistically significant effects arising in the model test that were small ( $<.18$ ) and complex, in that the corresponding simple correlations were not significant. Three such occurrences involved lower preparedness scores for older students, higher preparedness scores for employed students, and higher satisfaction for male students. Since these effects were small, complex, and unpredicted, no attempt will be made here to interpret them. On the other hand, the finding that second-year students reported higher burnout/strain in the field may be theoretically and practically meaningful and is consistent with known increases in exhaustion occurring as work involvement increases and accumulates.

### Limitations

We noted at the outset that causal path analyses based on static data provide weak inference power regarding causation. Nonetheless, we feel that overall satisfaction with the field placement is logically more persuasive as a consequent of the test variables of supervision quality, preparation, efficacy, and burnout than it is an antecedent. Similarly, efficacy and burnout/strain are conceptually and logically more credible as effects of supervision and preparation than as their antecedents. In other words, alternate ordering of the variables in the model seems not to produce credible alternatives to the causal flow that was tested. And, straightforward controls were entered in the model test. Only two direct paths were disconfirmed by the data: amount of preparation did not directly affect satisfaction, nor did it influence burnout/strain directly. It is possi-

ble that strain affects satisfaction through mechanisms unspecified in this model test, such as the acquisition of coping skills or the formation of a realistic perspective of what can be accomplished by the practitioner. It may also be the case that preparation, either as occurring in practice or as measured herein, does not provide resources to the student for controlling work exhaustion and strain. Thus, preparation, differently engineered and/or assessed, might be directly or indirectly contributory, but not manifested in this test. Preparedness was, of course, somewhat beneficial through the enhancement of felt efficacy in the field.

Given that the critical test measures were derived from self-reports, and all but one (preparation) was a subjective report of feelings or attitude, shared method (self-report) variance might be considered to inflate bivariate estimates of relationship. However, the multivariate regression analyses performed to obtain the path coefficients act to remove such shared explanation when estimating the effect sizes. Even with this built-in control for shared method variance, most of the critical and anticipated coefficients were statistically significant, and some were substantial by behavioral standards.

There is some concern that the effect of preparedness might be underestimated, because we opted to include year in the program and current employment as separate (control background) variables rather than as definers of amount of preparation. Indeed, year in the program and employment status directly affect preparation level. We might consider the effect of preparation on efficacy,

in particular, to be more substantial than the .22 estimate reflects, since that effect size reflects its influence independent of class seniority and current work experience. We, therefore, retested the model after removing year in program and employment status as controls and incorporating them into the preparation index. Preparedness continued to be not significantly related to either satisfaction or burnout/strain. Consequently, at least in these data, preparedness plays only a secondary role in the process explaining student satisfaction with the field placement.

A final threat to inference arises from low external validity. The model test occurred on a single sample from one school of social work. Part of the preparedness measure was specific to this particular school and its curriculum. The model would have to be tested on a larger and more diverse sample, or retested on numerous diverse additional samples, to gain support for its general relevance. The support found for the model in this one test does serve, however, as a starting point for later investigation and extension.

### **Implications and Applications**

There has long been an awareness that field education, and therefore social work education generally, would be enhanced by high quality supervision in the field and by a higher level of preparedness among the students who enter the field. Some previous research (Freeman, 1985; Gelman, 2004; Rompf et al., 1993; Siporin, 1982) and the findings of this study have empirically documented this awareness. The implication is clear that we should continue to strive to monitor, evaluate,

and improve the type of supervision students receive in their field settings. In addition, we should continue to endeavor to send well-prepared students into their placements, where our data show that they should derive a greater sense of efficacy and feel a sense of satisfaction with the placement.

The current study adds to our knowledge a better sense of *why* quality supervision may generate higher feelings of satisfaction with the field. It seems to achieve its benefits by strongly increasing a sense of effective and efficacious fieldwork performance and reducing felt strain and burnout symptoms. Awareness of these operative mechanisms enriches our plans for implementation of effective field education. Not only should we directly work to increase students' sense of efficacy in their field practice, but also we should try to construct supervisory input and our curricula to facilitate perceived and validated efficacy. Students might be considered "prepared" to enter the field when they can be expected to have a sense of efficacy or at least anticipatory efficacy regarding their work role. Supervision might be regarded as "quality supervision" when it induces a sense of empowerment or a sense of efficacy in the student, and when it anticipates and is programmed to deal with likely feelings of anxiety, strain, and even exhaustion.

The significant direct effect of supervision on satisfaction found in the model test suggests there are other unspecified paths through which supervision quality enhances eventual satisfaction. That is, efficacy and strain are not the whole story. Subsequent research might be directed to identifying these other mecha-

nisms through which quality supervision has its benefit for student attitude toward the placement. This additional knowledge could provide us other bases for designing better placement experiences.

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### **The Primary Focus of Supervision**

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|---|---------------------------|
| 1. To provide a regular space for the supervisees to reflect upon the content and process of their work.  | Educational               |
| 2. To develop understanding and skills within the work.   | Educational               |
| 3. To receive information and another perspective concerning one's work.  | Educational/Supportive    |
| 4. To receive both content and process feedback.  | Educational/Supportive    |
| 5. To be validated and supported both as a person and as a worker.  | Supportive                |
| 6. To ensure that as a person and as a worker, one is not left to carry unnecessarily difficulties, problems and projections alone.                 | Supportive                |
| 7. To have space to explore and express personal distress, re-stimulation, transference or counter-transference that may be brought up by the work. | Administrative            |
| 8. To plan and utilize their personal and professional resources better.  | Administrative            |
| 9. To be pro-active rather than re-active.  | Administrative            |
| 10. To ensure quality of work.  | Administrative/Supportive |