

DISCUSSION OF MISS CAMPBELL'S PAPER

Miss Campbell's material I have moved the focus of our thinking from the worker to the supervisor. Perhaps this is not such a great departure after all. We contend that in the case work relationship the degree to which the client can find help depends in large part on the worker's clarity about her own role. The supervisor's responsibility, whatever the services of the agency that creates

the setting in which worker and supervisor carry their respective roles, does establish a relationship in which it becomes known that the worker has need for the supervisor's help. Is it not as true in this relationship then as in the case work relationship that the supervisor's clarity about her role can be a powerful force in the worker's performance and achievement?

A SECOND YEAR WORKER IN THE PROCESS OF SUPERVISION*

By MARIE L. LAUFER

*Jewish Child Care Assn.
New York, N. Y.*

A CHILD placement agency, caring for children in foster homes, has the function of helping the child in a steady, uninterrupted movement in growth through the years of a continuing placement. The child, living apart from his own parents in a foster home, must utilize for his growth a different set of relationships than his natural setting. The foster home, the focal point around which a child placement agency operates, is the medium which affects the child's growth through day by day living. The foster parents' relation to placement, their needs, hopes and fears in regard to the child, are the agency's steady concern and the focus of our work with them. Since placement can be satisfying to the child only, if his parent can accept this vital change in their relationship, the agency maintains with the parent a continuous contact around the problems and adjustments inherent in placement. Thus it becomes clear that we can carry out our function only if we can achieve a balance in the triangular relationship between child, parent and foster parent so that their needs can be integrated into a living, growing organism.

Through the supervisory process, workers are helped to understand this con-

cept of a triangular relationship and to integrate it until it becomes, ultimately, a part of their professional self. We are aware of the natural identification and overidentification which the beginning worker feels with the child in placement and of her pain in helping foster parents accept the uncertainty inherent in placement. We recognize her frequent struggle around the parent's right to accept or reject agency help and to make the ultimate decision regarding the kind of relationships he wants to have with his child in placement. The worker's learning in relation to all of these aspects has many painful elements, for it may bring to the fore deep feelings about herself and basic attitudes in her relationship with other people. This process is worked through at the different levels of a worker's development and is characterized as all learning by many swings to extremes before some balance can be reached.

The supervisor helps the beginning worker to understand how the agency operates and how she can use its services. She sustains the worker in her efforts to find her place as a professional person within the agency set-up and to accept herself in a learning role, which is different from being a student. Thus the child placement worker will learn, for instance, how the agency provides clothing and medical care, and how it carries

* Presented at the National Conference of Jewish Social Welfare, Cleveland, Ohio, June, 1949.

out the responsibility for parental visiting. The worker's way of relating to these realities will be indicative of her general pattern. Whether and how she uses the supervisor in relation to it is significant of her personality, her way of learning, her ability to take help and to be a helping person. In her second year with the agency the worker usually tends to become aware of the deeper and more basic implications of placement. She then can be held more firmly to a greater involvement and to a deeper and more integrated use of self.

The following presentation illustrates an instance of a worker who had shown definite potentialities in many areas during her first year, but who experienced serious blocking when needing to reach a deeper and more mature level of functioning.

I will discuss, subsequently, how her problem was worked through in supervision and how it highlighted the worker's struggle of accepting herself in a learning role. The supervisory process, which will be described, extended over a period of ten months, during which the worker and I met in weekly conferences of two hours.

Mrs. B is a young woman who came to the agency upon her graduation from a School of Social Work. She made a good beginning with the agency and seemed very eager to give service to her clients with whom she identified closely. At the end of her first year, she was able to do some very sensitive and skillful work with prospective applicants, whom she helped to become foster parents by interpreting the agency to them in a very meaningful way. Also she responded with a great deal of warmth to the children on her case load, particularly to the younger ones, who, as she felt, needed her "protection." Her work with parents and foster parents was characterized by a great desire to sustain them in the painful reality of placement. For example, she visited a new foster mother twice a week to help her gain some se-

curity with a recently placed child. Also, she tried to convey to parents that she was available at all times, if they needed her help, i.e., "realistic services." However, she began to experience difficulty when helping made greater demands on her use of self. She felt lost, for instance, with the parent, who seemingly accepted placement easily, and with the foster parent, who expressed no need for help because of her long experience with the agency. Mrs. B became quite frustrated at these times, when she was faced with a more subtle kind of resistance on the part of parents and foster parents and would respond by a withdrawal of self.

From the beginning Mrs. B showed good organizational ability in relation to the clerical part of her job, and was known to be prompt and efficient. She established a positive relationship with all members of the staff and seemed at all times to be calm, even-tempered and collected. However, her whole manner seemed somewhat forced for a person as young as she and suggested a lack of spontaneity and fear of becoming involved more deeply in a relationship. When her supervisor attempted to help her express any feelings of discomfort or possible fear, Mrs. B was unable to respond and persisted that "this was just she!"

When Mrs. B was transferred to me, she assured me that she was very glad about the change in supervision. She expressed the feeling of needing challenge, adding that she was convinced she could get this from me. When I tried to help her express some fear of being supervised by someone new in the department and possibly some resentment for being used as a guinea-pig, she was unable to respond to this. Her need to make this beginning so totally positive, without leaving room for any difference and her inability to admit any risk or uncertainty, indicated to me some basic need to control as well as fear of authority.

Our beginning then was a rather stormy one, which was characterized by her need to test me out. On a few occasions she "forgot" to submit an agenda or material for conferences. While I held firmly to these requirements, I tried to recognize with her the deeper implications for her need to do so. I pointed out to her that there was natural fear for all of us in starting

with a new supervisor, whose person and expectations were largely unknown. This freed her to ask: "What *do* you think about me as a case worker?" When we looked together at this question, Mrs. B could recognize some indication of insecurity, which she attributed to her "youth and inexperience." Subsequently she was more relaxed and could bring to me, with greater ease, her questions about her activities with clients.

In discussing the different situations, I gave her full recognition for her increasing skill and sensitivity in her work with children, and commented upon her greater ease in her relationship with those adults who seemed to reach out for her help. At the same time I brought to her my concern about her difficulties in seeing the placement process as a whole and using the dynamics of the triangular relationship. This problem had become particularly evident in a situation of a child, who considered himself to be the cause of his mother's mental illness. While Mrs. B identified warmly with this child, she could show little concern for the foster mother and the latter's feelings of frustration. In her need to protect the child, she also found it very difficult to accept the mother as a person in need of help.

In the ensuing discussion Mrs. B readily admitted her much greater identification with children, to whom she represented a "natural authority." She then spoke for the first time of her frustration with "strong parents and controlling foster parents," and how difficult it was for her to use the dynamics of the triangular relationship in those instances. When I recognized her beginning awareness of this problem, she indicated her willingness to work on it.

During the next period Mrs. B confessed some dependency on supervision

and frequently expressed her feeling of "losing ground under her feet." I tried to help her see how frightening such feeling could be and how it sharpened her ambivalence of wanting to change and yet of needing to hold on to her old pattern.

Her conflict was evidenced again most vividly in her contacts with foster mothers, who had difficulties in accepting certain agency regulations, and with parents, who because of their own conflict, tended to interfere with placement. Here, Mrs. B often had a strong tendency to control the interviews and to use agency structure in a rather punitive way. Also, she did not respond spontaneously to her clients, but conveyed to them quite literally what had been discussed in conference. She was quite surprised when she was faced with the fact that this was really her way of fighting supervision. She then could begin to express her discomfort on being "questioned by me." When I identified with her she spoke about the painful self-realization that she "was not yet the finished product" she had thought herself to be for some time. I appreciated that she shared this with me so honestly, and we reviewed together her experience with the agency up to the present time. We saw how she had reached a certain level of development, which the agency had recognized by giving her the status of a second year worker. She then could realize the need to take a further step in her professional development and verbalized some fear of the uncertainty and risk which this involved.

However, the movement which she was able to make in her work with "strong parents and controlling foster parents" remained minimal throughout subsequent weeks, and her pattern re-

A SECOND YEAR WORKER IN THE PROCESS OF SUPERVISION

mained essentially the same. I felt that she was not helpful in those situations and did not take real responsibility for her own learning, but projected her difficulties on the outside. It therefore seemed necessary to help her face her own part in a direct discussion about her problem. The opportunity for this arose in a conference which took place in the 6th month of my work with her, which was two months prior to the completion of her second year with the agency. Mrs. B came to the conference quite upset. She related that she was angry at a mother who hurt her child through irregular visiting. She admitted her dislike for this mother and all other clients who "were equally strong." I realized the problem which she faced in this respect, and yet I could certainly sympathize with her clients! Here she laughed in a somewhat forced way. I then pointed out to her several instances where she had been rather punishing or hostile with strong parents or foster parents. Could she tell me what was so troubling for her in meeting her client's strength? She related that she became upset and confused, because they just did not cooperate and she therefore could not get anywhere with them. When I suggested that she seemed to have a definite goal, she told me that she wanted to help them and then added in a very low voice that "she also wanted to be known as a good worker." I recognized warmly her desire to help, but also my concern with her need to succeed which tended to prevent her from being able to listen to her clients. She felt that this was only true in her work with adults, while she found it quite easy to relate to the children on her case load. I affirmed this, but then pointed out that as child placement workers in this agency we were responsible for helping

children, parents and foster parents. Mrs. B indicated that her previous supervisor had been very satisfied with her and had stated in her evaluation that "she had a basic understanding of case work and would have to integrate it only on higher level." While I was aware that her need to "manipulate" certain clients had been mentioned in her last evaluation, I did not handle this with her but rather recognized her disappointment, frustration and evident unhappiness and tied it up with our previous discussion, when she had verbalized her need for further learning and some fear about the risks involved. She cut me short and stated that she could not do anything more than she had done up to the present time. I thought that perhaps she was right in feeling that she had reached her maximum. But then I would have serious questions how she could go on, because she was hurting some of her clients. While I was aware of her conflict in having to change, we both had a responsibility to the agency; namely to give service to *all* our clients. Furthermore, the agency could expect that workers were willing to learn and improve their skills so that they could give the best possible service to clients. Here Mrs. B became very angry at what she called "my approach." She realized that I would express my dissatisfaction in her evaluation, but what could she do? I did not attempt to tell her what to do, but I wanted to bring the seriousness of my concern to her attention. Three months were left until evaluation time. Unless there was some real change in her work with foster parents and parents during this time, I would have serious questions whether she could go on to the third year. She felt that it was fair to let her know where she stood, but it did not make it easier. While I

A SECOND YEAR WORKER IN THE PROCESS OF SUPERVISION

identified with her, I wondered how it related to our own supervisory relationship. In the ensuing discussion she could share with me some resentment about my "supervisory authority" which touched her so deeply at this moment. We had started at the agency at the same time, and now I was already a supervisor—her supervisor. When I had tried to handle this with her at an earlier point, she had denied any negative feelings in this respect. She now was able to see to some extent that she had carried some anger and resentment, since we had started to work together, but had not dared to acknowledge it. At the same time supervision had taken on a much greater meaning for her. She intimated that she did not even sleep too well at times, because of what had been touched off in our conferences. But now, what could she do but cry? When I suggested softly that crying may help us to ease up, she felt that there was no sense to it, she rather wanted to be helped to be different. She found it extremely difficult to see where this would depend so much on her willingness to yield and to give of herself and added that she did not know how to bear this uncertainty. She explained that she had tried to arrange her whole life in a way which would eliminate uncertainty. I appreciated as warmly as I could how frightening change must then seem to her, and that she might well wonder whether social work was worth all the pain it caused her. I therefore felt that a definite time limit might be helpful to her in deciding on just this. She remarked here that it would be so much easier if I would say: "I know you can do it!" While I appreciated her anxiety, I suggested that we both really could not know this right now. I offered her my help with additional con-

ference time during this critical period, but I also indicated to her my doubt whether she could trust me enough to let me help her. As we were ending, I conveyed to Mrs. B my feeling of her strength, which she had evidenced in this conference and suggested that it might enable her to do something different than she had until now.

During the next two months, Mrs. B was engaged in an intense struggle around her ability to change. There was a different quality in her work at the end of this period which was expressed in a much more perceptive, spontaneous and yielding approach to parents and foster parents. Also, she seemed much softer and more willing to become involved in the depth of the placement process. This then seemed to indicate that she had made the decision to stay in social work with its required self-investment.

Six months have passed since then during which Mrs. B has struggled hard to integrate the different parts of the triangular relationship and to find her place with those adult clients, who seemed so "strong and controlling" to her. During this time she has been engaged intensively with me in supervision and shown an increasing ability to let me be, as she put it "her supervisor at all times," whether it was in a staff meeting, in conference with another agency, or in an informal discussion about an important incident in her work. In very recent weeks, Mrs. B has asked me: "What is it in myself which makes for my easier and greater identification with children, than with adults?" She then could face her fundamental problem of accepting authority, could recognize its origin and how she used it as a projection in her work with parents and foster parents.

I believe that the serious blocking which Mrs. B experienced during this period and which prevented her from a full and spontaneous use of self was related to a deep feeling of inferiority about herself. Thus she needed to present herself as a "finished product" and was threatened when she sensed strength and self-affirmation in the other person. The change of supervision therefore created intense feelings of fear in her, which she did not dare to express because it would reveal her "weakness." Her ambivalence was particularly strong and painful, since it was in relation to a person with whom she also wanted to identify, because she represented "strength and success" to her. The supervisory process therefore gave her a unique opportunity to test out her feelings and to affirm finally her own identity. I feel, however, that her struggle became most meaningful because it was focussed on a specific aspect of her work, which is a vital reality in our agency. For the agency is set up in a way which requires each worker to become involved in a triangular relationship with child, parent and foster parent. The difficulty which she experienced in relation to the one aspect of her work helped her to become aware of and gain insight in her own pattern, thus she could gradually face her fear of changing and begin to yield. As she was helped, in supervision, to break down the frightening totality which change had for her, she could work towards a limited and defined goal: to become a third year worker in a child placement agency and to demonstrate her willingness to be engaged in a learning process. Thus she could define

herself as a professional person, who is developing, but who as yet is not a "finished product."

It seems to me that as supervisors we have the basic responsibility of helping workers to accept themselves in a learning role at each level of their development. For inherent in the supervisory process is a helping relationship in which we are concerned with the worker's personality and development as a professional person. As it is our steady concern to give the best possible service to our clients, we have to help workers to achieve this goal. As yet we have not set up definite criteria, determining workers' development which could be integrated organically in the supervisory structure of the agency. We do believe, however, that these criteria should be generic in nature and related to a specific agency function. We have already in many agencies outlines for evaluations, setting down specific criteria for a worker's development, as for instance: "Use of agency structure and services, organization of total job, relationship to other staff members, ability to assume responsibility, etc. However, we have, as yet, not defined what degree of development is expected in those areas at each level, and we therefore are not yet able to build up an organic structure.

It seems to me that there is not any one answer to this question, but that by solving it gradually, we might be able to carry out our double function: to give the best possible service to our clients and to provide supervision which gives each worker at his particular level the maximum opportunity for his growth and development.

HELPING THE NEW IMMIGRANT ACHIEVE HIS OWN BEGINNING IN THE UNITED STATES*

By MARY RUSSAK

N. Y. Assn. for New Americans

MIGRATION is both a social phenomenon and an individual experience. Its causes and effects are found in the economic, political, and social conditions of given countries at a given period. The specific nature of these conditions both in the country left behind, and in the new world profoundly affect not only the general character of the migration, but the individual who is undertaking and experiencing the change which is in migration.

Mass immigration to this country is as old as the history of the United States. Behind each wave of migration there is a story of social, economic, of political upheaval in the old world. In turn, the America to which each succeeding group of immigrants has come has been a changing one, different in its attitude to the newcomer, in the op-

portunity for economic and social adjustment, in the organization of its resources to aid the immigrant in his adjustment.

Whatever the conditions left behind, whatever the nature of the new world to which they come, always for the individual immigrant, there is the uniquely felt trauma of separation from the old, and the inevitable necessity for his own individual struggle in change and adjustment. No individual transplants himself lightly from one country to another even under the most favorable circumstances, allowing for a maximum of choice on the part of the individual. The circumstances making for mass migration in the modern world mean for most individuals that they are confronted with a harsh external compulsion. In greater or lesser measure, all mass migrations are a forcible uprooting to which every individual must react with some measure of fear, of resentment, and also of guilt, as well as pressing hope for a better life.

However much or little of choice the circumstances of his migration allowed, however overwhelming the impact of the forces may have been which led to his migration, the individual immigrant nonetheless is not altogether driven by circumstances. It is he who, as a human being, moves in response to his outer

* A thesis for the Pennsylvania School of Social Work submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements of the degree of Master of Social Work, June, 1948. When this thesis was written, Mrs. Russak was a member of the staff of the United Service for New Americans. The views expressed in this paper should not be taken as representative of the policies or procedures of the New York Association for New Americans which now conducts the program formerly operated under the auspices of the United Service for New Americans.