

Towards an Empirically Grounded Model of Psychoanalytic Reflective Practice: A Qualitative Study.

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Deliberate reflective practice (RP) has been proposed as a skill involved in the acquisition and maintenance of superior performance in the professional practice of psychotherapy (Chow et al., 2015). It follows that a strategy to improve therapeutic effectiveness could be to promote RP as part of training or continuing professional development. To do so, researchers would have to turn to the available models of RP, among which Schön's (1983) remains the most influential. However, the applicability of Schön's model to the professional practice of psychotherapy encounters two limitations. First, the model is transtheoretical: it assumes that the fundamental 'structure' of RP is the same for a cognitive-behavioral as well as for a psychoanalytic therapist, for instance. However, the theoretical 'lens' through which a therapist thinks is likely to correspond to a difference not only in professional jargon but also in the epistemology of practice (Wright, 2009). Second, when it comes to its application to psychotherapy, the model was based on the transcript of a single session between a psychiatric resident and his supervisor. In retrospect, this way of grounding theory on empirical data appears arbitrary, raising the question of whether Schön's conclusions were but a reflection of his methods of selection. To overcome these shortcomings, the present study intends to develop an empirically grounded and theory-laden model of RP within the boundaries of a specific treatment modality: psychoanalytic psychotherapy. While an extensive theoretical literature exists on the reflective processes that a psychoanalyst would go through in the course of his or her professional practice, little attention has been given to the problem in the empirical literature. How do psychoanalysts engage in clinical reasoning (e.g., apperceive data, arrive at interpretations, evaluate interventions)? A privileged context to study psychoanalytic reflective practice is supervision. An analytic supervisor is a professional who is assumed to possess a double competence: the ability to "think psychoanalytically" but also to help others do the same (Yerushalmi, 2013). The present qualitative study uses an audio assisted recall procedure: first, pairs of psychoanalytic supervisors and their supervisees record a session in their everyday setting; second, an interview is organized where the recording is played back in its entirety and the supervisor is asked to make explicit the reflective processes that they went through at each moment; finally, the transcripts of both the session and interview are transcribed ad verbatim and analyzed using grounded theory to derive an empirically grounded model of psychoanalytic RP.