

ESSAY: LEARNING TO "THINK LIKE A LAWYER" THROUGH EXPERIENCE

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SUMMARY:

... When I began this Article, my intent was to provide clinical professors with some insight into what it feels like to be a student in a law school clinic But now that I understand better both my supervisor's efforts and my own, before saying anything else I would like to express my sincere enthusiasm for clinical education; on the whole, nothing else in my law school career prepared me as well to actually "be a lawyer." ...

TEXT:

"I know when he gets out ... he will kill me," my client stated, as matter-of-factly as if she had just told me the sky was blue. From across the conference room table I could feel her terror under my own skin. Panicked by her fatalism, I quickly tried to steer the conversation to something I thought I could actually fix - making it more difficult for him to find her by strategizing a plan for her to relocate. She reluctantly followed my new direction, but I could tell she was unsatisfied with my response. This woman suffered with much more complex problems than I, with just my twenty-four years of life experience and one and a half years of legal education, was equipped to handle. My inexperience, coupled with my insecurity, began to haunt me as I realized there was nothing I could do, ultimately, to save her. Naive? of course. Unhealthy? No doubt. Just plain wrong? Yes. Call it CCLS n1 Lesson #1: attorneys do not save - they empower. On the outside, I knew this. On the inside, I had a hard time accepting it...

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I. Learning the Socratic Way

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A. What the Socratic Method Feels Like for Students

If you have never been the target of a Socratic-attack, it is hard to understand just what about it is so offensive. Essentially, the Socratic method in practice consists of a teacher asking a series of questions to a single student. It is important to note that at least in most first year classes the student being questioned does not "volunteer" but "gets volunteered." Often, the student is standing. The inquisition lasts anywhere from one minute to the whole class period. Generally, the teacher is attempting to lead a student down a path obvious only to the teacher.

As I understand our system of legal education, it is through these experiences that students are taught to "think like lawyers." It is not the answer that is most important, but the reasoning the student employs in moving either backward or forward between premises and conclusions. Whatever might be said about the epistemology implicit in the Socratic classroom, its psychology is quite plain. As Professor Susan Williams points out, advocates of the traditional Socratic method assume that learning is unidirectional (that is, it flows only from the teacher to the student), anyone can attain the answers if they follow the teacher's directed questions, and finally, that the analytical reasoning modeled by the teacher is the primary path to knowledge. . . .

B. What the Socratic Method Does Not Teach, and Why

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The traditional Socratic method certainly does serve some valuable purposes in a legal education. For example, it teaches students how to analyze the law in a written appellate opinion, a form of the law we will often confront in practice. In demanding thorough analysis, the traditional method teaches students how to read for details, and more importantly to identify legally significant facts. By approaching the law through faceless controversies, students can decipher and synthesize rules of law and patterns of precedent without being distracted by the personalities of the parties involved. The case book method is a safe way for students to learn legal methodology, that is, to apply the law to facts, because no real clients are involved. Nevertheless, the emphasis on face-less case theory can only contribute to, not consist of, the student's understanding of the law.

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Not only is the focus of the Socratic classroom painfully distant from the world of practice, but the psychological impact of this form of teaching simultaneously injures students and distorts their preparation for the interpersonal requirements of practice. From performance in class to performance on the exam, students are taught to perform alone and moreover against everyone else. Grading and class rank become the ultimate measure of "success" in law school. Even ignoring the numerous inadequacies of the grading system, such as the fact that it is based on one three to twelve hour exam at the end of the semester and in most cases provides no reward for demonstrated effort, ranking in itself does not serve students' best interest. In fact, announcing class rank can actually discourage students from trying harder. Furthermore, by encouraging a constant state of competition, the traditional method of legal education implicitly supports a system where it is "every man for himself." The traditional approach offers little, if any, opportunity for students to develop skills necessary for teamwork. This learned isolation is ultimately to the students' disadvantage because, in truth, most lawyers practice within a system comprised of many legal and non-legal players and depend upon collaboration with others to achieve their goals....

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II. Learning the Un-Socratic Way

A. The Un-Socratic Way: Learning by Doing and Under Supervision

Many of the reasons that I believe a clinical experience is so important to a complete legal education are the very same reasons it is fraught with difficulty. Because of the nature of the clinic, that is, the dynamics of the student/professor relationship, the emphasis on "learning by doing," the importance of producing a team product, and the interface with real clients and real problems, the clinic may present both the student and the clinician-professor-supervisor with issues that require each to analyze and balance a number of unique interests. It is my impression that both professors and students struggle with knowing when they are pushing too hard, or not enough. ...

Clinical education is founded on two principles: learning from direct experience within the lawyering process and student responsibility for student learning. The two principles are intertwined: accepting responsibility is at the core of learning through experience. Accepting responsibility can have very powerful effects on students. ... There is no question some students handled their stress differently and better than others. ... However, I am confident most of my peers would agree that the first semester in the clinic felt much like being on a roller coaster, strapped in tightly, at the whim of the very high "highs" and very low "lows" of litigation.

Every aspect of this tumultuous student experience is affected by supervision. Professor Robert Condlin begins his article on clinical education by stating that "clinical practice instruction is strategic intervention by law teachers in student performance of lawyering tasks." To "intervene," he explains, is "to enter into an ongoing system of relationships, to come between or among persons, groups, or objects for the purposes of helping them." Such intervention may be, and often is, focused on helping the student to decide what to do, what experiences to have. Professor Condlin emphasizes, however, that the value of the student's experience in performing "lawyering tasks" stems from the interpretation, "both one's own and others", of the experience, not

necessarily from the experience itself. Professor Kenneth Kreiling makes a similar point in affirming that "to effectively learn from experience, the person must become aware of the areas of ineffectiveness in his behavior." Both writers seem to suggest that facilitating interpretation of experiences is one of the primary tasks of clinical supervisors.

Before researching to do this project, I was virtually blind to how much planning supervision required. As students, we are socialized to believe teachers have the answers - that is, that they innately have the answers. It never occurred to me how deliberate a clinical professor's decisions on how to relate with her students actually were. ... The nature of a clinical education challenges the traditional law school hierarchy by blurring the roles of students and professors, but the result for clinical professors is, if anything, to make their teaching role much more complicated. Though one purpose of the clinic seems to be to teach the students a degree of independence, this aspiration does not mean that students in the clinic are autonomous. Instead, enabling students to achieve this partial independence is, paradoxically, the function of supervision.

A student's experience in the clinic consists of interactions with new tasks and also with several new people, including her client, her partner, and her supervisor. Ultimately, I believe the most important result of a clinical experience is the student's relationship with a new part of herself: the part that is a lawyer. Because supervision plays such a leading role in how these relationships are interpreted, the next ... sections of this article will specifically examine how supervision affects each of these relationships.

B. Supervision and the Student's Relationship with the Task

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Having responsibility for my cases produced both exhilaration and stress. Dr. Andrew Watson explains that stress produces anxiety, but that anxiety is "not per se bad." Dr. Watson claims that anxiety generally will push students to adapt their behavior in one of two ways: by introducing realistic problem-solving or by relying on a neurotic defense.

Being told to draft a particular pleading or do research on a particular subject or call a particular person at the courthouse is one thing. Making the decisions about what kind of pleading to draft or which subject needs to be researched or which person needs to be called is quite another. By the time students reach the clinic, many of them are accustomed to "taking and filling" orders. What is unique about the clinic is that students are asked to plan for the case's development. Planning requires students first to determine what the case is about and how they want to develop it, then to organize the necessary tasks and finally to utilize their otherwise isolated skills in a collaborative way. This process incorporates the two fundamental principles of clinical education, learning through direct experience and accepting responsibility, and, not surprisingly, the series of tasks necessary to move the case forward becomes a central focus of the student's experience in the clinic.

A student forms a "relationship" with these tasks in that her successful completion of the case depends largely on how she is able to manage the tasks. Completion of the tasks becomes the way the student can measure her success, both quantitatively - just by the completion itself - and qualitatively - by evaluating the actual effectiveness of the completed work. The substance of supervision affects the student's relationship with the task in two ways: how the task is completed and how the finished product is evaluated. Although I realize the supervisory tactics are most likely much more complex than this, from the student's perspective, there seem to be two methods of supervision in relation to completion of the tasks: "hide the ball" or "don't hide the ball." Because supervision is so time-intensive, clinicians are likely to be selective in the way they suggest pursuing a task or goal.

For example, ... [in my clinic], each student is given a notebook called the "Legal Survival Kit." The Kit includes [sample forms and relevant statutes and case law]. "Have you looked in your Survival Kit?" became my supervisor's most frequently used phrase in the early days of the semester. By providing us with this resource, the supervisors save the students a considerable amount of time and grief. Another resource we are given is an "Office Manual" that explains how the Clinic operates as a law office, where we need to bring things to be sent, how to write a transfer memo, where to find intake folders, and so on.

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There were many more times, however, when our professors left the resource finding up to us. Professors Meltsner and Schrag call this approach "learning about learning." This process involves learning how skills are acquired rather than simply learning the skills. This approach allows students to test "methods of learning" by use of experiences, discussion, and reflection. Without question this approach, although probably more beneficial in the long run, can be excruciating as it is experienced...

Supervision also affects the student's "relationship" with the task because it affects the way we define our successes and failures. The supervisor accomplishes this through feedback, which informs a student whether she is moving effectively toward her goal, and evaluation, which conveys the final determination of the quality of the completed task. Both feedback and evaluation are necessary to the learning process, and effective communication is crucial to each.

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Professors Meltsner, Rowan, and Givelber believe feedback is more important to the learning process than evaluation. To a point, I agree. It is true that without consistent feedback, most of us "operate in the dark." Certainly direction, advice, and critique offered in close proximity to the task at hand make it easier to modify the behavior or method in question. However, I think evaluation is equally crucial to learning. During my first semester in the clinic, I felt that Professor Barry gave me valuable feedback that effectively led me to think about the issues critical to addressing the particular problems presented in our cases. This kind of feedback prompted many interesting discussions. At the same time, however, I was often left feeling that I really did not know whether what I was thinking was actually correct. . . .

In a broader sense, evaluation is necessary because it is a natural time to assess how much (or how little) a student has grown professionally and identify what still needs to be developed. Moreover, evaluation is valuable for the teacher as well as the student. I say this because each of us is likely to approach an issue differently, albeit within given parameters. What might look like an incorrect method in isolation may later turn out either to have no detrimental effect on the final product, or, even better, to be a useful innovation. Evaluation allows both the student and the professor to reflect on the finished product and pull from it what is useful and discard what is not.

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C. Supervision and the Student-Attorney/Client Relationship

Trust is at the core of any effective attorney-client relationship; the clients must trust that their attorney is competent and loyal and the attorney, I believe, must trust that the client is telling him or her the truth. The task of finding the proper attorney-client relationship can be an arduous and complicated task in the ordinary practice of law. The practice of law in a clinical setting is beset with its own set of unique challenges. When a client comes to a teaching clinic for an attorney, what she receives is a team of individuals who together make up her attorney. Although three heads can often be better than one, this situation does create some complications. For the new student, the intensity of this attorney-client relationship can be tremendous or even destructive, and the clinical teacher's presence and supervision are essential to helping the student handle these challenges wisely. . .

At the same time that it helps the student-attorney/client relationship, the presence of the clinical supervisor in two ways constrains the student-lawyer's development of relationships with her clients, and I take these points up in the remainder of this section. First, because students come and go every semester, the supervisor is the only constant member of the legal team, and this sometimes makes it difficult for the client to accept the students as her new "attorney." Second, because students, especially in the beginning, lack the confidence to act even in any small way without their supervisor's presence, the level of trust the client can have for her "attorney" is affected. In making these observations, however, I do not mean to assert that supervision on balance negatively affects the student-attorney/client relationship; I mean only to explain how I think supervision can impede these relationships even as it provides a necessary foundation for their growth.

I can think of few other times in my life when I felt more exhilarated than the day I met my client Ellen. Professor Abbe Smith has observed about students' first meetings with their clients that "the first thing clinical students encounter is difference ... then they try and grapple with it." When I reflect on my relationship with Ellen I agree that, initially, the differences between us seemed vast. I worried about being "disingenuous and unauthentic" in her eyes. In the process of "grappling with it," however, I felt that the most pronounced difference between us seemed to be mere luck. As I grew to know Ellen better, I undoubtedly began to internalize her problems - all the while very conscious of the danger of losing "professional distance."

... As much as I hate to admit it now, my "desire to help my client" even made me frustrated with her at certain times. The sharpest moment of frustration I experienced with a client, however, came not with Ellen but with another client. One Thursday morning, two weeks before our scheduled trial date in this case, my partner and I ventured out to our client's apartment building to meet her for a scheduled meeting and then "troll" the scene for more evidence. At 10:00 a.m. we knocked on her door. No answer. We knocked again. From behind the closed door of her one room apartment, the client yelled, "I'm not coming out today, I'm not feeling well." That was it. She would not open the door. She would not talk with us. First shocked with disbelief, then angry, my partner and I left her alone and tried to plan our next move. Her seeming unwillingness to cooperate frustrated us in an almost "how dare she" kind of way. ... Luckily, our feelings were only temporary. Yet we debated for some time how to address the situation with her before we finally decided to put aside our anger and move on.

Learning to work with the client, rather than for her, helped me put this frustration in perspective. At the beginning of this Article I referred to one of the most important lessons I have taken from the clinic, namely that attorneys empower, not save. I believe that understanding this lesson is tied to learning to espouse "effective empathy," the balance between identifying with the client and maintaining a professional level of distance. Early in my relationship with Ellen, I lacked a necessary level of objectivity and as a result felt as though it was indeed my job to "save" her. I think that finally, in my second semester of representing battered women, I have achieved the necessary balance. I say this because I no longer feel it is my job to save my clients - I truly believe my role is to empower them to save themselves. I think about Ellen's case often and will always be concerned about her safety, but I do not "obsess" about it, or my other cases, anymore. As a result, I have had a much easier time carrying out clients' decisions, even the ones I think they should make differently. The obvious question I would like to answer is how I finally came to this conclusion, but I am afraid I cannot point to any one experience or paper or discussion. I will say that I did not reach this conclusion until this past summer, many miles away from Ellen and the clinic, so I suppose it probably came from a kind of self-reflective synthesis of all of my experiences together. But certainly my supervisor's efforts to demonstrate and to validate this stance, in class and in supervision, were essential to the conclusion I have now reached.

The supervisor's presence on the attorney "team," however, can also impinge on the student-attorney's relationship with the client. For example, it can frustrate a client to have to describe herself to her "new attorney" when she knows the supervisor already knows her story. I often wonder what it is like for a client to come to a law school teaching clinic with its inexperienced, rotating student labor force. ...[B]ecause the students on a particular case are likely to change every semester, the client will likely have to tell and retell her story several times, to several different student attorneys, throughout the time her case is open. . . .

In our clinic, all of the students start the semester with what is called a "transfer case," a case that began before the semester the current student enrolled in the clinic (and often before the student was even in law school, or out of college for that matter). After receiving our transfer case, my partner and I called the client to get started on the issues that were still open in her case. Though we had read the entire file and discussed the case with Professor Barry and the students who had the case the prior semester, there were still a number of factual issues we did not understand, so we asked the client about them. Her responses were quick and undetailed. On one hand, it could merely have been that she was tired of having to repeat herself. On the other hand, she could have been feeling annoyed that she should have to repeat herself to her "attorney." She never actually said, "Professor Barry already knows this," but her tone and her actions at our first meeting, in which she directed most of her answers and questions to Professor Barry, suggested that she did not like the situation. The exis-

tence of a supervisor, that is, someone who did know her case but who was not actively discussing it with her, had an effect on her relationship with us; she treated us, in a sense, as if we were not the "real players."

The other inhibiting effect of supervision on the student-attorney/client relationship is that it can undermine the confidence the client has that her student-attorney is capable of handling her case. As stated before, my partner and I were given primary responsibility for our clients' cases; we were their front line. Most of the time, our clients accepted this. Occasionally, however, it was clear that both they, and we, looked helplessly to our supervisor for the answers. One example was the first intake interview I had during my first semester. As I entered the clinic that day, my peers bombarded me with messages from Professor Barry that a new client would be coming in to the clinic for an interview within the hour. All anyone knew was her name, that her face was badly bruised and swollen, and that Professor Barry wanted me to make sure I took pictures of her injuries. I scrambled to plan a strategy for the meeting and find out what I needed to know before meeting her. My partner was nowhere to be found and Professor Barry was in a supervisory meeting with another student.

When the client arrived I tried my best to look prepared - but I am not confident I was very convincing. In any event, Professor Barry, the client, and I took seats in a small, poorly lit interview room and the interview began. My nervousness nearly silenced me. What is worse is that this was obvious - and I began to sense my client's nervousness intensify alongside mine. I remember the awkwardness of the first few words and my great relief when Professor Barry jumped in to get the conversation rolling. I suspect that as the case progressed, our client's trust in our ability to present her case grew. During those first few interactions, however, I know that if I had been the client I would have been looking to the supervisor for my answers.

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E. Supervision and the Supervisor-Student Relationship

... Professor Hoffman explains that the nature and progression of a supervisory relationship are difficult to determine in advance because the supervision needed depends on the various types of encounters that take place between supervisor and student, and also on the point of the semester that the student has reached - in other words, on what level the student is "at." I think it is fair to say students will reach different levels at different times and that the "semester" is not necessarily an accurate measure of how long it can take a student to reach the final stage of supervision that Professor Hoffman envisions. In the "Beginning Stage" of a typical clinical course the student is "usually emotionally and intellectually unprepared for the entirely new role of student-lawyer." Because the traditional legal education does not "ably" teach how to apply rules of procedure and practice, most students entering the clinic do not possess the knowledge they need to make appropriate case decisions about how to form or implement a plan of action. If a supervisor forced students to make these kinds of decisions immediately, they would likely become "overwhelmed with anxiety and frustration." Against this backdrop, Professor Hoffman suggests that compelling students to seek out information while they have such little background (and therefore will likely spend a great deal of time failing to find what they seek) can actually intensify their feelings of inadequacy. As a result, Professor Hoffman suggests that supervisors should make preliminary information available to the students and should further ensure that directions for tasks are "concrete and specific."

During this fragile stage of the relationship, supervisors must really make every effort to understand where the student is coming from. In researching to write this article I was actually shocked to learn that clinicians did at least acknowledge that students are often overwhelmed; it shocked me because when I was in this beginning stage myself, I did not feel like anyone was acknowledging this anxiety.... Now, away from my first semester, I can objectively see and appreciate the great efforts made by our supervisors to alleviate this stress, but at the time I felt it was difficult to find a sympathetic ear... .

Another issue that creeps into the early stages of a supervisory relationship is that, at least at first, students still expect to an extent that the student/professor relationship will be similar to what they have been experiencing throughout law school. The mystique that surrounds "professors of law" generates feelings that amount to awe and dread. Perhaps this is because so many of us enter law school with so little knowledge of the law, or perhaps one of my first-year professors was right that law professors truly are among the few elite minds in the

country. In any event, few law students could honestly deny that they do seek their law professors' approval. The sad irony is that so few are able to actually attain it.

The smaller, more intimate classes in the clinic provide a rare opportunity to develop genuine relationships with professors. For me this was the first time in my law school career that I felt free, indeed encouraged, to participate in class and to have a more informal relationship with my professors. Still, during the early stage of the supervisory relationship, students struggle in defining what their role is in the relationship and exactly where the boundaries are. For example, I struggled initially with simple issues like how to address Professor Barry. In the first few meetings I expected Professor Barry to say, "You can call me ...," or to refer to herself by some proper name. In fact she did not give any indication at all of what we should call her. Because I heard other students address her by her first name, I decided to address her as "Margaret" as well. In fact, it has been awkward to call her anything else throughout this Article. I firmly believe this evidence of familiarity does not in any way diminish the amount of respect I have for her as my "Professor."

In the middle stage of the supervisory relationship students begin to show they are more capable of taking on responsibility and initiative for their cases. In this stage the definition and solution of legal problems become the products of joint supervisor-student efforts, in which the supervisor "guides the students in interpreting, analyzing, applying, synthesizing, and evaluating the students' clinical experiences." The supervisor becomes a "sounding board" for the student's ideas, in addition to a source of basic information. Certainly, within a month or so after the clinic started, I began to have a much better grasp on the basic set of laws, rules and lawyering skills with which we were asked to practice. With this clearer understanding, I was able to make attempts at applying these resources to the facts of our cases.

An example of my supervision in this stage occurred in planning for the negotiation session for one of our cases. In developing a negotiation strategy, I used a planning model we had discussed in class to work through how each step of the negotiation process and each option the negotiation would present might affect our client. In doing this, I first worked through the plan alone, trying to incorporate my client's needs and goals as a whole (rather than just considering those goals and needs that were particular to the legal problem we were assisting her with), by defining various "action" options and then trying to predict how each option would affect our client. After compiling my conclusions, I gave Professor Barry a copy of what I had contrived. Then when we met she critiqued and commented on both the options I saw and the likelihood of the effects I had predicted. This process gave me a great sense of confidence at the time because I felt as though I had moved beyond simply asking Professor Barry to tell me what the "options" were. Professor Barry confirmed my belief by committing herself to addressing primarily just what I had handed her. By adopting my "starting point" she helped me achieve some confidence in my ability to tackle a series of legal and non-legal problems.

Professor Hoffman suggests that during the middle stage of a supervisory relationship the supervisor moves from the position of a partner working with a new associate to the role of a lawyer working with another co-equal associate to solve a legal problem. This degree of mutuality present in the clinical relationship becomes more apparent to the student as the semester progresses, and is undoubtedly the result of clinicians' effort to teach in ways that empower the student. For many of us it is the first time a legal professional is trusting us to find an answer and then relying on our result. As the semester progressed, I wanted to be more than Professor Barry's student. I wanted to be her peer. Although the hierarchy of the law school establishment is unyielding in truth, this method of teaching at least gives enough appearance of mutuality to allow the student to gain some confidence. For me, that confidence allowed me to feel like an equal member of a ... team working on our cases.....

In the final stage of the supervisory relationship the students are "sufficiently secure and competent to act, in effect, as lawyers in their own right." At this stage, Professor Hoffman suggests the supervisor should "defer to the student's analyses and decisions in cases where reasonable lawyers may differ"; in other words, the supervisor's role is to be a "safeguard against serious error." Personally, I think this is the stage where the clinic begins to be fun! During the final stage, the student begins to feel like an actual lawyer.

My first new case of this semester, my second semester in the clinic, involved a petition for a Civil Protection Order. Earlier in this piece I described the anxiety I felt the first time Professor Barry told me "a client was

on her way to the clinic" and how relieved I was to have Professor Barry intervene during the meeting. Just a few weeks ago, Professor Barry similarly tracked me down in the clinic to tell me she had another "client on the way." This time I knew what to do. Whereas during my first meeting I looked helplessly (or maybe just hopelessly) to Professor Barry to begin the interview, this time Professor Barry did not even enter the meeting until my client and I had already been discussing her case for about fifteen minutes. Although I still felt glad she was there, I did not feel like I would have walked out of the meeting without having sufficient information to file the petition if she had not been able to come. After the meeting, I drafted, filed, and served the petition. After filing the petition I sat down to map out my plan for the trial and presented my plan to Professor Barry. During the supervisory meeting, we discussed a few techniques, but for the most part I had successfully anticipated what needed to be done for the hearing. The meeting ended with me presenting Professor Barry with a tentative time-line setting out when I intended to have certain tasks accomplished. Notably, the meeting was much shorter than our meetings had been last semester.

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Because the focus in the final stage is no longer solely on the tasks that must be completed, the student and supervisor can expand their relationship by focusing more on "bigger" issues like professional responsibility or the policy effects of certain litigation decisions. Beyond that, there is more room to explore what I think is a very important issue, perhaps the most important one of all: how to ENJOY being a lawyer. Without the stresses of decoding a manual on how to file for contempt, for example, my energies can be placed (at least in part) in observing how Professor Barry has been able to practice law in a way that makes her happy. By watching her make decisions to balance her students' demands with her clients' demands with her family's demands and ultimately stay sane, I am able to learn, for example, that it is okay to say things like, "I can not make a meeting at a certain time because I have to be at home tonight." This may sound like a ridiculous thing for me to have been worrying about but I assure you it is on the minds of at least many of my female peers. I am very confident that if I had not decided to enroll in the clinic I would have definitely graduated from this law school without really being sure I could make this kind of statement and still be a good lawyer. In regard to this issue, tradition only taught me that it is my duty to zealously represent my client; the relationships I have been able to establish with the professors in the clinic have taught me that this traditional duty does not mean forgoing a life!

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F. Supervision and Self-reflection

One of the characteristics of the clinic that makes it unique is its emphasis on self-reflection and self-evaluation as part of the learning process. This emphasis makes sense in light of the premise that clinicians intend to teach students how to learn on their own. Yet self-evaluation assumes the student has a basis of knowledge from which to compare. This simply is not the case for many novice clinic students. Personally, I consistently spent a considerable amount of time reflecting I knew what I thought. I wanted to know what Professor Barry thought. . . . Most of us enter the clinic with so little confidence in our legal ability that we need external reassurance from experienced practitioners that we are making the right decisions. In short, what our supervisors say is critically important to the nature of our self-reflection - as the following account of my experience shows.

In my final evaluation, Professor Barry told me she could see that I had a strong grasp on the material but that I was too intense to have an effective final product, and that the excessive amount of time I spent in the clinic working on cases was a sign of my obsessive behavior. Prior to the evaluation, I thought I had achieved relative success over the semester. After the evaluation, based on what I perceived as a message that I had "failed," I began to rethink my own assessments and one by one discredit my accomplishments. Initially, I felt destroyed by her comments; like any unbalanced perfectionist, I had trouble taking the criticism. As I say this, I can vividly recall my feelings at the time and my overwhelming desire to drop the clinic from my schedule the next semester in hopes of finding "something I was good at" before graduation in May. I am ashamed to say it, but if the issue of domestic violence were not so central to my career goals and the clinic had not been the only opportunity I had to learn more about it in law school, I probably would have quit. Ideally, I suppose my need

for her praise would not have been so compelling. Regardless, for me as the novice that I was, it was. Eventually, ironically through more extensive and distanced self-reflection, I was able to set aside my all-or-nothing perspective and more accurately and honestly judge both my successes and failures. My point is that supervision, that is to say Professor Barry's comments, significantly shaped how I defined my success at that time. Moreover, these comments profoundly affected even my later reflection; the benefit of a summer away from law school and hopefully a lesson finally learned has made me accept the truth of her observations and attempt to actively change my approach to work.

Ann Smith says that one reason some people, those otherwise known as perfectionists, work compulsively is to make up for their feelings of inadequacy. After being told in my final evaluation that I worked compulsively and that my behavior made it difficult for others to work with me, I engaged in a great deal of self-reflection, attempting to process this criticism. In the period immediately following the evaluation meeting I felt a self-esteem low I could not ever remember feeling. In my initial attempts to mend my severely bruised ego, I undertook to discredit my supervisor's comments in any way possible. As I would realize later, this total inability to cope with constructive criticism was only one of the tell-tale signs that I was nearly exactly as she had described me.... It seems almost ironic to me that Professor Barry reports she was most worried about pushing too far and risking destroying my confidence during the semester, when what came the closest to doing that for me were the last words of the semester that she said to me. It seems the clarity of the line between pushing too hard and not pushing enough hinges on the quality of communication that exists between the supervisor and the student not only during the semester but even at the end....

Since starting this project, I have had many opportunities to explore with Professor Barry the issues that defined my first semester experience. One of the things I think we both agree on is that it is important to stress how long it may take for a student to come full circle, so to speak, in really internalizing his or her experiences in the clinic. Clearly, my learning lasted long after our last meeting. It is fair to say I am still learning from last semester's lessons. I am confident that I have achieved success in the clinic, if for no other reason than that I have been successful in developing not only my practical lawyering skills but also my self-reflection and analysis skills. This latter set of skills I am not sure I could have learned anywhere else. Now, when new clinic students declare their feelings of inadequacy and then their frustration at their supervisor's not "giving" them the answers, first, I empathize and tell them I know how they feel. Then, I tell them to hold on, eventually it will all make sense that this is the way the clinic is.

Conclusion

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I will always look back at my experience in the clinic as being, overall, extraordinary. I learned more about the law and myself in that ... course than I ever did from any other class before, and more, I am confident, than I will in any class I have in this, my final year of law school. That said, I will also remember my first semester in the clinic as being one of the most tumultuous experiences I have ever had. As clinicians, you wear many hats throughout the semester. I do not envy your position, because you are forced to adapt your program to a wide variety of individuals. From the student's perspective, what I want to convey is that most of us are in your clinics because we want to be there. We want to learn. And we want to be supervised. I urge you to keep in mind the stage of our education that most of us are in when we come to your clinics. Many of us come in search of the self-esteem we left at the door of the law school our first day. Due largely to your efforts, many of us find it.