

BY ALFRED KADUSHIN

Games People Play in Supervision

■ **This article attempts to make explicit the variety of games most frequently played in supervision, reviewing the rationale behind supervisory gamesmanship, the ploys used, and the counter-games that have been devised. The emphasis is on games developed and utilized by supervisees, although the gamesmanship potentialities of supervisors are also suggested.** ■

GAMESMANSHIP HAS HAD a checkered career. Respectably fathered by an eminent mathematician, Von Neumann, in his book *The Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*, it became the "Art of Winning Games Without Actually Cheating" as detailed by Potter in *Theory and Practice of Gamesmanship*.¹ It was partly rescued recently for the behavioral sciences by the psychoanalyst Eric Berne in *Games People Play*.² Berne defines a game as "an ongoing series of complementary ulterior transactions—superficially plausible but with a concealed motivation."³ It is a scheme, or artfulness, utilized in the pursuit of some objective or purpose. A ploy is a segment of a game.

The purpose of engaging in the game, of using the maneuvers, snares, gimmicks, and ploys that are, in essence, the art of gamesmanship, lies in the payoff. One party to the game chooses a strategy to maximize his payoff and minimize his penalties. He wants to win rather than to lose, and he wants to win as much as he can at the lowest cost.

Games people play in supervision are concerned with the kinds of recurrent in-

teractional incidents between supervisor and supervisee that have a payoff for one of the parties in the transaction. While both supervisor and supervisee may initiate a game, for the purposes of simplicity it may be desirable to discuss in greater detail games initiated by supervisees. This may also be the better part of valor.

WHY GAMES ARE PLAYED

To understand why the supervisee should be interested in initiating a game, it is necessary to understand the possible losses that might be anticipated by him in the supervisory relationship. One needs to know what the supervisee is defending himself against and the losses he might incur if he eschewed gamesmanship or lost the game. The supervisory situation generates a number of different kinds of anxieties for the supervisee. It is a situation in which he is asked to undergo some sort of change.

Unlike the usual educational situation that is concerned with helping the student critically examine and hence possibly change his ideas, social work supervision

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¹ John Von Neumann. *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1944); Stephen Potter, *Theory and Practice of Gamesmanship* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1948).

² New York: Grove Press, 1964.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

is often directed toward a change in behavior and, perhaps, personality. Change creates anxiety. It requires giving up the familiar for the unfamiliar; it requires a period of discomfort during which one is uneasy about continuing to use old patterns of behavior but does not, as yet, feel fully comfortable with new behaviors.

The threat of change is greater for the adult student because it requires dissolution of patterns of thinking and believing to which he has become habituated. It also requires an act of disloyalty to previous identification models. The ideas and behavior that might need changing represent, in a measure, the introjection of previously encountered significant others—parents, teachers, highly valued peers—and giving them up implies some rejection of these people in the acceptance of other models. The act of infidelity creates anxiety. The supervisory tutorial is a threat to the student's independence and autonomy. Learning requires some frank admission of dependence on the teacher; readiness to learn involves giving up some measure of autonomy in accepting direction from others, in submitting to the authority of the supervisor-teacher.

The supervisee also faces a threat to his sense of adequacy. The situation demands an admission of ignorance, however limited, in some areas. And in sharing one's ignorance one exposes one's vulnerability. One risks the possibility of criticism, of shame, and perhaps of rejection because of one's admitted inadequacy. In addition, the supervisee faces the hazard of not being adequate to the requirements of the learning situation. His performance may fall short of the supervisor's expectations, intensifying a sense of inadequacy and incurring the possibility of supervisory disapproval.

Since the parameters of the supervisory relationship are often ambiguous, there is a threat that devolves not only from the sensed inadequacies of one's work, but also from the perceived or suspected inad-

equacies of self. This threat is exaggerated in the social work supervisory relationship because so much of self is invested in and rejected by one's work and because of the tendency to attribute to the supervisor a diagnostic omniscience suggesting that he perceives all and knows all.

The supervisor-supervisee relationship is evocative of the parent-child relationship and as such may tend to reactivate some anxiety associated with this earlier relationship. The supervisor is in a position of authority and the supervisee is, in some measure, dependent on him. If the supervisor is a potential parent surrogate, fellow supervisees are potential siblings competing for the affectional responses of the parent. The situation is therefore one that threatens the reactivation not only of residual difficulties in the parent-child relationship but also in the sibling-sibling relationship.

The supervisor has the responsibility of evaluating the work of the supervisee and, as such, controls access to important rewards and penalties. School grades, salary increases, and promotional possibilities are real and significant prizes dependent on a favorable evaluation. Unlike previously encountered evaluative situations, for instance working toward a grade in a course, this is a situation in which it is impossible to hide in a group. There is direct and sharply focused confrontation with the work done by the supervisee. These threats, anxieties, and penalties are the losses that might be incurred in entering into the supervisory relationship. A desire to keep losses to a minimum and maximize the rewards that might derive from the encounter explains why the supervisee should want to play games in supervision, why he should feel a need to control the situation to his advantage.

Supervisees have over a period of time developed some well-established, identifiable games. An attempt will be made to group these games in terms of similar tactics. It might be important to

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note that not all supervisees play games and not all of the behavior supervisees engage in is indicative of an effort to play games. However, the best supervisee plays games some of the time; the poorest supervisee does not play games all of the time. What the author is trying to do is to identify a limited, albeit important, sector of supervisee behavior.

MANIPULATING DEMAND LEVELS

One series of games is designed to manipulate the level of demands made on the supervisee. One such game might be titled "Two Against the Agency" or "Seducing for Subversion." The game is generally played by intelligent, intuitively gifted supervisees who are impatient with routine agency procedures. Forms, reports, punctuality, and recording excite their contempt. The more sophisticated supervisee, in playing the game, introduces it by suggesting the conflict between the bureaucratic and professional orientation to the work of the agency. The bureaucratic orientation is one that is centered on what is needed to insure efficient operation of the agency; the professional orientation is focused on meeting the needs of the client.

The supervisee points out that meeting client need is more important, that time spent in recording, filling out forms, and writing reports tends to rob time from direct work with the client, and further that it does not make any difference when he comes to work or goes home as long as no client suffers as a consequence. Would it not therefore be possible to permit him, a highly intuitive and gifted worker, to schedule and allocate his time to maximum client advantage and should not the supervisor, then, be less concerned about the necessity of his filling out forms, doing recording, completing reports, and so on? For the student and recent graduate supervisee oriented toward the morality of the hippie movement (and many students, especially in social work, are responsive to hippie ideology, often without being explic-

itly aware of this), professional autonomy is consonant with the idea of self-expression—"doing your thing." Bureaucratic controls, demands, and expectations are regarded as violations of genuine self-expression and are resented as such.

It takes two to play games. The supervisor is induced to play (1) because he identifies with the student's concern for meeting client needs, (2) because he himself has frequently resented bureaucratic demands and so is, initially, sympathetic to the supervisee's complaints, and (3) because he is hesitant to assert his authority in demanding firmly that these requirements be met. If the supervisor elects to play the game, he has enlisted in an alliance with the supervisee to subvert agency administrative procedures.

Another game designed to control and mitigate the level of demands made on the supervisee might be called "Be Nice to me Because I Am Nice to You." The principal ploy is seduction by flattery. The supervisee is full of praise: "You're the best supervisor I ever had," "You're so perceptive that after I've talked to you I almost know what the client will say next," "You're so consistently helpful," "I look forward in the future to being as good a social worker as you are," and so on. It is a game of emotional blackmail in which, having been paid in this kind of coin, the supervisor finds himself incapable of firmly holding the worker to legitimate demands. The supervisor finds it difficult to resist engaging in the game because it is gratifying to be regarded as an omniscient source of wisdom; there is satisfaction in being perceived as helpful and in being selected as a pattern for identification and emulation. An invitation to play a game that tends to enhance a positive self-concept and feed one's narcissistic needs is likely to be accepted.

In general, the supervisor is vulnerable to an invitation to play this game. The supervisor needs the supervisee as much as the supervisee needs the supervisor. One of the principal sources of gratifica-

tion for a worker is contact with the client. The supervisor is denied this source of gratification, at least directly. For the supervisor the principal source of ratification is helping the supervisee to grow and change. But this means that he has to look to the supervisee to validate his effectiveness. Objective criteria of such effectiveness are, at best, obscure and equivocal. However, to have the supervisee say explicitly, openly, and directly: "I have learned a lot from you," "You have been helpful," "I am a better worker because of you," is the kind of reassurance needed and often subtly solicited by the supervisor. The perceptive supervisee understands and exploits the supervisor's needs in initiating this game.

REDEFINING THE RELATIONSHIP

A second series of games is also designed to mitigate the level of demands made on the supervisee, but here the game depends on redefining the supervisory relationship. As Goffman points out, games permit one to control the conduct of others by influencing the definition of the situation.⁴ These games depend on ambiguity of the definition of the supervisory relationship. It is open to a variety of interpretations and resembles, in some crucial respects, analogous relationships.

Thus, one kind of redefinition suggests a shift from the relationship of supervisor-supervisee as teacher-learner in an administrative hierarchy to supervisor-supervisee as worker-client in the context of therapy. The game might be called "Protect the Sick and the Infirm" or "Treat Me Don't Beat Me." The supervisee would rather expose himself than his work. And so he asks the supervisor for help in solving his personal problems. The sophisticated player relates these problems to his difficulties on the job. Nevertheless, he

seeks to engage the supervisor actively in a concern with his problems. If the translation to worker-client is made, the nature of demands shifts as well. The kinds of demands one can legitimately impose on a client are clearly less onerous than the level of expectations imposed on a worker. And the supervisee has achieved a payoff in a softening of demands.

The supervisor is induced to play (1) because the game appeals to the social worker in him (since he was a social worker before he became a supervisor and is still interested in helping those who have personal problems), (-) because it appeals to the voyeur in him (many supervisors are fascinated by the opportunity to share in the intimate life of others), (3) because it is flattering to be selected as a therapist, and (4) because the supervisor is not clearly certain as to whether such a redefinition of the situation is not permissible. All the discussions about the equivocal boundaries between supervision and therapy feed into this uncertainty.

Another game of redefinition might be called "Evaluation Is Not for Friends." Here the supervisory relationship is redefined as a social relationship. The supervisee makes an effort to take coffee breaks with the supervisor, invite him to lunch, walk to and from the bus or the parking lot with him, and discuss some common interests during conferences. The social component tends to vitiate the professional component in the relationship. It requires increased determination and resolution on the part of any supervisor to hold the "friend" to the required level of performance.

Another and more contemporary redefinition is less obvious than either of the two kinds just discussed, which have been standard for a long time now. This is the game of "Maximum Feasible Participation." It involves a shift in roles from supervisor-supervisee to peer-peer. The supervisee suggests that the relationship will be most effective if it is established on the basis of democratic participation. Since he

⁴ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, Doubleday 5: Co., 1959), pp. 3-4.

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knows best what he needs and wants to learn, he should be granted equal responsibility for determining the agendas of conferences. So far so good. The game is a difficult one to play because in the hands of a determined supervisee, joint control of agenda can easily become supervisee control with consequent mitigation of expectations. The supervisor finds himself in a predicament in trying to decline the game. For one, there is an element of validity in the claim that people learn best in a context that encourages democratic participation in the learning situation.

Second, the current trend is working with the social agency client encourages maximum feasible participation with presently undefined limits. To decline the game is to suggest that one is old-fashioned, undemocratic, and against the rights of those on lower levels in the administrative hierarchy—not an enviable picture to project of oneself. The supervisor is forced to play but needs to be constantly alert in order to maintain some semblance of administrative authority and prevent all the shots being called by the supervisee peer.

REDUCING POWER DISPARITY

A third series of games is designed to reduce anxiety by reducing the power disparity between supervisor and worker. One source of the supervisor's power is, of course, the consequence of his position in the administrative hierarchy vis-a-vis the supervisee. Another source of power, however, lies in his expertise, greater knowledge, and superior skill. It is the second source of power disparity that is vulnerable to this series of games. If the supervisee can establish the fact that the supervisor is not so smart after all, some of the power differential is mitigated and with it some need to feel anxious.

One such game, frequently played, might be called "If You Knew Dostoyevsky Like I know Dostoyevsky." During the

course of a conference the supervisee makes a casual allusion to the fact that the client's behavior reminds him of that of Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*, which is, after all, somewhat different in etiology from the pathology that plagued Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot*. An effective ploy used to score additional points, involves addressing the rhetorical question: "Your remember, don't you?" to the supervisor. It is equally clear to both the supervisee and the supervisor that the latter does not remember—if, indeed, he ever knew what he cannot remember no-v. At this point the supervisee proceeds to instruct the supervisor. The roles of teacher-learner are reversed; power disparity and supervisee anxiety are simultaneously reduced. The supervisor acquiesces to the game because refusal requires an open confession of ignorance on his part. The supervisee in playing the game well co-operates in a conspiracy with the supervisor not to expose his ignorance openly. The discussion proceeds under the protection of the mutually accepted fiction that both know what they are talking about.

The content for the essential gambit in this game changes with each generation of supervisees. The author's impression is that currently the allusion is likely to be to the work of the conditioning therapists—Eysenck, Wolpe, and Lazarus—rather than to literary figures. The effect on the supervisor, however, is the same: a feeling of depression and general malaise at having been found ignorant when his position requires that he know more than the supervisee. And it has the same payoff in reducing supervisee anxiety.

Another kind of game in this same genre exploits situational advantages to reduce power disparity and permit the supervisee the feeling that he, rather than the supervisor, is in control. This game is "So What Do You Know About It? The supervisee with a long record of experience in public welfare makes reference to "those of us on the front lines who have struggled

with the multiproblem client," exciting humility in family therapy with an unmarried female supervisor. The older supervisee will talk about "life" from the vantage point of incipient senility to the supervisor fresh out of graduate school. The younger supervisee will hint at his greater understanding of the adolescent client since he has, after all, smoked some pot and has seriously considered LSD. The supervisor trying to tune in finds his older psyche is not with it. The supervisor younger than the older supervisee, older than the younger supervisee—never having raised a child or met a payroll—finds himself being instructed by those he is charged with instructing; roles are reversed and the payoff lies in the fact that the supervisor is a less threatening figure to the supervisee.

Another, more recently developed, procedure for "putting the supervisor down" is through the judicious use in the conference of strong four-letter words. This is "telling it like it is" and the supervisor who responds with discomfort and loss of composure has forfeited some amount of control to the supervisee who has exposed some measure of his bourgeois character and residual Puritanism.

Putting the supervisor down may revolve around a question of social work goals rather than content. The social action-oriented supervisee is concerned with fundamental changes in social relationships. He knows that obtaining a slight increase in the budget for his client, finding a job for a client, or helping a neglectful mother relate more positively to her child are not of much use since they leave the basic pathology of society undisturbed and unchanged. He is impatient with the case-oriented supervisor who is interested in helping a specific family live a little less troubled, a little less unhappily, in a fundamentally disordered society. The game is "All or Nothing at All." It is designed to make the supervisor feel he has sold out, been co-opted by the Establishment, lost or abandoned his broader vision of the

"good" society, become endlessly concerned with symptoms rather than with causes. It is effective because the supervisor recognizes that there is some element of truth in the accusation, since this is true for all who occupy positions of responsibility in the Establishment.

CONTROLLING THE SITUATION

All the games mentioned have, as part of their effect, a shift of control of the situation from supervisor to supervisee. Another series of games is designed to place control of the supervisory situation more explicitly and directly in the hands of the supervisee. Control of the situation by the supervisor is potentially threatening since he can then take the initiative of introducing for discussion those weaknesses and inadequacies in the supervisee's work that need fullest review. If the supervisee can control the conference, much that is unflattering to discuss may be adroitly avoided.

One game designed to control the discussion's content is called "I Have a Little List." The supervisee comes in with a series of questions about his work that he would very much like to discuss. The better player formulates the questions so that they have relevance to those problems in which the supervisor has greatest professional interest and about which he has done considerable reading. The supervisee is under no obligation to listen to the answer to his question. Question 1 having been asked, the supervisor is off on a short lecture, during which time the supervisee is free to plan mentally the next weekend or review the last weekend, taking care merely to listen for signs that the supervisor is running down. When this happens, the supervisee introduces Question 2 with an appropriate transitional comment and the cycle is repeated. As the supervisee increases the supervisor's level of participation he is, by the same token, decreasing his own level of participation since only

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one person can be talking at once. Thus the supervisee controls both content and direction of conference interaction.

The supervisor is induced to play this game because there is narcissistic gratification in displaying one's knowledge and in meeting the dependency needs of those who appeal to one for answers to their questions, and because the supervisee's questions should be accepted, respected, and, if possible, answered.

Control of the initiative is also seized by the supervisee in the game of "Heading Them Off at the Pass." Here the supervisee knows that his poor work is likely to be analyzed critically. He therefore opens the conference by freely admitting his mistakes—he knows it was an inadequate interview, he knows that he should have, by now, learned to do better. There is no failing the supervisor's agenda for discussion with him to which he does not freely confess in advance, flagellating himself to excess. The supervisor, faced with overwhelming self-derogation, has little option but to reassure the supervisee sympathetically. The tactic not only makes difficult an extended discussion of mistakes in the work at the supervisor's initiative, it elicits praise by the supervisor for whatever strengths the supervisee has manifested, however limited. The supervisor, once again, acts out of concern with the troubled, out of his predisposition to comfort the discomfited, out of pleasure in acting the good, forgiving parent.

There is also the game of control through fluttering dependency, of strength through weakness. It is the game of "Little Old Me" or "Casework à Trois." The supervisee, in his ignorance and incompetence, looks to the knowledgeable, competent supervisor for a detailed prescription of how to proceed: "What would you do next?" "Then what would you say?" The supervisee unloads responsibility for the case onto the supervisor and the supervisor shares the case load with the worker. The supervisor plays the game because, in

reality, he does share responsibility for case management with the supervisee and has responsibility for seeing that the client is not harmed. Further, the supervisor often is interested in the gratification of carrying a case load, however vicariously, so that he is somewhat predisposed to take the case out of the hands of the supervisee. There are, further, the pleasures derived from acting, the capable parent to the dependent child and from the domination of others.

A variant of the game in the hands of an hostile supervisee is "I Did Like You Told Me." Here the supervisee maneuvers the supervisor into offering specific prescriptions on case management and then applies the prescriptions in spiteful obedience and undisguised mimicry. The supervisee acts as though the supervisor were responsible for the case, he himself merely being the executor of supervisory directives. Invariably and inevitably, whatever has been suggested by the supervisor fails to accomplish what it was supposed to accomplish.

"I Did Like You Told Me" is designed to make even a strong supervisor defensive. "It's All So Confusing" attempts to reduce the authority of the supervisor by appeals to other authorities—a former supervisor, another supervisor in the same agency, or a faculty member at a local school of social work with whom the supervisee just happened to discuss the case. The supervisee casually indicates that in similar situations his former supervisor tended to take such and such an approach, one that is at variance with the approach the current supervisor regards as desirable. And "It's All So Confusing" when different "authorities" suggest such different approaches to the same situation. The supervisor is faced with "defending" his approach against some unnamed, unknown competitor. This is difficult, especially when few situations in social work permit an unequivocal answer in which the supervisor can have categorical confidence. Since the supervisor was somewhat shaky

in his approach in the first place, he feels vulnerable against alternative suggestions from other "authorities" and his sense of authority vis-à-vis the supervisee is eroded.

A supervisee can control the degree of threat in the supervisory situation by distancing techniques. The game is "What You Don't Know Won't Hurt Me." The supervisor knows the work of the supervisee only indirectly, through what is shared in the recording and verbally in the conference. The supervisee can elect to share in a manner that is thin, inconsequential, without depth of affect. He can share selectively and can distort, consciously or unconsciously, in order to present a more favorable picture of his work. The supervisee can be passive and reticent or overwhelm the supervisor with endless trivia. In whatever manner it is done, the supervisee increases distance between the work he actually does and the supervisor who is responsible for critically analyzing with him the work done. This not only reduces the threat to him of possible criticism of his work but also, as Fleming points out, prevents the supervisor from intruding into the privacy of the relationship between the worker and the client.⁵

SUPERVISORS' GAMES

It would be doing both supervisor and supervisee an injustice to omit any reference to games initiated by supervisors—unjust to the supervisees in that such omission would imply that they alone play games in supervision and unjust to the supervisors in suggesting that they lack the imagination and capacity to devise their own counter-games. Supervisors play games out of felt threats to their position in the hierarchy, uncertainty about their authority, reluc-

tance to use their authority, a desire to be liked, a need for the supervisees' approbation—and out of some hostility to supervisees that is inevitable in such a complex, intimate relationship.

One of the classic supervisory games is called "I Wonder Why You Really Said That?" This is the game of redefining honest disagreement so that it appears to be psychological resistance. Honest disagreement requires that the supervisor defend his point of view, present the research evidence in support of his contention, be sufficiently acquainted with the literature so he can cite the knowledge that argues for the correctness of what he is saying. If honest disagreement is redefined as resistance, the burden is shifted to the supervisee. He has to examine his needs and motives that prompt him to question what the supervisor has said. The supervisor is thus relieved of the burden of validating what he has said and the onus for defense now rests with the supervisee.

Another classic supervisory game is "One Good Question Deserves Another." It was explicated some years ago by a new supervisor writing of her experience in an article called "Through Supervision With Gun and Camera":

I learned that another part of a supervisor's skills, as far as the workers are concerned, is to know all the answers. I was able to get out of this very easily. I discovered that when a worker asks a question, the best thing to do is to immediately ask for what she thinks. While the worker is figuring out the answer to her own question (this is known as growth and development), the supervisor quickly tries to figure it out also. She may arrive at the answer the same time as the worker, but the worker somehow assumes that she knew it all along. This is very comfortable for the supervisor. In the event that neither the worker nor the supervisor succeeds in coming up with a useful thought on the question the worker has raised, the supervisor can look wise and suggest that they think

⁵ Joan Fleming and Therese Benedek, *Psychoanalytic Supervision* (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1966), p. 101. See Norman Polansky, "On Duplicity in the Interview," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (April 1967), pp. 568-579, for a review of similar kinds of games played by the client.

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about it and discuss it further next time. This gives the supervisor plenty of time to look up the subject and leaves the worker with the feeling that the supervisor is giving great weight to her question. In the event that the supervisor does not want to go to all the trouble, she can just tell the worker that she does not know the answer (this is known as helping the worker accept the limitations of the supervision) and tell her to look it up herself...⁶

IN RESPONSE TO GAMES

Before going on to discuss possible constructive responses to games played in the context of supervision, the author must express some uneasiness about having raised the subject in the first place, a dissatisfaction similar to the felt toward Berne's *Games People Play*. The book communicates a sense of disrespect for the complexities of life and human behavior. The simplistic games formulas are a cheapening caricature of people's struggle for a modicum of comfort in a difficult world. A perceptive psychiatrist said in a critical and saddening review of the book:

It makes today's bothersome "problems" easily subject to a few home-spun models—particularly the cynical and concretely aphoristic kind that reduces all human experiences to a series of "exchanges" involving gain and loss, deceit or betrayal and exposure, camouflage and discovery.⁷

There are both a great deal more sensible sincerity and a great deal more devious complexity in multidetermined human interaction than is suggested by *Games People Play*. However, the very fact that games are a caricature of life justifies discussing them. The caricature selects some aspect of human behavior and, extracting

it for explicit examination, exaggerates and distorts its contours so that it is easier to perceive. The caricature thus makes possible increased understanding of the phenomenon—in this case the supervisory interaction. The insult to the phenomenon lies in forgetting that the caricature is just that—a caricature and not a truly accurate representation. A perceptive caricature, such as good satire, falsifies by distorting only elements that are actually present in the interaction in the first place. Supervisory games mirror, then, some selective, essentially truthful aspects of the supervisory relationship.

The simplest and most direct way of dealing with the problem of games introduced by the supervisee is to refuse to play. Yet one of the key difficulties in this has been implied by discussion of the gain for the supervisor in going along with the game. The supervisee can only successfully enlist the supervisor in a game if the supervisor wants to play for his own reasons. Collusion is not forced but is freely granted. Refusing to play requires the supervisor to be ready and able to forfeit self-advantages.

For instance, in declining to go along with the supervisees requests that he be permitted to ignore agency administrative requirements in playing "Two Against the Agency," the supervisor has to be comfortable in exercising his administrative authority, willing to risk and deal with supervisee hostility and rejection, willing to accept and handle the accusation that he bureaucratically, rather than professionally oriented. In declining other games the supervisor denies himself the sweet fruit of flattery, the joys of omniscience, the pleasures of acting the therapist, the gratification of being liked. He has to incur the penalties of an open admission of ignorance and uncertainty and the loss of infallibility. Declining to play the games demands a supervisor who is aware of and comfortable in what he is doing and who is accepting of himself in all his "glorious strengths and

⁶ H.C.D., "Through Supervision With Gun and Camera," *Social Work Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (October 1949), p 162.

⁷ Robert Coles, *New York Times*, Book Review Section (October 8, 196,), p. 8.

human weaknesses." The less vulnerable the supervisor the more impervious to gamesmanship—not an easy prescription to fill.

A second response lies in gradual interpretation or open confrontation. Goffman points out that in the usual social encounter each party accepts the line put out by the other party. There is a process of mutual face-saving in which what is said is accepted at its face value and "each participant is allowed to carry the role he has chosen for himself" unchallenged.⁸ This is done out of self-protection since in not challenging another one is also insuring that the other will not, in turn, challenge one's own fiction. Confrontation implies a refusal to accept the game being proposed by seeking to expose and make explicit what the supervisee is doing. The supervisory situation, like the therapeutic situation, deliberately and consciously rejects the usual rules of social interaction in attempting to help the supervisee.

Confrontation is, of course, a procedure that needs to be used with some regard for the supervisee's ability to handle the embarrassment, discomfort, and self-threat it involves. It needs to be used with some understanding of the defensive significance of the game to the supervisee. It might be of importance to point out that naming the interactions that have been described as "games" does not imply that they are frivolous and without consequence. Unmasking games risks much that is of serious personal significance for the supervisee. Interpretation and confrontation here, as always, require some compassionate caution, a sense of timing, and an understanding of dosage.

Perhaps another approach is to share honestly with the supervisee one's awareness of what he is attempting to do but to focus discussion neither on the dynamics

of his behavior nor on one's reaction to it, but on the disadvantages for him in playing games. These games have decided drawbacks for the supervisee in that they deny him the possibility of effectively fulfilling one of the essential, principal purposes of supervision—helping him to grow professionally. The games frustrate the achievement of this outcome. In playing games the supervisee loses by winning.

And, if all else fails, supervisees' games may yield to supervisors' counter-games. For instance, "I Have a Little List" may be broken up by "I Wonder Why You Really Asked That?" After all, the supervisor should have more experience at gamesmanship than the supervisee.

⁸ Erving Goffman, *Ritual Interaction* (Garden City, N.Y. Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., 1967), p.11.

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