Transforming the Education of Lawyers:
The Theory and Practice of Clinical Pedagogy

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Contents

Preface xv
Dedication and Acknowledgments xix
Contributors xxi

Chapter One · The Whole Is Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts:
Clinical Methodologies and Perspectives
Susan Bryant, Elliott Milstein, and Ann Shalleck 3
Four Methodologies and Three Perspectives: A Brief Introduction 4
The Book: Chapter-by-Chapter 6
A. Chapter Two: The Goals of Clinical Education 6
B. Chapters Three, Four, and Five: The Seminar Chapters 6
C. Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight: The Rounds Chapters 7
D. Chapters Nine, Ten, and Eleven: The Supervision Chapters 8
E. Chapters Twelve and Thirteen: The Fieldwork Chapters 10
F. Chapters Fourteen, Fifteen, and Sixteen: Lawyering & Pedagogical Perspectives 11
G. How to Use This Book 11

Chapter Two · Learning Goals for Clinical Programs
Susan Bryant, Elliott Milstein, and Ann Shalleck 13
Introduction 13
The Importance of Goals 13
A. Goal One: Develop a Professional Identity and Practice with Purpose 14
   (1) Integrate Personal and Professional Identities 15
   (2) Connect With and Serve Clients while Respecting Dual Loyalty to the Profession 16
   (3) Exercise Responsibility, Responsibly 16
   (4) Develop a Personal Commitment to Achieving Justice and Providing Access 16
B. Goal Two: Increase Understanding of How Law, the Legal System, and Other Institutions Function in the Lives of People, Particularly the Most Marginalized 17
   (1) Learn Law as an Interpretive Project 17
   (2) Understand the Importance and Malleability of Facts 18
   (3) Develop and Use Critical Insights about How Law Functions 18
   (4) See Clients and Problems in Context 18
C. Goal Three: Improve Capacities to Manage Uncertainty, Exercise Judgment, and Take Action 19
   (1) Law and Facts 19
   (2) Problem Solving 19
D. Goal Four: Develop New Modes of Thinking Like a Lawyer  
   (1) Role-Based Legal Analysis  
   (2) Narrative Reasoning  
   (3) Ends-Means Thinking  
   (4) Using and Building Theory through Contextual Thinking  
   (5) Critical Thinking  
   (6) Creative Thinking  

E. Goal Five: Build Lifelong Commitment and Skills to Learn in Professional Settings  
   (1) Learn through Reflection  
   (2) Use Models Critically  
   (3) Engage Peers for Collaborative Learning  
   (4) Metacognition: Learning About Learning  

F. Goal Six: Develop Skills Associated with the Human Dimensions of Practice  
   (1) Understanding the Perspective of Another  
   (2) Interpersonal Interactions  
   (3) Self-Knowledge and Self-Regulation  

G. Goal Seven: Build Lawyering Skills  
   (1) Identify and Name Skills  
   (2) Integrate Cognitive, Normative, Behavioral, and Affective Dimensions of Learning  
   (3) Learn Skills as Part of a Lawyering Process to Promote Transfer  
   (4) Select Skills to Focus Learning  

Conclusion
CONTENTS

(6) Law 53
(7) Beyond the Lawyering Process—Additional Topics for the Clinical Seminar 54

Chapter Four · Planning and Teaching the Seminar Class

Susan Bryant and Elliott Milstein 57

Introduction 57
Setting Concrete and Precise Goals 58
Planning and Teaching the Class: Focus on the Beginning and End of Class 61
Planning and Teaching the Class: The Middle Segment 62
A. Homework Assignments and In-Class Activities to Meet Learning Goals 63
B. Planning and Engaging in Classroom Conversations 66
(1) Conversations of the Whole 67
(2) Small Group Conversations 69
(3) Classroom Conversation Challenges 71
Selecting Learning Activities in the Classroom 73
A. Quick-Writes 74
B. Critical Incidents 74
C. Exercises and Role Play 75
D. Simulation 77
Conclusion 80

Chapter Five · Seminar Essays 81
Judgment-Based Lawyering: Structuring Seminar Time in a Non-Litigation Clinic
Mark Neal Aaronson 81
Using the Classroom to Teach Time Keeping, Client Billing, and Ethics
Bryan Adamson 91
One Community Economic Development Clinic’s Seminar and the Challenges in Connecting the Work of the Clinic to the Work of the Client
Alicia Alvarez 99
Reflections on Using Narrative Theory and Storytelling Practice in the Clinic Seminar
Carolyn Grose 107

Chapter Six · Rounds: Constructing Learning From the Experience of Peers

Susan Bryant and Elliott Milstein 113
Introduction 113
Goals and Learning Theory Supporting Rounds 114
A. “Just-In-Time” vs. “Just-In-Case” Learning 117
B. Collaborative Learning 118
C. Reflection 119
Professional Reasoning and Ethical Decision Making 121
A. Moving from the Particular to the General 121
B. Contextualized Thinking 124
C. Parallel Universe Thinking 126
D. Connecting Skills to Role and Values 127
Conclusion

Chapter Seven · Generating Conversations: Planning and Facilitating Rounds
Susan Bryant and Elliott Milstein

Introduction

Five Stages of a Rounds Conversation
A. Stage One: Description of Event(s)
B. Stage Two: Problem Identification or Clarification
C. Stage Three: Goals
D. Stage Four: Lawyering Strategies
E. Stage Five: Lawyering Lessons

Preparation for Rounds
A. Ground Rules
B. Topic Choices
C. Structure
   (1) Case Planning
   (2) Reflections on Performance
   (3) Case/Matter Presentations
   (4) Applying Seminar Theory to the Cases
D. Preparation for the Conversation

Faculty Role and Teaching Strategies
A. Choosing Faculty Roles
   (1) Facilitator
   (2) Coach
   (3) Expert
   (4) Co-Participant/Collaborator
   (5) Observer
   (6) Role Not to Play — Supervisor
B. Teacher Interventions: Starting and Keeping the Conversation Going
   (1) Questions
   (2) Mirroring and Rephrasing
   (3) Process Observations
   (4) Brainstorming
   (5) Role-Playing
   (6) Naming, Labeling, and Categorizing
   (7) Mini-Lectures
C. Addressing Impediments to Successful Rounds

Conclusion

Chapter Eight · Rounds Essays

The Case for Structured Rounds
Elizabeth B. Cooper

Beyond the Classroom: Applying the Stages of Rounds Structure to Analysis of Clinical Supervision
Deborah Epstein

Chapter Nine · Supervision: A Conceptual Framework
Ann Shalleck and Jane H. Aiken

Introduction
Understanding Supervision Using Arcs and Frames
A. Overview

B. Thinking Along Two Arcs

C. Using Three Frames: The Matter, the Macro, and the Meeting

(1) The Matter

a. The Arc of Client Representation in Supervision of the Matter
   (i) Lawyering Activities: Ways of Thinking and Lawyering Skills
   (ii) Lawyering as a Process
   (iii) The Client’s Experience and Understanding
   (iv) Race, Gender, Culture, and Inequality

b. The Arc of Student Learning in Supervision of the Matter
   (i) Expanding Learning: From Lawyering Tasks to Ways of Thinking
      (a) Uniting Theoretical and Practical Understanding
      (b) Promoting Integrative Learning
      (c) Understanding in Context
   (ii) Expanding Learning: From Lawyering to Professional Identity
   (iii) Deepening Learning: Relationships with Clients
   (iv) Deepening Learning: Engaging Motivations and Aspirations
   (v) Learning Beyond the Formal Curriculum: Lawyering Activities Necessary for Client Representation

c. Aligning the Arcs in Supervision of the Matter

(2) The Overall Experience — The Macro

a. Seeing Patterns while Appreciating Context
b. Exploring Fundamental Values and Ways of Thinking: Relationships with Clients
c. Forming Professional Identity as Process
d. Using Critical Perspectives
e. Developing Student Learning
f. Furthering Transfer

(3) The Meeting

a. Promoting Lawyering and Learning: Immediate Tasks
b. Incorporating Insights from the Frame of the Matter into the Meeting
c. Incorporating Insights from the Macro Frame into the Meeting
d. Realizing Multiple Objectives
   (i) Creating Segments in the Meeting
      (a) A Segment on Learning
      (b) A Segment on the Client
      (c) A Segment on Race, Gender, Culture, and Inequality
   (ii) Setting the Agenda

Gathering Possibilities and Deciding What to Teach: Guideposts

A. Insights from Arcs and Frames

B. Guideposts
   (1) Assess Student Capacity for Client Representation and Learning
   (2) Identify Goals for Each Student
   (3) Attend to Time

C. Using the Guideposts
Chapter Ten · The Practice of Supervision

Jane H. Aiken and Ann Shalleck

Introduction

The Meaning of Effective Supervision

Steps in Planning the Learning Experience

A. Step One: Identifying Over-Arching Goals Using the Frames of the Matter and the Macro

B. Step Two: Setting Goals for Development in a Case or Project

C. Step Three: Planning Supervisory Interventions

D. Step Four: Determining Success and Ensuring that Learning Transfers

Supervision as Problem Solving

A. Orienting to Context

B. Slow It Down

C. Appreciate the Process

D. Engage the Alternate Universe

E. Take Time to Reflect

F. An Example

Mantras and Norms

Conclusion

Chapter Eleven · Supervision Essays

Reflection on Supervision in Feedback Interactions: Reinforcement of Some Fundamental Themes

Beryl Blaustone

Combating Decision Fatigue in Supervision

Kristin Henning

Supervision Stories: Identifying and Engaging Professional Identity Issues

Donna Lee

Chapter Twelve · Fieldwork: The Experience That Sparks the Learning

Susan Bryant and Conrad Johnson

Introduction

Learning Goals and Opportunities

A. Goal One: Develop a Professional Identity and Practice with Purpose

B. Goal Two: Expanded Capacity to Think Like a Lawyer

C. Goal Three: Managing Uncertainty, Exercising Judgment, and Taking Action

D. Goal Four: Human Dimensions of Practice: Developing Skills in Interpersonal Dynamics, Especially the Capacity to Understand the Perspective of Another and Developing Self-Knowledge about Ways of Working

   (1) Empathy and Parallel Universe Thinking

   (2) Self-Knowledge and Self-Regulation

E. Goal Five: Understanding How Law and Legal Systems Function in General and in the Lives of Low-Income People

F. Goal Six: Learning to Learn
G. Developing Lawyering Skills  
Design Principles  
A. Ensure Student Responsibility For Client/Project Matters  
B. Select Fieldwork to Promote Integration and Transfer  
C. Limit Fieldwork to Enable Time for Reflection  
D. Select Fieldwork to Meet Service and Learning Goals That Advance Justice  
Environmental Factors  
A. Student Interest and Connection to Careers  
B. Faculty Preference and Expertise  
C. Social Justice Needs and Legal Context  
D. Pragmatic Concerns: Money, Time, and Other Resources  
Structures  
A. Clinics Organized Around Lawyering Tasks: General Practice  
B. Subject Matter Clinics  
C. Membership in Group and Holistic Representation  
D. Community Lawyering and Human Rights Clinics  
E. Hybrid Clinics  
“Doing The Math”: Connecting Fieldwork to Goals, Environmental Factors and Design Principles  
A. Process  
B. An Example  
C. Illustration  
Doing the Math  
Conclusion

Chapter Thirteen · Design Essays  
The Hybrid Clinic: Bringing the In-House Clinic to the Field  
Claudia Angelos  
Fieldwork and the Political  
Sameer M. Ashar  
Reflections from the Middle Ground: Clinic Design in Context  
Juliet M. Brodie  
Lawyering in the Digital Age  
Conrad Johnson  
The Evolving Design of a First Generation Clinic  
Wallace J. Mlyniec

Chapter Fourteen · Learning to Be a Lawyer: Embracing Indeterminacy and Uncertainty  
Robert D. Dinerstein and Elliott S. Milstein  
Introduction  
A. The Indeterminacy of Law  
B. The Indeterminacy of Facts  
C. The Indeterminacy of the Lawyer-Client Relationship  
D. The Indeterminacy of Problem Solving  
E. The Indeterminacy of Skills  
Conclusion
Chapter Fifteen · Reflecting on the Habits: Teaching about Identity, Culture, Language, and Difference

Susan Bryant and Jean Koh Peters

Introduction

Looking Back: Reflecting on Five Habits of Cross-Cultural Lawyering

A. The Habits in Summary

B. Teaching the Habits

   (1) Teaching the Habits as a Group and Culture and Language More Generally

   (2) Teaching the Habits One by One

      a. Teaching Habit One

      b. Teaching Habit Two

      c. Teaching Habit Three

      d. Teaching Habit Four

      e. Teaching Habit Five

C. Teaching about Working with Interpreters

Moving Ahead: Methodological Belief, Methodological Doubt, and the Doubting/Believing Scale

A. Elbow's Concepts of Methodological Doubt and Belief

B. The Doubting and Believing Scale

C. How Do Methodological Doubt and Methodological Belief, and the Doubting and Believing Scale, Relate to Cross-Cultural Lawyering?

D. Concrete Uses of Methodological Doubt and Belief and the Doubting and Believing Scale in the Law School Clinic

   (1) With the Client

      a. Client Interviewing

      b. Mooting

   (2) In the Classroom

      a. Introduction of New Theory

      b. Case Rounds

   (3) In Supervision

E. How Doubting and Believing Connect to the Other Habits

Conclusion

Chapter Sixteen · Talking about Race

Jean Koh Peters and Susan Bryant

Introduction

Readying the Garden: Removing the Rocks

A. Practice Nonjudgment

B. Recognize and Overcome Resistance

C. Remove Distrust by Building a Learning Community

Readying the Garden: Sowing the Seeds of Constructive Conversations about Race

A. Inviting the Conversation Early: "We will be discussing race."

B. Normalizing the Question: "What role does race play in our work?"

C. Building Conceptual Understanding for Twenty-First Century Race Discussions

   (1) Microaggression, Privilege, and Power

   (2) Implicit Bias

Conclusion
CONTENTS

(3) Using and Breaking Categories: Intersectionality and Anti-Essentialism 388
(4) Understanding Equality and Material Inequality 390
D. Historical and Current Vestiges of Discrimination in the Law 391
E. Five Habits of Cross-Cultural Lawyering 393
Growing the Conversations, Even the Difficult Ones, in the Classroom:
Three Principles and Ten Techniques 395
A. Principle One: Embrace Tension and Difficulty as an Inevitable and Constructive Part of the Learning Experience 396
B. Principle Two: Employ Nonjudgment and Isomorphic Attribution and Give Everyone an Opportunity to Be Heard 396
C. Principle Three: Choose and Cultivate a Direction for Conversation That Furthers Racial Justice; Take Responsibility for Your Choice 396
D. Ten Techniques for Carrying Out These Principles in the Classroom 397
(1) Acknowledge the Difficulty 397
(2) Articulate a Clear Discussion Prompt 397
(3) Take Time Out to Write 398
(4) Co-Reconstruct the Facts — Do Not Rush to Tie It Up in a Bow 399
(5) Use Methodological Belief and Doubt 399
(6) Require All Participants to Be Able to Restate Accurately Others’ Positions 400
(7) Consider Using a Rounds Approach 401
(8) Except When/Especially When 401
(9) Action Planning 402
(10) Review the Session Afterward to Prepare for the Future 402
Going from the Conversations Out into the World for the Client:
Five Questions and a Promise 403
A. Step One: Continue Amid Controversy 403
B. Step Two: Co-Reconstruct the Facts 403
C. Step Three: Carefully Listen 404
D. Step Four: Comprehensively Restate the Other’s View 404
E. Step Five: Clarify Changes and Confirm Choice 404
F. Step Six: Commit to Reflect 405
G. Five Illustrative Questions and a Promise 405
Areas for Further Study 406
Conclusion 406
Index 411
Preface

Clinical Legal Education started in response to the failure of traditional legal education to prepare students to engage in the craft of being a lawyer. Modern clinical legal education began with the belief that having law students represent real clients in underserved communities was important, both to teach students the skills and values necessary to their careers as lawyers and to improve justice for clients. From its beginning, clinical education has been a reform movement, one intended to transform the content and methods of the legal academy.

Clinicians provide students their first moment of responsibility for clients, a role that requires them to take actions that have consequences in the real world. Doing this under the tutelage of faculty members ensures that the lessons that come from that profound moment are ones that express the highest aspirations of the legal profession. To teach students engaged in practice requires thoughtful pedagogy. Clinical teachers from around the country and now around the world have worked together to develop and improve that pedagogy. Over more than four decades, the clinical community has gathered at conferences (most importantly, the annual Association of American Law Schools Clinical Teachers’ Conference), written articles and textbooks, created teaching materials, and participated in small intellectual networks, all to create the methods and content of the clinical curriculum.

This community has from the beginning developed innovative ways to teach both new and experienced teachers. Because clinical education is part of legal education reform in many parts of the world, that teaching is now an international phenomena. The need for law schools to teach students to understand the complexity of law as it takes shape through practice and to prepare students to undertake the responsibilities of practice has meant that the cadre of clinicians who are able to do this important work continues to expand.

As we write and edit this book, legal education is in a period of transition, responding partly to critical evaluations of legal education from many voices, but also to current transformation in the nature of law practice. As we write, we do not know where these shifts will take the legal profession and what society will need and expect from lawyers. Thus, we prepare students for a changing practice and, at the same time, identify and teach enduring norms about what being a lawyer means. In the current terminology, many legal educators have embraced a goal of making students more “practice ready,” but clinical education has since its inception been committed to the broader goals of ensuring that law schools educate students in the complex ways of thinking and acting required of lawyers to fulfill their critical roles in society.

Legal education that includes faculty-supervised practice enables law schools to educate lawyers with the capacity to adapt to change and be agents in reshaping law and the profession. In the book, we describe clinical education’s transformative potential to create ethical, skilled, thoughtful practitioners imbued with professional values of seeking justice and serving clients. We are convinced that educating students in a faculty-supervised
practice community enables deep, expansive, and enduring learning about how to practice and how to continue to learn. The book illustrates the vibrant learning potential of these practice communities as well as the methodologies teachers have to realize the potential of clinical education.

While the main audience for the book is the faculty who teach and supervise in these law-school sponsored practice communities located in the United States, we hope the book will prove valuable for all teachers, here and abroad, who teach about practice and professional identity. The book’s examples of how to teach come from faculty-supervised clinical programs and illustrate the depth and vibrancy of learning that is grounded in students’ experiences, guided by faculty, of exercising responsibility for clients. The pedagogical theories we identify for learning the necessary practice skills, ways of thinking, and perspectives on the legal system, as well as the suggestions we offer for how to use these theories apply to a broad range of experiential learning courses. In addition to identifying how students learn, the book, explicitly and implicitly through our examples, identifies how a teacher sets priorities for what students learn.

The book articulates an ambitious agenda for student learning and therefore for teachers who facilitate this learning. The chapters on the four clinical methodologies—fieldwork, supervision, seminar, and rounds—identify a variety of choices teachers face in designing each one. We know these lists of possible choices can be overwhelming, especially as one is beginning to teach. Indeed, in our own professional development, we focus on different aspects of our teaching or lawyering in different years to manage this feeling. The book is written in a way that allows a reader to focus on particular chapters without reading the whole at one time. We hope those in fellowship programs and other beginners will find the book a welcoming introduction to becoming a clinical teacher and that it will be resource for future development. We hope the book’s varied frameworks and approaches resonate with our experienced colleagues’ practices of good teaching, renew commitments to intentional teaching, organize thinking about established ways of approaching our educational activities, and offer new ideas.

The changing nature of professional work provides opportunities for teachers to explore anew innovative approaches to practice, to achieving justice, and to inspiring a new generation of lawyers. Evolving approaches to practice signal the need for careful thought about how and what to teach. In this book, we have aspired to do what we intend to do in our teaching: to provide concrete ideas for handing the work that is before us and create theories and frameworks for guiding our current and future work.

In writing this book we worked together with many wonderful colleagues from around the country. They have generously served as chapter co-authors or have written essays that add additional examples of the methodologies. We are grateful to them. They are a diverse group, all committed to the innovation and experimentation that characterize clinical education. Our work with them reminds us how much we have influenced each other in our thinking about clinical teaching. We are fortunate to be part of a community of law teachers who learn from each other about teaching students, representing clients, and achieving justice. We are indebted to this community for our development as teachers and for this book. Our field is an on-going collaboration among people who are passionate and thoughtful about the privilege we have to be clinical teachers.

Many clinicians whose voices are not heard directly in this book have contributed to what we know and have given feedback or offered suggestions for improving this project. We thank them for being willing and effective participants in this intellectual community.
that taught us all so much. Finally, the book is not a research project so the footnotes and bibliography are minimal. In the endnotes to chapters, we acknowledge thinkers whose work is precisely necessary for understanding particular ideas we are developing and identify a few specific sources for this learning. We, therefore, leave for another day references to the many who have influenced our thinking.

Sue, Elliott & Ann
Dedication and Acknowledgments

Throughout our long and joyous careers in clinical education, we have been part of a community of committed lawyer-teacher-scholars who have worked together to understand and teach lawyering. These colleagues and friends have created a new field of inquiry. Together they have generated knowledge about the work of lawyers, the role of lawyering in law and society, and the education of lawyers. They have sought to inspire students, improve legal education and the legal profession, and promote justice. We cherish them and hope that this book honors all who have shared their ideas with us, taught us, and learned with us.

The book is a collaborative effort, a demonstration of the collective tradition of clinical legal education. Our chapter co-authors, Jane Aiken, Robert Dinerstein, Conrad Johnson, and Jean Koh Peters, shaped our thinking and helped us realize our aspirations for this project.

Our essayists joined us in making it possible for this book to contain wisdom produced through the contributions of many.

The colleagues with whom we work every day, the faculties of American University Washington College of Law and CUNY School of Law, especially our clinical colleagues, are the first line of intellectual exchange in our lives. We are proud of our association with them.

We thank our law schools for supporting our work and providing research assistance over the life of the project.

We dedicate this book to all of these colleagues and friends. But most of all, we dedicate it to all those we love for supporting us and sustaining us over the long life of this project.

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Pedagogy (ˈpɛdəɡɒdʒi, -ɡoʊdʒi, -ɡɒɡi), most commonly understood as the approach to teaching, refers to the theory and practice of learning, and how this process influences, and is influenced by, the social, political and psychological development of learners. Pedagogy, taken as an academic discipline, is the study of how knowledge and skills are imparted in an educational context, and it considers the interactions that take place during learning. Both the theory and practice of pedagogy vary greatly. Purely practical considerations of committee organization and procedures for carrying out the work of translating are treated in the Appendix. A glossary of technical terms is also added, as a kind of index, in which difficult words are briefly defined. Unfortunately, the underlying theory of translating has not caught up with the development of skills; and in religious translating, despite consecrated talent and painstaking efforts, a comprehension of the basic principles of translation and communication has lagged behind translating in the secular fields. The first wave of clinical legal education in the United States began in the early part of the twentieth century, shortly after the casebook method emerged in the late 1890's as a popular route to preparing for a career in law.1 The casebook method's emphases on appellate judicial decisions and the Socratic method as the means to teach the skill. "narrow view of legal education."3 Even though the casebook method was growing to become the dominant pedagogy in law schools, there were critics of this method from the start.