

Changes in Self-Image in a Psychotherapy Supervisor Training Program

HELENE YBRANDT and KERSTIN ARMELIUS

Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden

In this study, the Structural Analysis of Social Behavior (SASB) was used to assess the self-image of psychotherapists enrolled in a psychotherapy supervisor training program in the initial and final phases of their training, as well as four months after the completion of their training. Their self-image was compared to that of experienced supervisors. The results show that the self-image of the supervisor trainees changed over the course of the training. By the end of the training, their self-image was as autonomous as that of experienced supervisors. Positive self-acceptance also developed. The relation between the outcome of psychotherapy, the style of trainees' supervisor, and changes in the self-image of the trainees is also discussed.

KEYWORDS *psychotherapy, SASB, self-image, supervisor, supervisor program, trainee*

Formal training and experience in supervision are associated with the development of a supervisor identity (Baker, Exum, & Tyler, 2002; Rönnerstad, Orlinsky, Parks, & Davis, 1997; Ögren, Boalt Boëthius, & Sundin, 2006). They are also associated with changes in self-image—that is, the set of thoughts and feelings that the supervisor trainee has about him- or herself as a supervisor. Training helps trainees develop better self-appraisal, self-understanding, and self-confidence as supervisors (Rönnerstad et al., 1997). Formal training also develops behaviors and values that will enhance the supervisory relationship, such as flexibility, being less critical, and having a more supportive approach to supervision (Watkins, 1995c,d).

Psychotherapy supervisor trainees pass through many models of the developmental process as they become supervisors (Watkins, 1995b).

Address correspondence to Dr. Helene Ybrandt, Department of Psychology, Umeå University, SE-90187 Umeå, Sweden. E-mail: helene.ybrandt@psy.umu.se

Kaufman and Schwartz (2003) have based one such model on Erikson's psychological stages. At the start of the process, the inexperienced trainee is in a state of uncertainty and insecurity, and needs guidance to develop basic trust and self-reliance. As the trainee gains more experience and training, he or she moves toward more autonomy and initiative. New knowledge and practice contribute to feelings of competence and ultimately forge a supervisor identity, so that by the end of the process the trainee sees him- or herself as a professional supervisor and has more realistic self-appraisal, increased supervisory skills, and changed supervisory confidence.

Watkins' (1993) Supervisor Complexity Model (SCM) is also influenced by Erikson's developmental model (1985) and deals with supervisor identity. According to Watkins (1993), the SCM is the most detailed and conclusive of all the models. It has also been applied in practice (Watkins, 1995c). The model describes four stages of development: role shock, role recovery/transition, role consolidation, and role mastery. Each stage of development is comprised of four aspects of supervisor development: competence versus incompetence, autonomy versus dependency, identity versus identity diffusion, and self-awareness versus unawareness. The first stage in the development of a sense of a professional clinical supervisor identity is role shock, when the trainee has no real sense of supervisory identity, is hypersensitive to his or her own shortcomings, is hypercritical, lacks confidence, and needs support and guidance from others in supervisory efforts. In the second stage, role recovery/transition, a crude, nascent identity core begins to emerge as the trainee becomes less questioning about the self and more realistic about his or her weaknesses and strengths, but still experiences various forms of doubt about the self in supervising. In the third stage, role consolidation, the vacillation between strengths and weaknesses diminishes and the self-assessment of the supervisor trainee becomes more realistic. A general sense of self-confidence and a more solid identity as a supervisor with greater self-trust and self-reliance is established. In the final stage, role mastery, the trainee's sense of identity as a supervisor is well-integrated, consolidated, and elaborated, with a good, strong, solid sense of confidence. At this stage, the supervisor trainee sees him- or herself as professionally effective and makes efforts to become still better as a supervisor.

These models of the development of a professional supervisor identity have generally not been operationalized and tested, and their applicability to the actual supervisory process has not been closely evaluated. Baker and colleagues (2002) tested the SCM model using the Psychotherapy Supervisor Development Scale (PSDS) (Watkins, Schneider, Haynes, & Nieberding, 1995) and their results were congruent with Watkins' model. Over time, supervisor trainees showed greater confidence in their professionalism. Rönnerstad and colleagues (1997), however, found evidence that suggests a need for some revision of Watkins' model, for the supervisor trainees in their study showed more initial confidence than predicted by the model.

The authors suggest that this result could be due to the fact that the trainees in their study were more experienced therapists.

All the models identify important aspects in the development of a professional supervisor identity, including more self-reliance and self-autonomy and less self-criticism. These aspects can be seen in terms of different combinations of self-affiliation and self-control/autonomy. One model that combines these two dimensions of the self-image in distinct clusters in a circumplex format is the Structural Analysis of Social Behavior (SASB; Benjamin, 1974, 1996; Benjamin, Rothweiler, & Critchfield, 2006). The SASB model collects behavioral information on the inner percept of the self in two fundamental dimensions: affiliation, with the endpoints of love and hate; and interdependence, with the endpoints of autonomy and control. The specific domains of the SASB structure are defined in eight clusters of different aspects of affiliation and control. The cluster version of the SASB model of the self-image is shown in Figure 1.

As can be seen in Figure 1, positive behavior toward the self is represented on the right-hand side of the model, negative behavior on the left, autonomous behavior at the top, and self-controlling behavior at the bottom. Applied to the development of a supervisor’s self-image, the SASB model

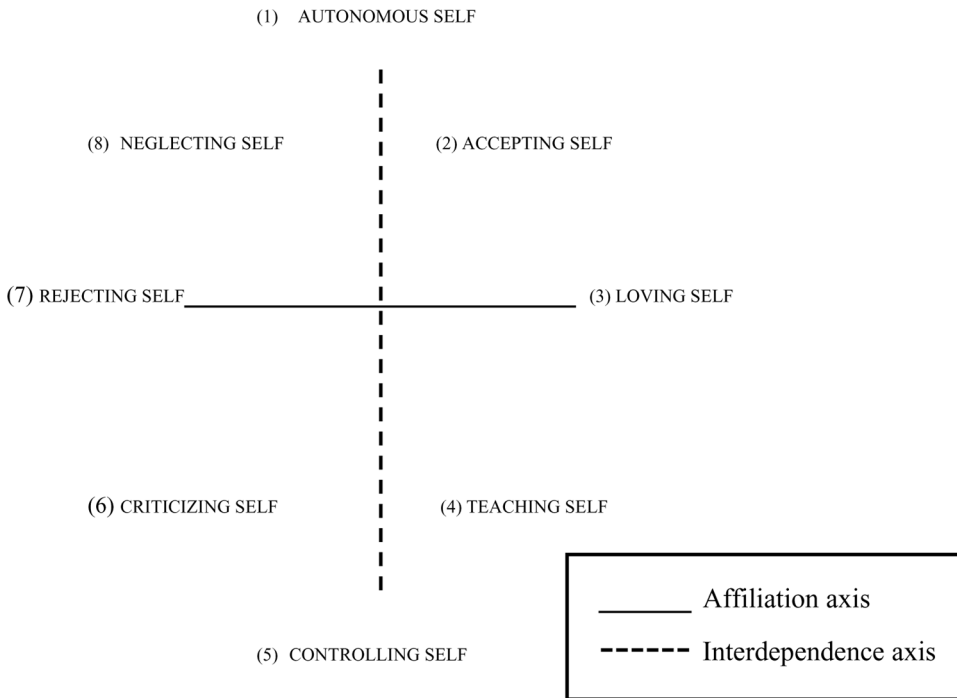


FIGURE 1 The Structural Analysis of Social Behavior: Eight-cluster version with the attention focus on the self-image.

describes the clinical supervisor's self-image in the following way, using examples of statements associated with each cluster: Cluster 1 represents perceptions of oneself as independent and autonomous. "As a supervisor I feel free to let my real nature develop as it likes." Cluster 2 combines autonomy and self-love and represents self-affirming behavior. "As a supervisor I let myself feel glad about and pleased with myself just as I am." Cluster 3 represents self-love. "As a supervisor I naturally and easily nurture and take care of myself as needed." Cluster 4 combines self-control and self-love and represents self-protective behavior. "As a supervisor I reliably protect myself, look after my own interest." Cluster 5 represents self-control. "As a supervisor I control and guide myself according to the objectives I have set for myself." Cluster 6 combines self-control and self-hate and represents self-blaming behavior. "As a supervisor I am very unsure of myself because I tell myself I do things all wrong, that others can do better." Cluster 7 represents self-hate. "As a supervisor I look upon myself negatively and destructively; I really am my own worst enemy." Finally, Cluster 8 combines self-hate and autonomy and represents self-neglecting behavior. "As a supervisor I don't care for myself and I am not striving to develop my own possibilities."

This study attempts to examine the development of psychotherapy supervisors' identity during a supervisor training program. The self-image of a group of supervisor trainees was studied over three semesters of training. Their self-image was assessed with the SASB model before and after training and at the four-month follow-up. The trainees' self-image was also compared with that of a group of experienced supervisors.

If the main developmental issues of supervisor identity are translated into the dimensions and clusters of the SASB, one can expect that the self-image after training should be more autonomous (Cluster 1) and less critical (Cluster 6), and that in the final stage, once the trainees have internalized the identity of a professional supervisor, it should be less negative (Cluster 7). Self-acceptance, self-reliance, and self-caring (Clusters 2, 3, and 4) are also expected to grow during training. By the end of training and at follow-up, the self-image should show similarities to the self-image in the professional supervisor group.

METHOD

Participants

The supervisor trainees (SVT), six women and three men, participated in a three-semester (2005 to 2006) postgraduate supervisor and teacher training program at a Swedish university with an integrated focus on psychodynamic and cognitive individual psychotherapy. Seven of the participants were psychologists and two were social workers. All were experienced licensed psychotherapists who, on average, had been working as psychotherapists

for four years. All were Caucasian, and the average age at the beginning of the training was 48 years (range of 36 to 58).

During their training, each participant supervised three students who were enrolled in a five-year training program to become psychologists. During the fourth year of that program, the students were required to do psychotherapeutic work with individual clients. Each group of three students met their supervisor once a week over one or two semesters for a total of 140 hours. The supervisor trainees in their turn were assigned to two groups of four and five trainees who met with one senior supervisor for a total of 140 hours. Both groups also met once a week over a period of three semesters. The general aim of the program was to contribute to the development of a supervisor identity in psychotherapy through the integration of supervisory theory and methods and actual supervision.

The supervisor (SV) group consisted of 12 (7 women and 5 men, mean age 49 years) highly experienced supervisors who were authorized clinical psychologists and had completed a two-year training program in psychotherapy supervision.

Measurement Instrument, Procedures, and Design

Self-image was assessed using the long form of the Swedish Structural Analysis of Social Behavior, SASB (Benjamin, 1974). Participants were instructed to rate how well each statement described their perception of their own behavior toward themselves when they were acting as supervisors. The answers were given on scales ranging from 0 (do not agree) to 100 (perfect agreement). Test-retest reliability is $r=0.87$ for the American version (Benjamin, 1988), and Cronbach's alpha for the Swedish version is around 0.80 (Armeliu, 2001). Regarding construct validity, factor analysis shows that the Swedish translation is consistent with the model (Armeliu, 2001). The data were analyzed on two levels of aggregation of the eight cluster scores. Two vectors, affiliation (AFF) and autonomy (AUT), express the two dimensions of the model, affiliation and control (Pincus, Newes, Dickinson, & Ruiz, 1998). The AFF and AUT vectors are composed of the eight clusters, which are assigned positive or negative weights according to their position in relation to the intersection of the axes. The equations for the vectors are

$$\text{AFF} = 0 * \text{cluster 1} + 4.5 * \text{cluster 2} + 7.8 * \text{cluster 3} + 4.5 * \text{cluster 4} \\ + 0 * \text{cluster 5} - 4.5 * \text{cluster 6} - 7.8 * \text{cluster 7} - 4.5 * \text{cluster 8}$$

$$\text{AUT} = 7.8 * \text{cluster 1} + 4.5 * \text{cluster 2} + 0 * \text{cluster 3} - 4.5 * \text{cluster 4} \\ - 7.8 * \text{cluster 5} - 4.5 * \text{cluster 6} + 0 * \text{cluster 7} + 4.5 * \text{cluster 8}.$$

The SASB self-image instrument was mailed to the SV group. The questionnaire was returned in a sealed envelope without any personal identification.

Three participants in the SV group did not respond to the questionnaire. The SVT group completed the SASB questionnaire anonymously in a classroom setting at the end of the first and third semesters. At the four-month follow-up, the questionnaire was mailed to each participant and was returned without personal identification. One participant in the SVT group did not respond to the follow-up questionnaire.

Self-image ratings in the SVT group before and after training and at follow-up were compared with that of a group of experienced supervisors (SV) who rated their self-image only once. The ratings within the SVT group were compared at pre, post, and at follow-up.

RESULTS

Self-image ratings in the SVT group before and after training and at follow-up were compared on two levels of aggregation, clusters and vectors (AFF and AUT) with paired sample t-tests. The differences between the SV and the SVT groups were compared only for vectors AFF and AUT in a series of t-tests for unrelated groups. The level of significance was set at .05. The mean and standard deviations for each of the eight clusters and for AFF and AUT in the SV and SVT (first and third semester and follow-up) groups are shown in Table 1.

Self-Image Before and After Training

The only significant difference between the supervisor trainee's self-image before and after training was found in Cluster 1, $t(8) = 2.6$, $p < .03$. After training, the self-image was more autonomous. However, the results showed a tendency toward a more positive self-image after training as the scores showed an increase in self-love (Cluster 3), $t(8) = 1.6$, $p = .15$ and in

TABLE 1 Mean and Standard Deviation for the Eight SASB Self-image Clusters and AFF(iliation) and AUT(onomy) Vectors for Supervisor (SV) and Supervisor Trainee (SVT) Before and After Training and at Four-month Follow-up

Group	Cl 1	Cl 2	Cl 3	Cl 4	Cl 5	Cl 6	Cl 7	Cl 8	AFF	AUT
<i>SV</i>										
M	44.9	70.2	53.4	56.8	56.2	12.3	10.0	8.0	769.0	-47.0
Std	16.8	10.7	17.5	11.6	9.7	7.1	7.2	6.5	208.2	159.2
<i>SVT (first sem)</i>										
M	35.6	63.1	60.4	62.5	60.2	18.6	12.2	4.7	449.2	-252.4
Std	10.4	21.2	18.1	14.3	12.6	20.5	13.4	6.5	453.6	219.6
<i>SVT (third sem)</i>										
M	44.9	72.2	70.9	72.8	60.0	10.3	7.6	5.3	815.1	-142.9
Std	6.3	15.5	19.3	7.5	12.3	8.3	6.0	4.0	137.5	115.5
<i>SVT (follow up)</i>										
M	46.8	76.3	73.3	75.0	58.5	8.8	8.1	6.9	1118.3	-94.5
Std	15.7	16.7	18.9	12.9	12.7	7.7	8.8	9.9	362.8	194.6

self-reliance (Cluster 4), $t(8) = 1.7$, $p = .13$. At the four-month follow-up, the supervisor trainees' self-image was significantly more self-accepting than it was at the beginning of training (Cluster 2), $t(7) = 2.4$, $p < .05$ (see Figure 2).

In summary, the ratings show that before training the supervisor trainees' show less self-autonomy and a tendency to be less self-loving and less self-reliant than at the end of training. At follow-up, their self-image seemed to be consolidated as more self-accepting and more autonomous.

Finally, the self-image in the SVT group before and after training and at follow-up was compared to the self-image in the SV group with the vectors AFF and AUT. The results are presented in Figure 3.

Compared to the SV group before training, the self-image in the SVT group differed on the AUT vector ($t(19) = -2.5$, $p < .02$). The supervisor trainees showed less autonomy in their self-image than the experienced supervisors. This means, for example, that the supervisor trainees did not feel free to relax and permit themselves to do what comes naturally as a supervisor in the same way that the experienced supervisors did. After training, the supervisor trainees had the same autonomy rating as the experienced supervisors. At the four-month follow-up, the self-image of the trainees was more positive than that of the experienced supervisors ($t(18) = 2.2$, $p < .04$) and we found no difference in autonomy.

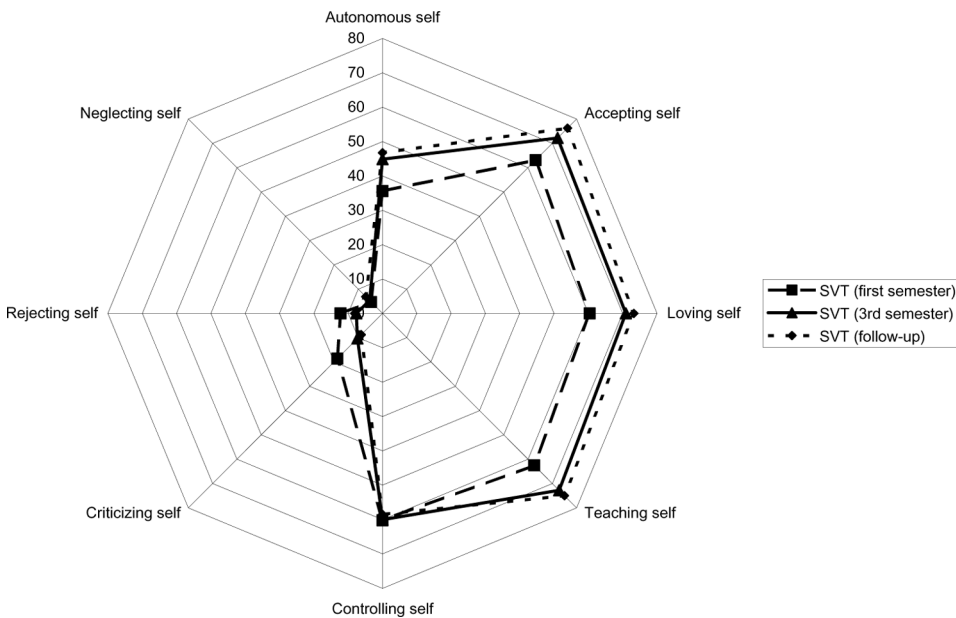


FIGURE 2 Cluster scores for self-image for psychotherapy supervisor trainees before and after training and at follow-up.

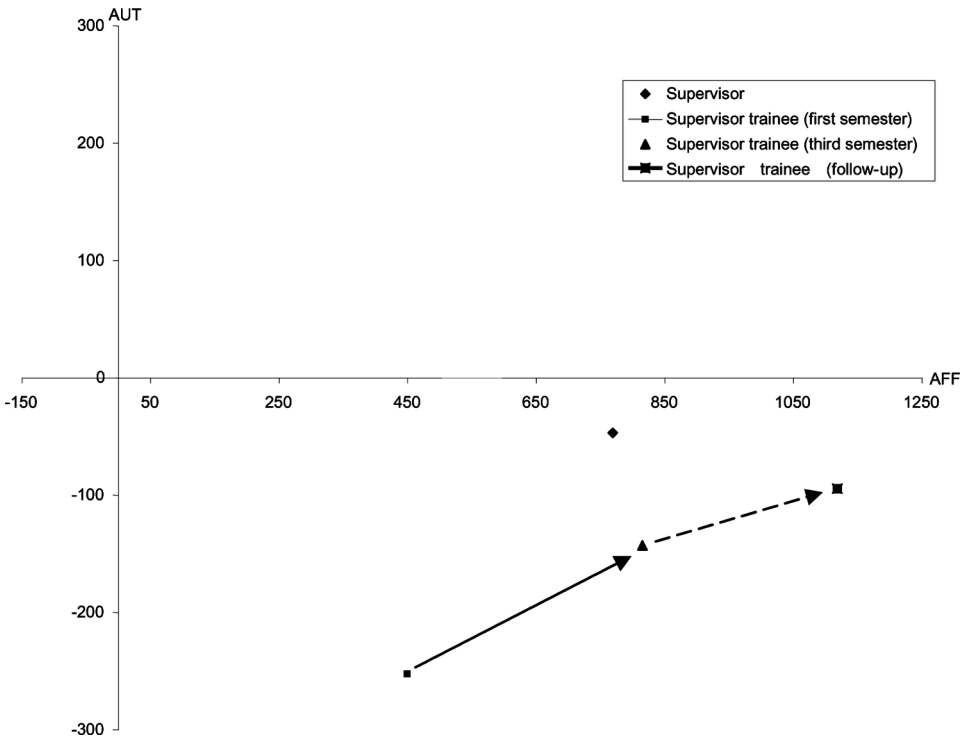


FIGURE 3 AFF (affiliation) and AUT (autonomy) vector scores for self-image for clinical supervisor and supervisor trainees before and after training and at four-month follow-up.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the development of the self-image in clinical supervisor trainees in a supervisor training program with a focus on psychotherapy. The main finding was that the main area of change in the trainees' self-image after training seems to be related to autonomy. This was seen both after training and at follow-up. At the beginning of training, the trainees rated themselves as less free and autonomous in their role as supervisor than the experienced supervisors. By the end of training, their perceptions of themselves had changed and their ratings of their self-image did not differ from those of experienced supervisors in regard to autonomy. This rating persisted at follow-up. After training, results showed a tendency for the self-image to become more positive, with more self-acceptance, self-reliance, and self-caring. At follow-up, this tendency seemed to be consolidated, so that the self-image in the supervisor trainee group was significantly more positive than in the experienced supervisor group. These results are in line with the initial hypothesis that by the end of training the trainees' self-image would become freer and more autonomous, with a tendency to be more self-caring and self-reliant.

Watkins (1994) relates supervisor trainee development to the supervision process. He states that those training supervisors initially focus on establishing a secure “hold” and on direct instruction, teaching, and structure. Gradually they loosen their hold, and a shift to a more collegial, collaborative stance occurs. The increase in autonomy in the relationship between the trainer and the trainee in the final phase of supervision training may be associated with a parallel increase in the supervisor trainee’s perception of his or her own autonomy.

An interesting but not significant finding of the present study was that the trainees were more self-critical at the beginning of their training and controlled and guided themselves in an attempt to do things correctly. Watkins (1995d) suggests that a self-critical factor may be important for the learning and growth of the supervisor in training. He argues that a self-critically constructive, evaluative attitude consistently directed toward one’s own efforts to supervise may support a trainee’s efforts to develop supervisor competence, especially at the beginning of training. With such an attitude, the trainee will regularly take valuable time out to think about the supervisor work, thus improving his or her development as a supervisor.

The results also reveal a tendency for the self-image of a supervisor trainee to become more positive after training. This change, as with the change in autonomy, may be affected by the style of the trainer and the supervisor process. Sundin, Ögren, & Boalt Boëthius (2006) found that supervisors in a training context found that their own supervisory style gradually became more supportive over the course of the training (i.e., “more exploring, invested, empathic, and accepting”). Positive trainee development was found to be facilitated by supervisors with a non-authoritarian style (Ögren et al., 2006) who were accepting, affirming, supportive, and encouraging (Reichelt & Skervje, 2002). It can be hypothesized that trainers who modeled this style as they supervised trainees provided role models that encouraged the supervisor trainees to develop a self-image with more warmth, empathy, understanding, and flexibility (Gilbert & Evans, 2000; Gorkin, 1987; Reichelt & Skervje, 2002; Russell & Petrie, 1994; Sundin et al., 2006; Ögren et al., 2006).

The supervisor trainee group generally had a positive and confident self-image as supervisors from the start of training, a finding that parallels that of Rönnerstad and colleagues (1997). Even so, minor changes did occur and at follow-up their self-image was more positive than before training. This result is not in line with Watkins’ suggestion that solid supervisor self-confidence only appears in the final stage of role mastery. The divergence between Watkins’ proposed developmental model and the results in the present study may be because the supervisor trainees in our study were experienced and had thus already developed some confidence as supervisors (see Rönnerstad et al., 1997). Another possible explanation is that changes in self-image after formal education, as in the present study, cannot

be compared with the development of a supervisor identity through practice, as proposed in the Watkins model.

The results of the present study are interesting despite the small sample size, the tentative nature of the findings, and the problem with multiple t-tests. However, the pattern of results is as expected from other studies, and theories and could not be explained only by Type I error. The field needs longitudinal empirical studies of the development of the supervisor self-image in a supervisor training program (Watkins, 1995b, 1998; Whitman, Ryan, & Rubenstein, 2001). The changes in the trainees' self-image found in the present study raise questions of how their supervisors' style affects the change in the supervisor trainees' self-image in training and how changes in the self-image might influence the outcome of psychotherapy (Watkins, 1998). Several studies have shown that the psychotherapist's self-image is a very important factor in the development and outcome of the therapeutic process (Henry, Schacht, & Strupp, 1986, 1990; Holmkvist & Armelius, 2000). It seems likely that the self-image of the psychotherapist's supervisor has a similar effect on the therapeutic outcome.

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