Professional Supervision in a Community of Practice

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis represents my own work except where due acknowledgement is made and that this material has not been included in a thesis or report submitted to Massey University or any other university for a degree or other qualification.

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Abstract

Previous research of supervision in educational psychology has regularly reported low rates of participation and dissatisfaction with the adequacy of supervisory arrangements. Most studies to date have been conducted on the assumption that supervision is a formalised, often one-to-one relationship. However, this view of supervision is incongruent with the ecological theories of human development that currently guide educational psychologists' work. The present study sought to develop understanding of the nature and contexts of supervision for a group of educational psychologists through examination of the actions they took to meet the goals of supervision. A situational analysis research method was used to examine the supervisory actions, in relation to the theories underlying current field practice, of 38 educational psychologists. This collaborative method of inquiry reflected the procedures of the psychologists' professional practice and enabled the understanding of supervision to be constructed using the participants' own sense-making processes. Results of the study indicated that the psychologists pursued the goals of supervision through the multiple interactions that took place within the regular activity of their community of practice. Supervision included a combination of formal, informal and situated interactions. It was concerned with connectedness to the professional community and comprised a range of integrated activities. The psychologists demonstrated that their supervision-in-action was guided by the same ecological principles that guided their professional practice. When supervision was conceptualised as a practice that included formal, informal and situated interactions intended to meet the goals of supervision, the participants reported high levels of satisfaction with current supervisory arrangements and participation in the practice. This thesis proposes an extended view of supervision that depicts supervision as activity situated within the interaction of a community of practice. It suggests that ecologically valid evaluations of supervision activity and the development of applicable systems of supervision must consider a wide range of supervision activities and contexts of practice.

Acknowledgements

The construction of this thesis has been made possible through the contributions of many family members, friends, colleagues and authors. Firstly, I would like to thank those who participated in this study; the psychologists who contributed with reports of their supervision activity; members of the reference group who provided feedback on the theory of supervision; and the managers of Specialist Education Services (now Ministry of Education; Special Education) for facilitating the data collection and consultation process. In particular, I would like to thank Lewis Rivers for his support of this project from the outset.

I wish to thank Associate Professor Ken Ryba for sharing his valuable professional expertise and offering me support throughout the study. I am appreciative of his generosity and courage in giving me the latitude to conduct this study in a way that reflected the sense-making processes of the participants. I am also grateful for the supervision of Associate Professor Pat Nolan who encouraged me to take a broad view of the project, challenged me to get over the trials in composing a PhD and pressed me to actually get on and write it. Pat and Ken also prompted me to examine the detail of my work and instilled in me a determination to demonstrate the coherence of my theory.

The writing of a thesis would be an isolating experience if not for the support of family. It would be an impossible task to express my gratitude for the support of my husband Brian who coaxed me back to university, joined me on the PhD journey and kept me engaged in my work through on-going dialogue. I appreciate his willingness to understand both the bright and dark moments that are an inevitable part of extended study. Thank you to our two daughters, Rebecca and Kimberley, who have supported me with their patience, independence and explicit valuing of this learning. I also acknowledge the vital contributions of my late mother and father, Mary and Ian, who imparted their desire to acquire knowledge and understanding of the world through a combination of the written word and first hand experience. I appreciate also the input of my sister Gilly for her generous support for our

girls when I have been studying and for her ability to supportively challenge my personal theories.

Several writers have contributed to my sense of purpose and enthusiasm for social research by proposing particular understandings of the relations between people. In the early years of my university study, Colin Lankshear introduced me to the work of Paulo Freire, who presented a view of knowledge construction that made sense to me and inspired me to further my learning. Later, I was introduced by Stuart McNaughton to the views of the social interactionists, including Lev Vygotsky and Urie Bronfenbrenner, whose perspectives on human development located concerns in the interaction between people and their worlds.

Particular knowledge and tools were required to examine the context of supervision. In this regard, I acknowledge the work of Chris Argyris and David Schön who provided a means for discerning and interpreting these interactions. Viviane Robinson's *problem analysis* was a vital component of the present study as it provided a vehicle for the management and re-creation of meaning for entangled and disparate data sets. I also acknowledge the contributions of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, whose recognition of situated learning and description of the functioning of *communities of practice* has contributed so enormously to this thesis.

This study would not have been possible without funding to negotiate the project or to gather information and consult with the professional community on the applicability of the findings. I wish to thank the College of Education, Massey University, especially the Department of Learning and Teaching, for their ongoing support throughout the project. I am also grateful for the financial support made available through: (1) the Graduate Research Fund; (2) an Academic Women's Award; and, (3) an Advanced Degree Award.

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Overview of the Study

In this thesis, I present an alternative conceptualisation of professional supervision in educational psychology. I portray supervision as a practice situated within the multiple relationships that educational psychologists develop between fellow members of their community of practice. This community of practice perspective on supervision contrasts sharply with traditional views that perceive the practice as a discrete dyadic activity. The alternative conceptualisation of supervision is illustrated in this thesis as a conceptual framework in which the structure of the community of practice, the interactions within it, and supervision activity are integrated.

Whereas most previous studies of professional supervision in educational psychology have adopted a survey approach (e.g. Fischetti & Crespi, 1999; Chafouleas, Clonan, and VanAuken, 2000), I elected to make use of situational analysis and adapt this as a research method in order to carry out a systematic analysis. Situational analysis is a method of investigating the ecology of problematic educational and social situations encountered by psychologists working in education. The situational analysis allowed me to explore the supervision context using the sense-making processes of the participants and to illuminate salient features of a complex supervision context. This ecological, largely inductive method of research involved selection, examination and analysis of proximal and distal layers of influence on psychologists' participation in supervision. The analyses of each layer, referred to as 'dimensions', were then integrated to form an overall analysis of the situation. The alternative conceptualisation of supervision was derived from this analysis.

Development of the Research Process

Initially, I was concerned with reported low levels of participation in supervision and high dissatisfaction with current provision. I had expected that I might identify and test particular strategies to address these problems. However, during the process of clarifying and focusing this research, it became clear to me that the notion of supervision accepted in educational psychology was incongruent with the ecological theory psychologists espoused with regard to learning and support. The focus of most studies and the language used in published accounts of supervision implied, and often made explicit, that supervision involved a singular relationship with another, usually more experienced, person. In addition, my colleagues and I had recently completed a nationwide study of the ways of working and models of practice adopted by psychologists, resource teachers of learning and behaviour and special education advisors (Ryba, Annan & Mentis, 2001a). We interviewed 72 participants in total, 26 of whom were psychologists, about the theories that guided their practice and the ways they accessed support for their work. The theories they identified shared the common foundation of socially mediated learning. Participants valued strongly the support they gained from the multiple relationships they formed with members of their practice teams. Although 58% of the psychologist participants in this study said they gained support for their work from supervision, 96% explained that they were supported by their involvement in their practice teams. These findings helped to explain why psychologists might choose not to participate in supervision as currently conceptualized, either as provider or recipient.

This realization gave rise to a new way of thinking about this research project. I first checked that supervision was a practice that warranted this level of investigation. Why pursue research into a practice that psychologists were saying, through their actions, was not a priority for them? I studied professional reports that called for increased participation in supervision and discussed the topic of supervision with work

colleagues, supervising psychologists and intern psychologists. Despite the widespread reports of dissatisfaction with supervision, the perceived efficacy of this practice to: (1) obtain support; (2) continue professional development; and, (3) maintain accountability remained strong across many sectors of educational psychology (Fischetti & Crespi, 1999; McIntosh & Phelps, 2000; Nolan, 1999; Ryba et al, 2001a). I concluded that both those advocating for increased dyadic supervision, and the practicing psychologists who sought support through interaction in multi-person service teams, valued the attainment of the goals of supervision.

Published models of supervision vary considerably in their approach yet there is a high level of consistency among reports about the functions that supervision must serve. This discrepancy suggests that supervision is a socially constructed phenomenon, designed to delineate and create the conditions required to pursue the goals of supervision. Assuming that this was the case, supervision could take many forms, and would transform as different theories of educational psychology became popular. It seemed to me that this process of change had been either obstructed or masked. Psychologists were holding on to a dyadic view of supervision despite their recognition of the broad social ecology and its inherent multi-connections.

Although the profession of educational psychology has been massively transformed throughout its history from the beginning of the 1900s to the present day (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000), psychologists' overt notions of supervision were grounded in theory that fit with earlier psychology practice and indeed, many available models of supervision have been based on counselling theories emanating from previous eras, e.g. unidirectional, staged developmental approaches (Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992) and social-role supervision models (Bernard, 1979) that focus on the skills of the supervisee and imply singular relationships between experienced and less experienced people. While supervisee skills might be important, this situation is reminiscent of the child-centred approaches that saw educational psychology evaluating student performance in isolation to the learning context. An

ecological approach to supervision would require an increased focus on the multi-systemic context of practice and supervision. Educational psychologists' traditional conceptualization of supervision has not adjusted in accordance with the change from person-centred to ecological understandings of the environment and is being rejected by the profession.

I considered that understanding of supervision must be negotiable and that it could be re-conceptualised to fit with psychologists' current theories about human development, personal support and accountability. I set out to identify the activities that a new conceptualization of supervision would elicit. This search led me to examine the theories recognised in educational psychology today and at key points throughout the profession's history. It also led me to consider the actions taken by psychologists to meet the three goals of supervision and to interpersonal factors that mediate between psychologists knowing about supervision and doing it.

Gathering Information for the Study

The study was designed to answer the questions below. The search for answers to these questions would take the project to its new destination, i.e. construction of an understanding of the nature of supervision for a group of educational psychologists. It would provide an implicit link back to the original problem with participation.

1. What is the nature of current supervision practice in a community of educational psychologists?
2. How does supervision function in this particular community?
3. How can supervision be viewed in order to discern participation or assess the adequacy of provision?

To identify and understand the activities that might comprise an alternative conceptualization that would fit with current educational psychology practice, I

needed to investigate the broad social and historical context of supervision. Action does not occur in isolation but is a dynamic product of social and historical events (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Vygotsky, 1987). In accordance with the situational analysis method, I examined three dimensions of the supervision situation. The selection was made on the basis of my knowledge of educational psychology practice and the contextual information collected at this point in the project. The three dimensions relied on three premises. They were:

1. Current educational practice is guided by the theories that have influenced the profession throughout its history.
2. Psychologists' conduct of supervision activities reflect their theories about ways to achieve the goals of supervision.
3. Social factors mediate between knowing about supervision and conducting supervision.

If the exploration of any of these dimensions had indicated that these factors were not relevant, they would have been discarded. If new relevant information that could not be accommodated within the existing dimensions had emerged during the exploration, this would have prompted the formation of a new dimension. However, this was not the case and the three dimensions were maintained throughout the process. This was probably due, in part, to the breadth of the dimensions selected and an extensive background investigation before embarking on this project.

Figure 1 shows the three dimensions of the supervision ecology examined in the study. The outer layer, the first dimension, contains the theories and associated discourses that guide the actions of educational psychologists. The inner core, the third dimension, represents the actual supervision activity psychologists make in order to meet the goals of supervision. The second dimension is located between the outer and inner layers and contains specific social factors that mediate between the theories and the supervision actions of the educational psychologists. The supervision ecology

is depicted as a dynamic structure in which changes in one dimension will affect the others. For example, as new theories are introduced to the community, the supervision actions of members will change as will the nature and extent of the mediating factors.
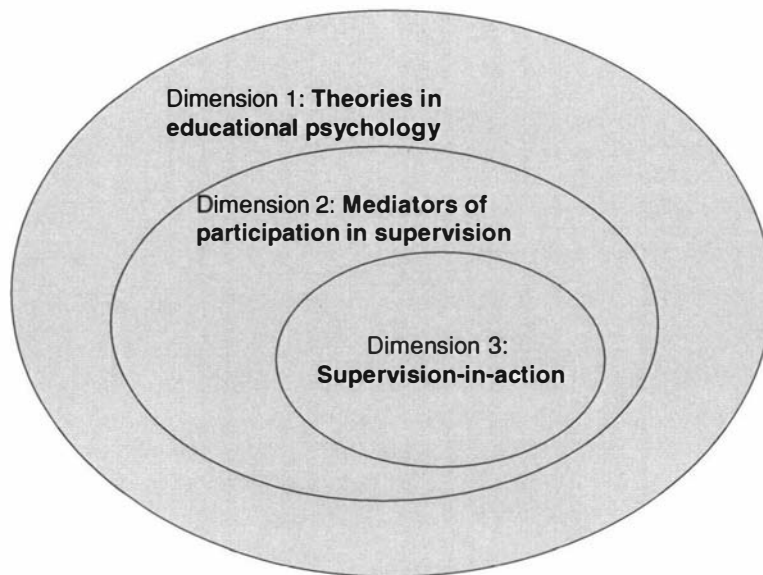
Figure 1. Three dimensions of the ecology of supervision in educational psychology.

Dimension 1: Theories in Educational Psychology

To develop the first dimension, I explored the theories of human development that guided psychologists' professional actions. This exploration took account of the results of our study of special educators' ways of working (Ryba et al, 2001a) and psychologists' reports of the current theories espoused by educational psychologists. Literature from other countries, such as Great Britain and the USA, were included in this review as developments in one part of the wider educational psychology community are influenced by, and contribute to, changes in other parts of the community. For example, Woolfson, Whaling, Stewart & Monsen (2003) have

developed ways of applying problem analysis (Robinson, 1987) in the UK. In New Zealand, psychologists have aligned their ways of working with the theory of Russian-born Urie Bronfenbrenner who has lived from an early age in the USA (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2004; Ryba et al, 2001).

Through examination of the social and historical context of educational psychology practice I was able to discern important current emphases on practice that would inform an alternative conceptualisation of supervision. The discerning process included the acknowledgment of multi-systemic units of analysis for social situations, construction of shared knowledge in multiple relationships, acceptance and valuing of diversity, and the identification and construction of effective learning zones. The educational psychology community now expects positive foci on the development of understandings of situations, location of practice in the context of interaction and requires that psychologists engage in evidence-based practice.

Dimension 2: Mediators of Participation in Supervision

In developing the second dimension, I was seeking to identify some important social factors that directly influenced participation in supervision. I examined explicit professional supervision knowledge through the review of journal articles, books and research reports concerning supervision in social service professions. Dimension two comprised a series of sub-dimensions each of which was summarised (See chapter 4). The summaries of each sub-dimension informed an overall summary (the analysis) of the dimension, which, in turn, contributed to the analysis of the supervision ecology.

In summary, I found that several social factors mediated psychologists' experience of supervision. These factors included professional relationships, cultural factors, psychologists' previous experience of supervision and the ways in which they thought and communicated about supervision. The traditional conceptualisation of supervision, with its focus on singular relationships, infiltrated supervision research

and was proliferated through its presence in literature and supervision systems. If psychologists' experience of supervision is not positive, then it is unlikely that they would actively pursue this activity. If the ways the profession conducts supervision are not in accordance with participant beliefs about accessing support, if psychologists are restricted to accessing supervision through a singular relationship, or series of singular relationships, if supervisory partners do not share sufficient cultural knowledge to understand the perspectives of one another, psychologists will be unlikely to approach supervision with enthusiasm. Furthermore, the extent to which they have acquired explicit and tacit knowledge about conducting supervision will surely influence their motivation to participate.

With minimal preparation for supervision, psychologists' opportunities to construct methods that align with their theories of support, professional development and accountability would be limited. In addition, as educational psychologists place high value on the evidence-base of their practice, the quality of any preparation undertaken would be strongly influenced by the way in which research in supervision has been conducted. If supervision research assumes that the practice is primarily a dyadic activity, then the findings of this research will generate understandings that continue to incorporate this view in training.

Educational psychology has retained a strong foundation, however, on which to develop a supervision system that is congruent with their theories about meeting the goals of supervision. The might of this foundation is reflected in psychologists' ability to articulate the theoretical bases of their everyday work and the retention of links with one another through engagement in shared practice and development of new knowledge. Most importantly, they have not lost sight of the value of maintaining professional standards and continue to stipulate that members of their profession are accountable, that they further their professional development and support one another in their work (See the New Zealand Psychological Society Code of Ethics for Psychologists working in Aotearoa New Zealand, 2002).

Dimension 3: Supervision-in-Action

The development of the third dimension constituted a discrete study within the study. It provided a window into the supervision theories-in-use of a participant group of educational psychologists. The participants in the study were 38 educational psychologists employed by the New Zealand Ministry of Education and situated in special education agency offices. These psychologists carried out their work in schools and other educational settings throughout New Zealand.

I engaged in 'working conversations' with each of the participants. The working conversations involved a two-way participant-researcher dialogue in which psychologists were invited to consider supervision as a broad range of activities. Participants discussed the ways they obtained professional support and talked about the activities they undertook to ensure that their practice was sound. I considered that the activities they reported in these conversations were supervisory events and constituted the participants' supervision theories-in-action. The validity of these accounts was critical to the development of meaning for supervision, as the participants' reported actions formed the basis of an alternative conceptualisation. To maximise the validity of data, all notes taken in these conversations were typed and sent to participants so that they could check and modify them if they wished.

The results of this study provided information about the wide range of supervisory actions taken by the participants. The participants said that they engaged in formally arranged and regularly scheduled supervision, made specific arrangements for supervision on particular projects or situations, held informal discussions with colleagues, worked alongside one another in practice teams, attended conferences and courses and accessed professional literature associated with their work. Although only two thirds of the group received formal supervision that they considered was satisfactory, most (90%) of the group were satisfied with their access to support through various combinations of activities.

From the analysis of the working conversations I concluded that the psychologists pursued the goals of supervision in multiple relationships, in multiple settings, using a variety of different actions. The activities were situated within the functioning of their professional community and situated in their everyday work.

Analysis: Identifying the Relationships between Dimensions

To understand the supervision ecology, I analysed the three dimensions simultaneously. To do this, I synthesised the analyses of all three dimensions, constructing a succinct statement of meaning for the particular supervision situation I had examined. This analysis is presented below.

Current dyadic notions of supervision are incongruent with the theories that currently guide psychologists' everyday work and also with the actions they take to meet the goals of supervision. These conceptualisations of supervision do not allow for legitimisation of all important supervision activities or support psychologists to demonstrate fully their participation in activity that serves to develop and maintain sound practice. They provide some insight into one aspect of supervision, but serve as barriers to learning about, preparing for, or carrying out ecological supervision in an increasingly diverse society. The participants indicated that they did not rely on formal dyadic supervision to support their practice, although this activity remained an important item on the menu of the supervisory activities they reported.

Instead, the participants pursued the goals of supervision in various ways, through their interactions in the multiple relationships they established in their professional community. For example, informal discussions, formally arranged meetings, shared work in schools, team meetings and attendance at conferences. The psychologists' supervision theories-in-action were closely aligned with their reported theories of human development, although several social factors mediated this relationship. These included the quality of professional relationships, broad cultural factors, and

psychologists' past experience with supervision. The extent and nature of psychologists' preparation for supervision also presented as mediating factors. These mediating factors were not considered causal but were enmeshed in the reciprocity of the supervision ecology, each dimension being subject to changes in other dimensions. For example, changes in research and preparation for supervision occurring in the second dimension will influence psychologists' participation in the third dimension. In turn, as supervisory participants attend to selected features of situations (see Argyris, 1990) and will minimise the discrepancy between their actions and their theories (see Festinger, 1957), the actions that psychologists take will influence their selection of theories about supervision.

Development of a Framework for Supervision

The finding that supervision was a multi-relationship phenomenon that integrated with the psychologists' everyday practice led me to seek knowledge about connectedness in professional communities. This was necessary as most supervision literature had focused mostly on temporary 'disconnection' from the professional community. Up until this point, I had considered the participant group to represent a *professional community,* but views I had not considered the term *communities of practice* in relation to supervision. However, on becoming acquainted with the conception of communities of practice advanced by Lave and Wenger (1991), I began to see how this theory of situated learning within professional communities could be applied to the supervision context. I noticed that the three ecological dimensions of educational psychology supervision examined in this study, mapped directly on to Lave and Wenger's community of practice model. They had identified three critical aspects (1) the 'domain', or shared knowledge bank, (2) the 'community' comprising the people and the relationships between them, and (3) the 'practice' comprising the actions and tools required to perform these actions. Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between the community of practice framework and the ecological perspective taken on supervision in this research. The *domain* represents dimension 1, educational

psychology theory, *community* represents dimension 2, social mediators of supervision participation, and *practice* represents dimension 3, the supervision actions of the psychologists.
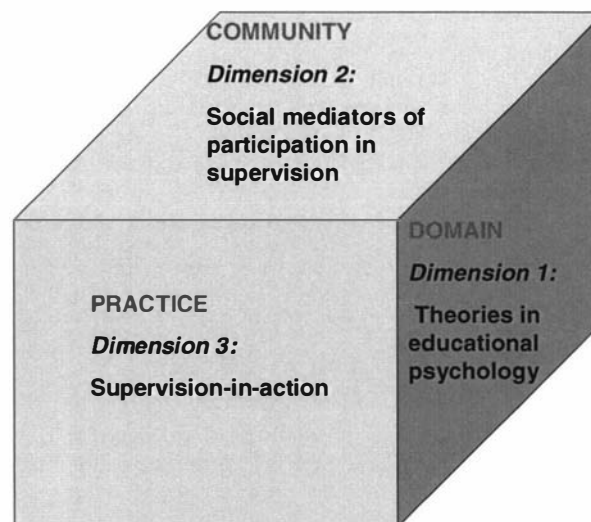
Figure 2. The three dimensions of the ecology of supervision in a community of practice framework.

This observed relationship prompted me to further examine the functioning of communities of practice. I expected that by understanding more about the way in which they worked, I would be better able to illustrate the integration of supervision with the practice of the community. After accessing a range of published information about the structure, operation and various kinds of communities of practice, I undertook to construct a model of communities of practice that situated supervision amidst its structure. The present study revealed that psychologists were not easily able to articulate their supervision practice. I considered that a framework would support psychologists to analyse supervision systems and discern their salient features. With a 'big picture' view, they would be better placed to build strong supervisory systems that would foster participation and positive experience with the practice.

The framework, created for explaining supervision in a community of practice, was based on a model of situated learning devised by Lave and Wenger (1991) and subsequently refined by Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002). Although these writers had not presented the community of practice in diagrammatic form, I represented their text as a three dimensional block and transposed the findings of the present study of supervision on to this model. I developed a series of figures to illustrate the elements of each dimension and the mechanisms that propelled the practice of supervision within the community of practice. Below is an introduction to the community of practice framework for supervision. Details of the framework are presented in Chapter 7 of this thesis.

The framework for supervision shows supervision to be situated within community of practice activity. It comprises all of the actions taken by community members in order to meet the goals of supervision. Selection of ways to meet the goals of supervision is determined by the central feature of the community of practice, its bank of implicit and tacit knowledge. The framework shows how the same theories that guide the everyday work of psychologists in educational settings, apply to the practice of supervision. In constructing supervision systems or methods of supervision, psychologists need to call on the theories they find acceptable at the time. From these theories they derive principles that, in turn, guide the development of methods and strategies for supervision action. The community of practice stores, develops and cares for the resources required to carry out supervision. For example, it may develop a specific language to discuss events, or particular tools to assess certain situations, or codes and standards with which psychologists can compare practice. As supervision activities are so closely associated with the theories of educational psychology practice, they will regularly change in response to changes in the knowledge bank of the community. While members of communities of practice share common knowledge, they are also diverse. The balance between commonality and diversity is an essential component of supervision as it generates the power to transform, and therefore sustain, the particular community of practice knowledge and practice.

Established and new members of communities of practice make equivalent contributions to supervision in the community of practice. While established members share their knowledge of the existing community and defend this special knowledge, newcomers bring new ideas that challenge existing theories and bring about vital change. Supervision activity supports or challenges existing knowledge, helps to maintain a process of continual transformation of the practice of supervision and the community itself. Such change is a critical aspect of supervision within the community of practice. If the practice is not continually transforming, supervision will cease to exist or will, as in the case of the communities sampled in previous research, become outdated and will be rejected by community members.

In summary, the development of the framework was informed by the supervision activity reported by the participants of this study and the vital elements of communities of practice. The theoretical and practical knowledge that guided professional practice and supervision in educational psychology was integral to the development of this alternative conceptualisation. This framework constitutes the major contribution of this study and is described in detail in the main body of the thesis

Review of the Framework for Supervision

Once the framework was developed, I consulted with members of the community of practice who had contributed their supervision theories-in-action. The development of the framework had been based on the assumption that, because the dimensions of the ecological situational analysis mapped directly onto the three dimensional community of practice structure, the integral components of each dimension would also match. This assumption required support. I carried out a review of the framework and its illustration to check that it matched member's observations of supervisory interactions and to examine the implications of conceptualising supervision as a community concern.

As part of the review, psychologists and management staff in one region of New Zealand attended two presentations to consider the representativeness of the illustrated framework. These presentations were followed by discussion about the framework in relation to its application in the field. Five psychologists formed a reference group for the study and were asked to provide brief written comments. The psychologists considered that the framework reflected the activity in which they engaged and that, in the main, it was a useful way to view supervision because it encompassed the range of supervisory activities in which they engaged. They challenged some particular aspects, however. These related to fears about the consequences of thinking about supervision in this alternative way, but not to the validity of the framework per se. In particular, the legitimisation of informal discussions as supervisory was uncomfortable for some because they were concerned that the boundaries concerning confidentiality may not be sufficiently clear. This led me to make some modifications to the original framework. These changes increased the prominence of the intentional supervision processes and reduced the more spontaneous ones so that supervision systems, based on this framework, could be more easily managed.

Summary

The present research has made two contributions to current knowledge in educational psychology. First, it has suggested an alternative conceptualisation of supervision. In brief, supervision is depicted as a community rather than individual activity. Participation in this practice encompassed a broad range of interactions between members of the community of practice and all of the activity they undertook to meet the goals of supervision. Supervision was shown to be a practice that integrated with regular community functioning and relied on multiple connections of community members who shared in the maintenance and development of a particular body of knowledge and mutual understandings of their ways of working.

The present study also demonstrated the application of the situational analysis as a method of research in complex circumstances that call for the development of understanding. This method, adapted from the psychology practice of the participant group, allowed for the construction of the alternative conceptualisation of supervision to be developed using the sense-making processes of the participants.

Organisation of the Thesis

The thesis began with an overview of the study and is followed by nine chapters, structured to match the research method. A brief description of the contents of each chapter is presented below.

Table 1. Organisation of the thesis.

	Overview of the Study	The thesis begins with an overview of the study from the beginning to the conclusion. It includes 'behind the scenes' information about the research process.
Chapter 1	**Background to the Study**	Chapter 1 explains the rationale for embarking on this study and for the particular focus selected.
Chapter 2	**Research: Perspective, Method and Design**	Chapter 2 describes the research method selected for the study and discusses critical features of the approach taken in the research. It contains the specific aims and research questions for the study, a description of the way information was processed and information regarding the involvement of participants.
Chapter 3	**Dimension 1: Theories in Educational Psychology**	Chapter 3 discusses the theories that guide field practice in educational psychology. It considers the implications of current approaches for practice and supervision.

Chapter 4	**Dimension 2: Mediators of Participation in Supervision**	Chapter 4 considers social factors that affect psychologists' participation and experience of supervision. This information was gathered from reports of supervision research, published comments on supervision and public policy documents that address practice matters for this professional group.
Chapter 5	**Dimension 3: Psychologists' Supervision Theories-in-Action**	This chapter presents the analysis of 38 psychologists' accounts of the actions they took to obtain support, professional development and maintain standards in their work. This analysis constitutes a proposition concerning the psychologists' supervision theories-in-action.
Chapter 6	**Overall Analysis of Dimensions.**	Chapter 6 presents an overall analysis of the analyses of the three dimensions. Critical features of an applicable alternative conceptualisation of supervision are identified.
Chapter 7	**Community of Practice Framework for Supervision.**	This chapter presents the alternative conceptualisation of supervision. It is presented as a community of practice framework for supervision.
Chapter 8	**Consultation and Review: Reference group response**	A reference group of psychologists from the participant community reviewed the proposed community of practice framework for supervision. Chapter 8 presents an analysis of the comments made by the reference group and discussion about the representativeness and applicability of the framework.
Chapter 9	**Reflective Evaluation**	The final chapter presents the conclusions drawn in this research and discusses the implications of the study. It includes discussion of the significance of the study and the original contribution that it makes to psychological knowledge. Strengths and limitations of the study are identified in addition to several suggestions for further research.

Chapter 1

Background to the Study

This thesis offers an alternative way of thinking about supervision, a guide for developing supervision systems and a systemic unit of analysis for supervision research. It presents the alternative conceptualisation as a community of practice framework that illustrates the ecology of the practice of supervision for the participants of the study.

Initially, my concern with supervision resided with the reasons for educational psychologists' reported low rates of participation in supervision and widespread dissatisfaction with current provision. My aim, at the outset of the study, was to examine the reasons for low participation and dissatisfaction, and to subsequently develop a supervision system that might identify and overcome some of the barriers to supervision. However, when I examined the available research on supervision in educational psychology I concluded that the assumptions made by psychologists about the nature of supervision warranted further investigation. It was not possible to adequately understand participation in supervision without more information about its nature and its relationship with practice. Therefore the study focused on the development of an alternative conceptualisation of supervision for this professional group. I sought a way of thinking about supervision that would support further research and development in this area.

1.1. Background to the Research

This chapter provides an introduction to the study and explains my rationale for pursing this topic, taking a particular perspective and applying the method of research. As I make in-depth comment on the theoretical and methodological aspects of the study in subsequent chapters, the topics are discussed here in just sufficient detail to establish a brief background.

Low rates of participation in supervision have continued despite the high value psychologists place on this practice. In New Zealand, Ryba et al (2001a) found that 72 special educators, 26 of whom were psychologists, considered supervision to be advantageous but expressed concern about their access to this resource. In other countries, including the United States of America and Britain, researchers have reported low rates of participation and little satisfaction with supervision provision (Chafouleas, et al, 2002; Fischetti & Crespi, 1999; Pomerantz, 1993). Despite this research, the reasons for this situation remained unexplained although some questions emerged. 'Why did psychologists report low rates of participation and dissatisfaction with the supervision they received?' Did this mean that psychologists were not engaging in supervisory activity? Were they not accessing personal support, furthering their professional development and ensuring that they maintained the standards set by the profession?

Supervision is the social conscience of educational psychology. Psychologists in New Zealand and overseas, regardless of the reasons they undertake, or don't undertake, supervision, are obliged to demonstrate their adherence to professional codes of ethics. A decade ago, the National Association of School Psychologists devoted a whole issue of *School Psychology Review* to the topic of supervision. Recently, the New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPsS) has taken active steps toward advancing the quality of professional supervision through workshops and schemes to provide supervision for trainee psychologists. The emphasis that researchers, professional

bodies and licensure agencies place on supervision suggests that the goals of supervision relate to essential requirements for acceptable professional performance (Allen, Ostrom, Maples & Morrison, 2000; Crespi & Fischetti, 1997; Nastasi, 2000; Scott, Ingram, Vitanza & Smith, 2000; New Zealand Psychological Society, 2002).

The NZPsP, through their *Code of Ethics,* and the New Zealand Psychologists Registration Board both require that psychologists undertake professional supervision in order to ensure that their work is sound. This requirement is in accord with global trends; psychologists in many countries are asked to adhere to similar codes. However, the advent of the Health Practitioners' Competence Act, effective from 18 September 2004, has placed increased pressure on New Zealand psychologists to demonstrate their engagement in supervision. The New Zealand government, through implementation of the Act, has aligned twelve professional groups by bringing them under the umbrella of a single Act. The Act places emphasis on the assessment of the continuing competence of health professions, including psychologists. One of the main features of the Act is the intention to link annual practicing certificates with professionals' demonstration of involvement in ongoing professional development programmes and supervision.

While there is cause for concern that participation rates in structured supervision are low, there are other forms of evidence to suggest that psychologists routinely engage in activity that is not formally recognised as supervisory, yet is intended to serve restorative, formative and normative functions. For example, psychologists can access support from on-line community forums such as the Global School Psychology Network operated from Northeastern University in Massachusetts or, in New Zealand, Massey University's Special Education/Educational Psychology internet site. They also take opportunities to discuss professional matters with colleagues in the course of their work (Ryba et al, 2001a). To understand the context of supervision and discern supervisory events, a broad ecological analysis of supervision practice is required. Therefore, the present study did not focus directly on participation rates and

satisfaction with supervision as it was currently conceptualized, but aimed to construct a way of thinking about supervision for a group of educational psychologists, by answering the following: What is supervision? How does it operate? How can supervision be analysed in order to examine and understand psychologists' experience of the process?

Supervision in previous studies had been conceptualised as a formal, usually scheduled, dyadic interaction. The concept of supervision as a practice located primarily within a single dyadic relationship appeared incongruent with the ecological theories that currently guided educational psychology practice (Christenson, 2004; Ehrhardt-Padgett, Hatzichristou, Kitson & Meyers, 2004; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). In their everyday practice, educational psychologists created understanding of situations by considering the many relationships in and between the multiple settings of people's lives. Knowledge, in the work of this professional group, was constructed through the integration of information gained from multiple events, relationships and settings. Therefore, it was not surprising that investigation of one decontextualised and explicit aspect of professional activity had not revealed a great deal of satisfactory supervisory practice.

1.2 Conducting the Study

As previously mentioned, the focus of the present study was the development of a new conceptualisation of supervision. I intended to make sense of supervision in the educational psychology community in the expectation that a new and more applicable understanding of the practice would lead to the development of systems of supervision that could facilitate and encourage participation in supervision. The alternative conceptualisation of supervision that resulted from this study is presented in this thesis as a framework that describes the structure and processes of the supervision system examined. The study was not intended to develop specific procedures or techniques for psychologists' supervisory interactions. Indeed, the

findings of the present study indicated that such community-specific methods must be developed by members themselves.

The research method used to develop the supervision conceptualisation was situational analysis. Situational analysis, developed specifically for psychologists' professional practice, is a framework for directing systemic casework and research (Annan, 2005). I selected this method of research for this study of professional supervision because it was consistent with the way many educational psychologists in New Zealand create meaning in their work projects. The situational analysis guides researchers to focus the investigation of particular circumstances on the most salient variables influencing a situation. These variables, presented as named dimensions, are considered in relation to one another to form analyses or interpretations of the information contained within them. The situational analysis process is guided by a set of specifications that ensure research is ecological, evidence-based, collaborative and constructive. Researchers using this method develop understandings in accordance with the ways of knowing of participant groups, creating meanings that reflect culture and social history. Interventions derived from these analyses are developed on the supportive aspects of the situations investigated. See chapter 2 for a detailed description of this method.

Note: Use of the term 'educational psychologist'.
I have used the term 'educational psychologist' in this thesis to describe the designation of each participant. Although most participants were educational psychologists, some were originally trained in clinical psychology programmes. However, all worked in educational settings and were employed to work as educational psychologists.

In addition, use of the title 'educational' psychologist is now not as straightforward as it was when this project started. Since September 2004, with the passing of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act, it has been illegal to use the term

'educational psychologist' unless specifically registered under that scope of practice. Only a small percentage of eligible psychologists have requested to belong specifically to the education scope of practice. Most have selected to remain in the general scope (New Zealand Psychologists Registration Board, 2005). However, this does not affect this report as at the time of data collection, psychologists were permitted to select the ways they qualified their psychologist status.

Chapter 2

Research: Perspective, Method and Design

Chapter 2 contains information about the theoretical perspective of the research, the research method applied and the rationale for its selection. In this chapter, I describe the steps the participants and I took to explore the supervision practice of educational psychologists and to construct an alternative conceptualisation of supervision. The chapter also includes information about the way certain ethical factors were proactively addressed.

I conducted this research from an ecological perspective. This vantage point permitted me to view supervision in educational psychology as a practice that interacted with the multi-dimensional, multi-systemic and dynamic ecology that surrounded it. Supervision was not an isolated interaction but a practice that reflected the professional community culture that incorporated current theoretical approaches and valuable learning from the past. The ecological perspective that broadened the view of supervision practice, allowed participants to become active in the process of constructing meaning for supervision events as the context was examined using their own sense-making processes. Educational psychologists in New Zealand and overseas currently promote ecological analysis for the assignment of meaning for the situations they encounter in their everyday work (Annan, 2001; 2005; Christenson, 2004; Power, 2003; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000; Ryba et al, 2001a).

2.1. Ecological Research

2.1.1. Multi-dimensional Inquiry and Construction of New Knowledge

Educational psychology currently reflects the work of a group of theorists. Prominent among these theorists are Vygotsky (1978) who perceived knowledge as firstly social and secondly individual, Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1979) who shared his model of the interactive ecology of human development, and Dewey who contended that individuals' actions were affected by the whole situation in which they are involved (1933; 1938). Although each theorist has made a unique contribution to educational psychology, the viewpoints advanced by these writers are compatible as they share a common foundation of socially mediated learning.

Ecological approaches to research imply that any construction of meaning for events can be established only through integration of cultural and socio-historical knowledge of the multi-systems that influence the situation under examination. Interpretation of data rests on the understanding that social systems are constructed by those who act within them. The present research considered the social and historical context of educational psychologists' supervision through access to the explicit published knowledge of the professional community and authentic accounts of supervision gained through collaborative inquiry. Rather than seek the 'truth' about supervision, the study generated a data-based but refutable proposition about the context of supervision activity.

For much of the twentieth century, psychologists and other social scientists have viewed contextual variables as irrelevant and confounding. They now, however, consider them the most important elements in the construction of meaning for situations. However, acknowledgement of the context of human experience does not imply that scientific inquiry is not an important feature in the construction of understanding. Ecological approaches simply require that a new range of questions be

asked. The introduction of contextualised research and practice offers an enriched view of science rather than an attack on it (Gergen, 2001; 2002; Potter, 2002).

Psychologists continue to apply principles of the scientific method as they gather and analyse social situations, although the context of research and practice is not the clinics or laboratories of previous eras, but the wider environment. They focus on the interaction between the individual or specific situation and the world, rather than individual people or isolated settings. Useful tools from previous times are still present in ecological research, but they are no longer used to create decontextualised understandings or applied to the detection and measurement of deficit. For example, psychologists work in ways that minimize unhelpful practitioner bias and prejudice, but these goals are not met through the isolation of a narrow range of variables. New methods of practice recognise benefits of researcher alignment with participants. Unhelpful elements of bias and prejudice are addressed by increasing the input of those involved in referral situations on an everyday basis.

Working within an ecological framework, collaboration and negotiation play a critical role. Psychological analysis of situations invariably requires the integration of the various interpretations of all participants. Researchers and practitioners adopting ecological ways of working form partnerships with those involved in their investigations in order to ensure representation of the multiple perspectives of participants (Esler, Godber & Christenson, 2002; Nastasi, 2000; Zins & Erchul, 2002). In the present study, I engaged in collaborative inquiry and negotiation with the participants. The psychologists' participation, voluntary and shared at every point, allowed for the co-construction of a theory of supervision through their active involvement in working conversations and representation in a review of the alternative conceptualisation.

The total ecology of situations includes social, emotional, physical, aesthetic and spiritual aspects. While the task of assessing all of these aspects might be beyond the

scope of educational psychologists, they do not deny their influence and do make efforts to include salient but less demonstrable factors. Clearly some factors are more amenable to observation, description, quantification and verification than others but all contribute to human experience. Accordingly, psychologists are now encouraged to integrate ecological and traditional scientific approaches in their work (McCaslin & Hickey, 2001; Rosiek, 2003).

2.1.2 Measurement in Ecological Research

The integration of ecological and traditional approaches includes the recognition of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods of research. Psychologists working in education now perceive significant limitations regarding isolated use of traditional quantitative-dominated methods. Although helping to reduce researcher bias, these approaches have been associated with the denial of relevant and important unquantifiable data concerning human experience and present practical difficulties in the implementation of research (Lipsev, 2000). For these reasons, the profession has placed a new emphasis on qualitative methods of research and practice. Such methods support the collection of more comprehensive data and acknowledge the reality of individuals' experiences.

The relationship between quantitative and qualitative methods is not dichotomous and supports the attainment of a wide variety of views. Both types of analysis contribute to the understanding of referral situations and the finding of answers to the questions psychologists ask in their research. Qualitative and quantitative designs can be complementary and used either sequentially or simultaneously to provide a broad picture of the situation under investigation and to support the development of new knowledge and understandings through the resolution of the contradictions the two methods generate (Sofaer, 1999). Psychologists seek triangulated data (Denzin, 1978) and work systematically and rigorously, continuing to ensure that bias and error in research is minimised. The current research involved the construction of a qualitative

(dominant)/quantitative research design (see Creswell, 1994) and satisfied Creswell's (2003) criteria for credible qualitative research. The criteria were met in the following ways.

- Integration of data from more than one source.
- Use of member checking of data sets.
- Use of rich, thick description of events.
- Clarification of bias through declaration of participant researcher status and maximising the contributions of members of the community to increase the proportion of their input and therefore reduce the extent of the researcher bias.
- Use of negative or discrepant information to challenge dominant accounts within the community and to develop new understandings.
- Prolonged field experience by the researcher to support member interpretation
- Opportunities for participants to make ongoing and confidential comment.

2.1.3. The Participant Researcher

All researchers are positioned, to some extent, in the social phenomena that are the objects of inquiry and inevitably are enmeshed in their interactions with participants (Middleton, 1993). This involvement necessarily affects the responses of participants in-vivo in addition to the researchers' selection processes in the interpretation of recorded data. I had previously practised educational psychology within the same agency as the participants in this study and my current work at the university involved continued liaison with agency personnel in relation to the study and preparation of new educational psychologists. I was a participant researcher, and therefore I could not assert complete objectivity. However, I considered the net effect of this participant researcher position to be advantageous with regard to the interpretation of observed actions, as subjectivity has the potential to enrich the data collection process and interpretation.

However, it is not sufficient to simply acknowledge the theoretical assumptions that underpin research and to recognise researcher values and perspective (Olssen, 1984). Specific procedures must be built in to the research process to maximise validity. To ensure that my participant status contributed positively to the research process, I made attempts through use of systematic, visible research and shared construction of meaning, to minimise threats to the validity of data (see Schwandt, 1994). The participants' own terms and interpretations were considered to be the most central information. I was particularly mindful when selecting material that would contribute to my own *history* of educational psychology, that my experience and perspective would guide me to select particular events and views from the vast amount of information and interpretations available. Therefore, I took measures to ensure that the material selected for review embodied current, local and dominant interpretations of events both past and present.

As a participant researcher I was also aware of the apparently paradoxical issue of representing both objectivity and subjectivity with regard to the inclusion of one participants' report of experience over that of another. I addressed this by taking an *inclusive* position. The inclusive position was one in which the contributions of all participants were accommodated by the alternative conceptualisation of supervision developed in the study. That is, rather than including only those contributions that were consistent across participants, all views were included. This meant that if information was shared by only one participant, it was considered a valid component of the collective community knowledge bank.

In summary, the integration of the interpretations of educational psychology theory and practice by prominent psychologists, and systematic, collaborative data analysis, supported the management of the subjectivity of others. I assumed that objectivity and subjectivity, with regard to professional supervision, co-existed and that objectivity was represented by the subjectivity of others. I considered meaning to be socially and historically relative and remained aware that I could not, and should not, become

disengaged from the activity observed (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In this way, the construction of the alternative conceptualisation of supervision became a shared endeavour (see Sofaer, 1999; Sarantakos, 1998).

2.1.4. Constructive Ecological Intervention

Co-construction of an alternative conceptualisation supported the development of a framework of supervision that reflected educational psychologists' current emphasis on strength-based intervention (Bear, Cavalier & Manning, 2002; Barnett, 2002; Fantuzzo, McWayne & Bulotsky, 2003). This is an important aspect of ecological research. The alternative conceptualisation was built on the positive foundations identified within the operation of the professional community, rather than on the deficits of existing systems. Descriptions of psychologists' preferred actions and the theories to which they most strongly adhered, informed the creation of the new solution. In this way, I was able to ensure that valued practices were acknowledged and retained. My intention was to generate processes of reconstruction and enhancement, rather than to destroy or degrade current supervision practice. To achieve this objective I took account of helpful procedures or those current supervision solutions that psychologists considered were effective. While barriers to successful supervision were necessarily identified, the analysis placed emphasis on supportive aspects of the supervision ecology.

2.1.5. Inductive Inquiry

Situational analysis is a largely inductive approach that allows researchers to generate understandings from the starting point of the situations being examined. For the present study, this research method provided a useful heuristic for the collection of data that accommodated all information provided by the participants, ensuring the inclusion of vital subjective information. This process permitted important helpful elements, existing within the situation, to be recognised and integrated into a

comprehensive theory that implied circular causation. The study did not seek to detect cause and effect as such, but to offer refutable description and theory.

Inductive analysis guided me to constantly refine emergent categories as new data came to hand rather than constraining me to test a priori hypotheses. However, although the generation of categories and theories may imply that I approached the investigation with no pre-conceived notions, I am not so naïve as to claim that the study of supervision, or any phenomena, might be conducted in a purely inductive way. Theories do not develop solely on the basis of data collected during research as researchers cannot approach their study without any theoretical concepts at all (Kelle, 1997). The motivation to conduct a study is always provided by a begging question to which every researcher will necessarily apply their existing schemata. Conceptual networks developed through lived experience serve as a means to structure everyday events, including the conduct of research. For example, in the present study I had noted, before conducting the research, that psychologists were not totally reliant on formal dyadic relationships to obtain support, professional development and accountability, although the range of activities they undertook for these purposes was unknown. This observation indicated a discrepancy between the espoused notions of supervision in the participants' workplace and the practices carried out by many of the members of the psychologist group. Additionally, in our previous study of special educators' ways of working, my colleagues and I observed that special education staff in the participants' organisation gained most support for their professional practice from involvement in their work teams (Ryba et al, 2001a). In the same study, the special education group also noted that their perspective on practice was shaped by a combination of behavioural, Maori, ecological, social cognitive and social constructivist theories. This information provided an indication of the perspectives that the special educators took with regard to support and learning in general. These broad perspectives did not focus on singular relationships but community interaction. These observations alone however, had insufficient data to substantiate any

relationship between theories and supervision but they did provide sufficient evidence to warrant further investigation.

Preconceptions necessarily play a critical part in guiding the observation, perception and construction of meaning for events. Accordingly, the analysis of perceptions can contribute positively to the ecological validity of research. Maintaining my awareness of the preconceived views I held, I worked to utilise the knowledge I had gained through lived experience, and allowed relevant, tacit knowledge to contribute to the direction and breadth of the investigation and interpretation of data.

In essence, my reasoning throughout this study was based on three types of logical inference: deduction, induction, and what Kelle (1997) described as 'abduction'. Abductive inference occurs when new information is not explained by, or does not fit with, previous theoretical understanding or existing categories and rules. In the present study, this process required, in the light of new data, the revision of preconceptions and gave rise to an alternative way of thinking about supervision. When information could not be included in existing categories, I was prompted to re-examine the tentative assumptions I held, gather new information from more focused sampling within the case parameters and modify the emerging analysis. The ecological participant method thus provided the study with not only a valuable means to generate categories and propositions that might not have been apparent before data collection began, but also an inclusive way of representing the collective supervisory practice of the participant group (see Coolican, 1999).

In summary, to conduct this study I drew lightly on an initial deduction, although in the major components of the investigation I relied largely on inductive and abductive approaches. This procedure elicited contributions relating not only to the dominant accounts of the community but of the departures from these. The dominant accounts, coherent from the outset, provided a foundation for the emerging conception of supervision. The less dominant accounts, while more difficult to access, provided the

information necessary to build a new and more inclusive framework of supervision for this particular community.

2.1.6. Evidence in Ecological Inquiry

The ecological approach to research has given rise to some debate about the nature of evidence (Doll, 2000; Hughes, 2000; Kratochwill & Shernoff, 2004). However, as registered practitioners, psychologists must determine what constitutes legitimate evidence for the specific contexts in which they work. They must have theoretically supported confidence that their interventions will be effective. It is not surprising that the educational psychology community has recently seen a flood of reminders of the profession's obligation to engage in evidence-based practice (Fox, 2003; Hoagwood, Burns, Kise, Ringeisen & Schoenwald, 2003; Holley, 2003; Kratochwill & Shernoff, 2004; Hughes, 2000). The diversity highlighted in debates on evidence-based practice have indicated that what constitutes evidence for one person, is not necessarily valid evidence for another. There is no one 'correct' form of evidence but a range of forms to suit different situations and to support different types of claims.

Adhering to the scientific method made establishing the validity of data a relatively straightforward matter. For instance, researchers and psychologists could develop hypotheses, find or construct instruments to measure behaviours through quantification of some purportedly representative aspect of a phenomenon, and hence justify their decision to confirm or reject a null hypothesis. While such measures are still useful for some types of research and practice, they are administered less frequently than in the past and are no longer interpreted in isolation from the context in which they are collected. A swing away from such scientific measurement has led the psychologist community to caution its members about the need to remain mindful of the importance of evidence, even though they must now consider evidence that is not always conveniently quantifiable.

The situational analysis method applied in this study ensured that the research demonstrated the "evidence-based designation" recommended by Kratochwill & Shernoff (2004) who argued that intervention in situations must reflect demonstrated efficacy in the specified contexts in which it occurs. Situational analysis allowed for the integration of evidence-based knowledge through the ways-of-knowing of participants. It supported the development of a new understanding of a familiar situation through the analysis of the collective knowledge of multiple participants, including psychologists, rather than of individuals alone.

For the purpose of this study, I have defined evidence as knowledge derived from published psychological and educational theory and research, in addition to the particular cultural knowledge of the educational psychology community. The evidence base of this study was located in the authentic contributions of the participants and the published works of their peers. My research perspective took in reports of the current actions of a group of psychologists, interpreted with reference to salient aspects of the social and historical context in which they occurred.

2.2 Research Method: Situational Analysis

2.2.1. Background to the Situational Analysis

The situational analysis framework is designed to provide direction for psychologists who wish to tailor their research and practice to the diverse circumstances they encounter. The framework guides psychologists to focus their practice and research in ways that support them to determine the salient foreground features (dimensions) of referral situations and invites them to propose analyses that explain evidence-supported relationships between these features. The open and collaborative, rather than prescriptive, consultation process supports the development of unique solutions for particular situations that are constructed on supportive features of referral situations. By applying this method in the present study, I was able to construct an

alternative conceptualisation of supervision from the point of view of the participant group.

Several features characterise this approach: (1) collaborative, evidenced-based decision-making throughout the consultation process; (2) recognition and valuing of the multiple perspectives of participants in any given situation; (3) acknowledgement of the social construction of knowledge and understanding; (4) identification of elements of new solutions in existing situations; (5) recognition of the interaction between people and the multi-systems of their lives; (6) appreciation of the dynamic nature of human performance; and, (7) systematic application of a problem analysis procedure.

Situational analysis has two aspects; (1) *style*, the particular theoretical orientation and (2) *structure*, the problem-solving method used to track information through from referral to intervention. Style refers to the *way* in which actions are undertaken, the perspective taken in the ascription of meaning for situations and the approach taken in the construction of new solutions. This aspect requires that psychology practice and research is always evidence-based, ecological, collaborative and constructive.

The problem-solving structure of situational analysis is *problem analysis,* developed in New Zealand by Robinson (1987). Problem analysis represents the particular steps required for processing of data. It guides the channelling of information from complex situations, representing these situations in new, more refined and manageable ways. From such analyses, principles are derived to guide the development of new and more suitable alternative situations. This particular problem solving method was selected for its capacity to accommodate a range of theoretical approaches to practice, particularly an ecological one. Situational analysis places some restrictions on the open problem analysis by requiring its particular style of implementation.

2.2.2. Description of Situational Analysis

The following description presents an overview of the situational analysis, reduced to its basic components, for the purpose of making the entire process visible at one time. When applied to practice, orchestrating the situational analysis is not such a straightforward matter. It requires the development of not only the explicit knowledge of the profession, but the development of more tacit understandings that support the transfer of this knowledge from its theoretical state, to research and practice (See Laiken, 1997; Stein, 1998; Wenger et al, 2002).

The structure and style of the situational analysis are illustrated in Figure 3. The process first involves selecting the area of study, clarifying the purpose of the research and stating the specific questions to be answered. Once this direction is set, researchers select the dimensions or the main factors that interact to support or mitigate problem situations. They propose relationships between the dimensions with reference to psychological theory and research, in addition to particular cultural understandings relevant to the unique situation under examination. This linking of dimensions forms an analysis that guides research teams to identify and address priority areas and to plan for intervention or development. Researchers then, in collaboration with the participants of the study, review and modify the new developments and completed interventions. These steps, however, do not always follow in a linear fashion. The process involves constant attention to the formation of sets of data and revision in loops backwards and forwards from the point at which the study is conceived. Steps 1-8 describe the tasks the researcher and others involved in the process take, while the core of the figure denotes the way in which these actions are conducted.

While situational analysis was applicable to the present study, certain features of the framework might preclude it in other circumstances. Although the framework appears straightforward, its application requires practical familiarity with the method.

Particular knowledge and skills are required to apply the method in dynamic interactive settings. As the framework is open, allowing an infinite range of variables to be considered, researchers using this method must have extensive knowledge of the phenomena examined and be positioned to interpret local responses. Checklist or controlled variable approaches to investigating situations ensure that particular fields are examined but they run the risk of excluding other areas that may have been the most relevant in the first place. While situational analysis addresses this issue, the extent to which this advantage is realised is dependent on the researcher's breadth of relevant knowledge, theoretical orientation and effectiveness of interpersonal skills.

(1) Selecting the study area

Some study areas are well focused from the outset, indicating specific topics or problematic situations for research. However, this is rarely the case. Situations that create interest to the researcher are often vague and require extensive exploration to clarify and refine a problematic aspect or an opportunity for development (Robinson, 1987). This clarification is the first task in the situational analysis.

(2) Developing research questions

Researchers and practitioners develop a set of questions to guide them in their exploration of the topic. The process of answering these questions may give rise to new questions. The license to generate new questions in order to explore the clarified topic is an important feature of contextualised research. It ensures that the quality and scope of research is not thwarted by insufficient flexibility to incorporate new information into the analysis as it comes to hand. Researchers must take care, however, to maintain a clear view of the aims and purposes of the research.

1. Select the study area

What is the research about?
What justification is there for conducting the study?

2. Develop research questions

•Clarification of the problem
•What do you want to know?
• Who are the participants?

8. Review of intervention/development

• Intervention effectiveness is evaluated?

• Check with participants for suitability of development.

2. Plan data collection

• Specific plans of exploration are developed based on initial hypotheses

•Ask 'What systems might influence the situation?'

4. Select dimensions

What are the salient factors influencing the situation?

Ecological
Actions referenced to an interactive, multi-level, socio-historical context.

Collaborative
Inclusive engagement with participants

Constructive
Intervention based on the strengths of the situation

Evidence-based
All decision-making is supported by theory and research in educational psychology and cultural knowledge applicable to the context.

7. Intervene or develop

• Interventions/Developments are constructed in collaboration with participants.

5. Analysis

• Meaning is ascribed to the situation
• Main influences, both unhelpful and supportive, are linked with reference to theoretical, research, social and cultural knowledge
• A data-supported hypothesis is advanced as explanation/meaning

6. Propose guiding principles for development and intervention

• Principles are derived from the analysis

Figure 3. The situational analysis method of social research.

(3) Planning data collection

The exploration of the situation selected for study requires a tailored plan. The researcher firstly posits some possible lines of inquiry in relation to the referral questions. The development of unique plans is shaped by a combination of observed events and evidence derived from researchers' knowledge of theory and research in the area of study. Tentative propositions, which will be examined during the research, imply imbalances between selected aspects of a dynamic ecology, rather than solely on deficits of individuals within the systems (See Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000).

The initial plan represents a set of loosely supported propositions about influences on the situation. It steers the researcher in a direction that maximises the chances of collecting relevant information to either support or challenge the propositions contained in the plan. The researcher and other participants design the plan to accommodate various information-seeking methods to ensure that the data are triangulated (Denzin, 1978). Triangulated data are those which are collected from two or more independent sources. Researchers using this method collect data from a variety of sources, at different levels of the ecology, over different periods of time, by various means or in different settings.

(4) Examining Dimensions of the Situation

When initial and generated propositions are supported by evidence, they are retained and designated *'dimensions'* of the situation. There can be any number of dimensions, but as situational analysis functions to create a more manageable meaning for circumstances, they are represented in ways that allow ease of access to an overview of the situation. For example, several dimensions may be collapsed into one broad category. In the current research, for instance, 'the supervisory relationship' and 'research support for supervision' were included in the broad dimension, 'Mediators of participation in supervision'. Each dimension is summarised. This summary constitutes a sub-analysis that later links with other sub-analyses to form the overall analysis of the situation.

In most circumstances, study areas are associated with problematic events although the dimensions include a range of both supportive and problematic aspects. Often, those involved in problematic situations have a long history of experiencing them as overwhelming. In such circumstances it can be difficult for researchers, practitioners and participants to make distinctions between foreground and background factors. Situational analysis supports, through ecological and collaborative exploration of the

referral situation, selection of salient factors that occupy the foreground of the situation. Background events that may serve to confound the situation are set aside with the tentative assumption being made that they are either currently minimally or not influential, that they may be creating a distraction from more important influences, or that they are indirectly related to the foreground factors. Such outlying factors are usually challenged in the data collection process with regard to their influence on the situation. In practice psychologists do not lose sight of these factors, but suspend their direct involvement with them until new supporting information is obtained. Dimensions are presented in ways that represent the views of the multiple participants who place problematic issues within the interaction between people and their world.

(5) Making an Analysis/Analysing the Dimensions

The analysis is the heart of situational analysis. It is created by proposing links between the summaries of the dimensions to indicate the influence of one on the other. The links, where possible, indicate propositions of circular causation rather than isolation of independent variables. This process takes into account the interdependence of individuals and social systems of the environment and serves to create meaning that provides a foundation for positive future development.

Connections between dimensions are made with reference to knowledge derived from theory, research and bodies of socio-cultural knowledge applicable to participants. This interpretation is the pivotal point of the process and demands strong and explicit evidence. Although situations are dynamic in nature, the analysis requires researchers and practitioners to take snapshots in time, taking into account the information collected to a designated point. Analyses represent data-based hypotheses regarding the relationships between dimensions and guide the development of new understandings and new systems.

(6) Proposing guiding principles for development and intervention

The analysis gives rise to a set of principles used to guide the intervention/development phase of the situational analysis. They denote the qualities that must be present in the resulting intervention/development. These principles inform the development of objectives in intervention studies and rationale for both intervention and development. This process results in evidence-based interventions as the principles that guide them are based on sound evidence-based analyses. Participants collaboratively design interventions with reference to professional knowledge and local cultural understandings. It is the analysis of the situation and the development of principles for development and intervention that justifies the conduct of those who map new developments or plan and implement interventions.

Researchers prioritise the principles in relation to their importance for direct intervention. If the analysis is sound, it is likely that not all dimensions will require direct intervention. Knowledge of the relationships between these dimensions allows for the development of 'least-intrusive' interventions and focused developments. Minimal but powerful changes to the environment have clear advantages over 'cover all the bases' interventions that address each dimension as there is less chance of disrupting supportive aspects of situations and greater opportunity of implementing sustainable change.

(7) Planning and Implementing an Intervention or Development

The process of developing an intervention (ecological modification) or proposing a new development (for example, a resource folio, an emergency response plan, an alternative conceptualisation) necessarily involves discussion with the participants of the situation. If the process has been collaborative throughout, the analysis will have been largely jointly conceived, maximising opportunities for shared participant views in relation to the direction developments take.

(8) Reviewing the Intervention/Development

On completion of a development or conclusion of an intervention, participants, or representatives for the participant group, review the outcomes. They evaluate interventions in terms of the extent to which they meet objectives derived from the guiding principles. They assess developments with regard to their alignment with the analysis, their reported usefulness and the fit the participant group consider them to have with their experienced reality. Information from such reviews is used to modify developments and adjust interventions. In some cases, this point represents the end of the situational analysis process. In others, the review indicates the need to conduct further cycles of the process in order to collect the data required to achieve more coherence in developments or to meet objectives in interventions.

2.3. Research Design

2.3.1. Conceptualising the Study

The first two steps in the research process involved clarifying the focus of the study, formulating the specific aim of the research and developing research questions. During this phase I also negotiated with potential participants and key members of their employing organisation about the terms and conditions for conducting the project. I obtained ethical approval to conduct the study from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (See 2.4. Ethical Considerations).

Aim of the Study

The aim of the study was to develop an alternative conceptualisation of professional supervision for an educational psychology community.

Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

a) What is the nature of current supervision practice in a community of educational psychologists?

b) How does supervision function in this particular community?

c) How can supervision be viewed in order to discern participation or assess the adequacy of provision?

Step 3 involved the selection of the tentative fields of investigation, later to become dimensions. These fields were (a) educational psychology theory, (b) social factors associated with participation in supervision and (c) supervision activity itself. The situational analysis conducted in this study involved a process of ongoing analysis and data collection. Figure 4 illustrates the design of the research and shows how the

situational analysis process is not linear but loops backward and forward to support evidence-based analysis and development.
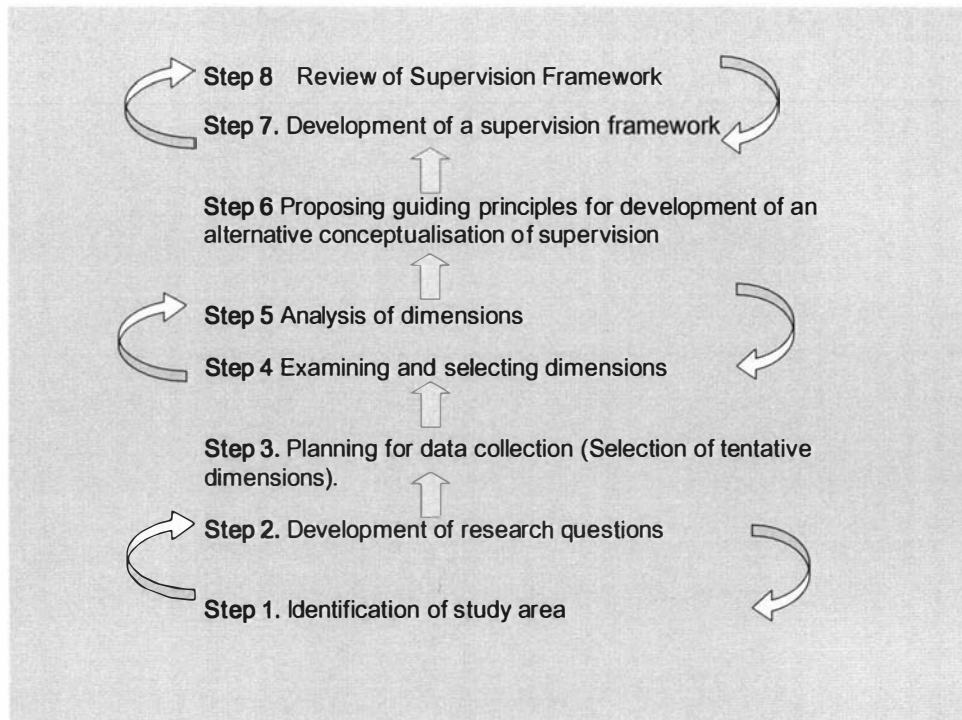
Figure 4. The steps taken to develop an alternative conceptualisation of supervision

2.3.2. Examining and Determining Dimensions

Step 4 involved the description and analysis of three discrete dimensions. In this thesis I describe the design of the research process for each dimension as separate sub-studies.

Dimension 1: Theories in Educational Psychology

Objectives:

a) To identify the theoretical foundation of practice in the profession of educational psychology.

b) To recognise the particular principles, derived from these theories that guide field practice of educational psychologists in New Zealand.

Rationale:

From an ecological point of view, understanding of current supervision practice requires examination of the social and historical context of the situation in which it is developed.

Procedure:

Document Review

To examine the broad theoretical context of practice in educational psychology, I reviewed published information relating to psychologists' practice in New Zealand and overseas. The review centred on the major theoretical approaches taken to practice since educational psychology was established as a profession.

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, my colleagues and I had recently investigated the practice of 72 special educators working in educational settings where severe behaviour problems existed (Ryba et al, 2001a). The special educator group comprised 26 Psychologists, 24 Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour, and 22 Special Education Advisors. We sought to identify the theoretical underpinnings to the participants' practices through the application of a conceptual framework for analysis advanced by Cole and Chan (1990). The framework that allowed us to identify the practices, principles and underlying theories purported to guide these practices (Figure 5). The information gathered in that study was particularly relevant to the present study. Both studies involved participants from the same organisation. The data from the previous study strengthened the representation of the local context of practice of the participants.
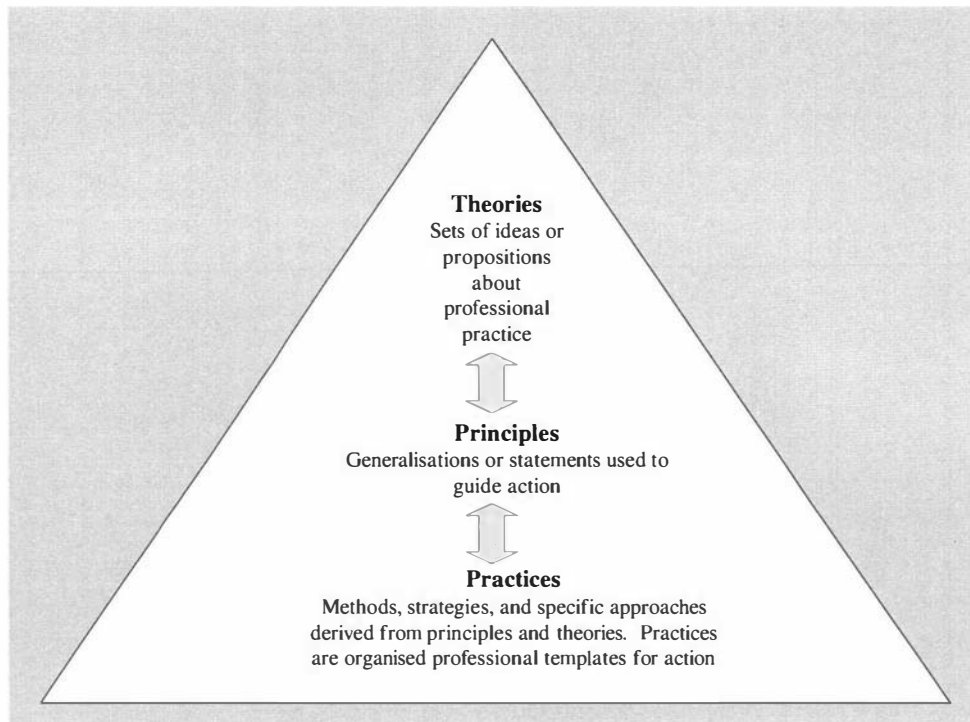
Figure 5. The relationship between theory, principles and practices. (Adapted from Cole & Chan, 1990)

The findings of the review of theoretical knowledge and research in educational psychology can be found in chapter 4. Some of the results of this study reported psychologists contributions separately from those of other disciplines, although some aspects of practice were collated across disciplines.

Dimension 2: Mediators of participation in supervision

Objectives: This dimension was examined to identify social contextual factors that influenced psychologists' experience of supervision.

Rationale: Knowledge of psychologists' experience of supervision would help in developing understanding of the factors that influence psychologists' decisions regarding their participation in supervision.

Procedure: This dimension was explored by reviewing published reports of research, professional comments on supervision and professional guidelines and policies related to the history, conceptualisation and practice of supervision.

Dimension 3: Psychologists' Supervision Theories-in-Action

Objective: To identify a group of educational psychologists' *theories-in-action* in relation to pursuing the goals of supervision.

Rationale: Participants' accounts of actions taken to meet the goals of supervision would provide a window into the educational psychologists theories-in-action about supervisory practice (Argyris & Schön, 1974).

Knowledge of the relationship between theory and action, thought and behaviour, were critical to the research process. The accounts of the actions the participants took to pursue the goals of supervision formed the focal point of the data as they provided a window into the underlying theories of the participant group in relation to supervision practice. Argyris and Schön (1974) noted that there is sometimes a discrepancy between people's *espoused theories* and their *theories-in-use.* Espoused theories are those that people articulate, or those they claim to follow, while theories-in-use relate to the theories evident in the actual behaviours of people. In instances where these are discrepant, actors may or may not be aware of the inconsistency.

Clearly, if information were required to construct a description of psychologists' theories-in-use for supervision, then actions would provide more useful information than espoused perceptions or beliefs. However, this study did not involve direct observation as (1) it was not possible to observe all action taken in a national sample of participants, (2) it would have limited the range of actions considered and (3) it would have been unnecessarily intrusive in participants' professional life. The

window of investigation was widened through the use of interviews, or more specifically, working conversations, to collect psychologists' reports of actual supervision experience or events that had occurred in the recent past. It was important that the data collection method supported the gathering of information with sufficient breadth to inform the development of a coherent explanatory theory. In order to ensure that data collected represented theories-in-use, participants were asked to comment on what they *did* rather than what they *thought*.

Participants: Thirty-eight psychologist volunteers formed the participant group. The psychologists all worked for the MoE:SE and differed markedly in terms of their breadth of experience and history of employment. Members of the participant group were located throughout New Zealand, with numbers resembling proportions representative of the general distribution of psychologists in this organisation. Information from the first 31 participants contributed to the quantified aspects of analysis, while data collected from all 38 participants informed the qualitative aspects of the study. These data from the first 31 participants to volunteer were eligible for quantification as all of these psychologists responded to the first request for participation. The remaining seven psychologists responded to the second call for participants made when particular issues required further explanation. The second call expressly asked for participants who did not participate in formal supervision or who were dissatisfied with supervision. The second recruitment allowed for further investigation of the various methods used to meet the goals of supervision outside of dyadic relationships.

Interview Procedure: Working Conversations.
Participants talked with me about the ways in which they worked toward the goals of supervision. These conversations mostly took place in the workplaces of the participants, although I talked with some on the telephone due to travel and scheduling constraints. I considered the analysis of the data I collected for the formation of this dimension to be a construction of supervision in action, a

construction belonging jointly to the participants in the study and me. I remained aware, throughout the study, that this particular analysis was an understanding of supervision that related to the supervision of the specific participant group at the time of data collection.

I conducted the interviews as *working conversations* in which the questions and the meanings of responses were contextually grounded. I considered the conversations to be *interviews as negotiated text*, that allowed meaning to be jointly constructed by both the participants and myself (Fontana & Frey, 2000). This form of interviewing recognised, accommodated and utilised my insider status.

I developed a semi-structured schedule for working conversations to allow participants to discuss the actions they took in order to gain professional support, further their professional development and maintain accountability to the profession. Although the working conversations were largely open to allow discussion to flow freely and to avoid excluding important information, a degree of structure in the interview was retained in order to define the parameters of the study, ensure its efficiency and to support the participants in focusing on issues associated with the functions and procedures of the activity under review (Coolican, 1999). I wanted to respect individuals' privacy and finite resources. Therefore questions, although sufficiently open to allow participants to include important but unanticipated information, were designed to elicit responses that related directly to the area of study. I was mindful that issues of personal and professional development, accountability, and perceptions of competency, while associated with field practice, were also located well within the personal sphere of participants. During trials of the schedule, the extent to which psychologists simultaneously addressed the three goals of supervision became clear and consequently the categories were collapsed to ensure efficiency of each conversation. I hoped that the integration of the categories would also assure participants that the interviewer had indeed attended to the viewpoints they had shared during the conversations.

Topics referred, in the main, to broad areas of psychologist supervisory activity and its purposes. They acted as starting points for discussion and required participants to provide descriptions of action taken and the contexts in which events occurred (see Appendix C). Open questioning and presentation of topic areas for discussion supported maximum participation of the psychologists (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Although some verbatim quotes were taken, many of the entries on data sheets reflected a summary of what the participants had said. Through taking notes rather than solely quotes, raw data were subjected to a layer of analysis, or construction of meaning of actual words spoken, being carried out in collaboration with participants. Where possible, summaries were made by participants. In cases where I summarised, I checked this interpretation with participants.

I expected that participants would be more comfortable with the interview process if they were not surprised by unexpected questions at the beginning of the session and were able to talk about a familiar topic (Sarantakos, 1998). Early questions were not intended to be emotionally charged or controversial but involved description of common supervision practice. Psychologists were first asked to comment on their current supervisory arrangements without my reference to any particular notions of the practice. This was an open question but I had accurately predicted from the way in which supervision had been discussed in published literature and by members of the professional community, that most participants would interpret the question as one referring to formal dyadic supervision. This aspect of the interview was designed to encourage engagement of the participants by opening the conversation from their existing viewpoint. Although the first question was planned, the open-ended nature of the topic meant that the conversation flowed naturally and the participants frequently covered the topics on the interview schedule incidentally, in the course of their conversations. Topics presented later in the conversation revealed a broader range of activities in which participants engaged to meet the goals of supervision. I examined explicitly the question of participant satisfaction with supervision practice only after

the participants had conversed with me and had considered the possibility of broadening the notion of supervision to include the various activities they had just described. The willingness of participants to consider the full range of activities discussed in each interview in relation to satisfaction with supervision indicated that, through our dialogue, a shared understanding of a broadened notion of supervision was being constructed.

I asked participants to comment on specified topic areas. Some prompt questions were available to me to help the participants elaborate on responses and to clarify topic domains (*See Appendix J for structured interview topics and prompts*). I undertook further questioning, selected from the prompt menu, to relieve participant anxiety where necessary and to investigate implied information in participants' statements (Coolican, 1999, p. 143). The same topics were discussed in all conversations although I made spontaneous, contextualised decisions regarding the sequencing of questions. As the presentation of information was not linear and the style of the data collection was conversational, I had to be strongly familiar with the conversation schedule, topic area and the interview recording form in order to document responses in the appropriate spaces. Particular care was taken to avoid asking participants to discuss subject matter already covered in relation to earlier questions.

Through the working conversations I attempted to discover participants' views of their experiences of supervision. I wanted to know if they participated in supervisory action, and if so, why they participated, what they did, when and where. During the preliminary trial of the working conversation I noticed that the supervisory relationship, the 'with whom' factor, was an important aspect of the supervisory situation. This was not surprising as in previous research, the supervisor relationship had repeatedly been demonstrated to influence supervisee satisfaction of supervision (Worthen & McNeill, 1996). Clearly, I could not form an understanding of supervision without collecting information regarding preferred supervisory qualities and behaviours. Although all 31 participants from the first recruitment were asked to

identify desirable supervisor qualities, the importance of supervisee qualities also became apparent to me during the data collection process. I introduced the matter of supervisee action to the topic list in response to this observation. As several conversations had already taken place, only twenty participants provided information about the qualities they sought in supervisees. During working conversations, I introduced the topic of supervision and supervisee qualities and behaviours only after participants had considered the broader range of strategies used to pursue the goals of supervision. I hoped that by placing the topic in this position, participants would include their perceptions of relationships established in all activity undertaken to pursue supervision goals.

The final topic list for the working conversation comprised the following:

- Current supervision arrangements
- The intended purposes served by supervisory practice
- Activities and content of supervision sessions
- Type of support accessed for work
- Ways of ensuring that fieldwork was proficient
- Satisfaction with supervision.
- Valued supervisor and supervisee qualities.

I took notes in full view of the participants throughout the conversations, recording a combination of verbatim and summarised contributions. Before the conversations were concluded, I checked that all topics had been covered. In order to ensure that psychologists' reality was not falsely interpreted and that the notes taken reflected participant views, each participant was later provided an opportunity to review the contributions they had made to the data pool and to modify these if they wished. I sent a typed copy of the notes to each participant and asked them to read the notes and verify that the entries represented their view. Participants were invited to make any changes they believed were necessary to represent their view and returned the notes to me. The modified and verified scripts became the data for the study. In situations

where responses required further explanation after the interview, I contacted the individual participants concerned to further discuss the particular issues.

The Interview Climate.

The working conversations were conducted in a ways intended to ensure both participant comfort and focused authentic discussion. Where possible, by the time I met with each participant, rapport had been well established. This allowed the conversations in some cases to be completed in as little as one hour, or as in most cases, at least within two hours. The interview climate was monitored throughout to ensure sustained informality and acknowledgment of participant contributions by the researcher. The open lines of inquiry ensured that there were no right or wrong answers and the inclusive nature of the process of analysis for these data ensured that all responses were considered valid and would contribute to the overall theory of supervision for this psychologist group.

Conversations were conducted in a climate of professional and personal safety for the psychologists through guaranteed confidentiality and respect of the information shared in the interview. Confidentiality was crucial. Supervision relationships are often highly valued and threats to their stability can be personally and professionally sensitive (Worthen and McNeill, 1996). I was constantly aware that these relationships must not be placed at risk in any way. The safety of participants was a guiding factor with regard to the selection of methods of recording information. Audiotapes or videotapes were not used in this study because (1) the researcher considered they would not offer any benefits over the verified notes, modified by the participants themselves, and (2) such recordings had the potential to reduce perceived participant control of information.

Trials for the Interview Procedure and Recording Method.

Interviewer familiarity with the procedures was an important factor in this research (Coolican, 1999). Therefore, before the investigation began, I carried out two trials of

the interview schedule. As the same answers were supplied for questions regarding the ways support, professional development and accountability was accessed, these categories were collapsed into one. These changes were made to ensure that I respectfully acknowledged participant contributions as well as to allow the interviews to flow.

Analysis within Dimension 3.

The data were analysed according to emerging themes or collections of common data. The themes or categories were not imposed on the data, but were identified as they become apparent. The process of determining themes and assigning participants' contributions to categories was continued until the frame was able to account for all information supplied by each participant. Two cycles of data collection and analysis took place as more information was collected to explain data not accommodated by initially identified themes. This inclusive analysis allowed for the construction of a comprehensive and cohesive representation of the sum of contributions provided by the participant group.

I analysed the data systematically through four stages, refining individual items and data sets from their raw to an interpreted state. Although described in stages here, this process was not always linear as the emergence of new themes required some re-categorisation. I used indexes of coded data to organise the categories that developed in the ongoing process of analysis. The coding system supported the generation of an emerging theory or a network of identified categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

1) *Development of Tentative Categories.* I became familiar with the data collected from participants and noted emerging and recurrent themes. I had nominated tentative themes during the early stages of data collection and watched for recurrent patterns. In this way, the analysis of data began simultaneously with the data collection

2) *Ongoing Indexing of Dynamic Categories.* I complied an index of categories and regularly modified this as key concepts and new themes emerged from the data. I assigned single or multiple codes to electronic copies of the data. NVivo 2.0™ (QSR International, 2002), computer software was used for this purpose.

3) *Grouping of Data According to Emerging Categories.* The coded data were then grouped in relation to the identified themes which were re-examined and refined. This process involved checking the homogeneity of category entries and applying suitable category labels. The resultant themes became firm categories and summaries of these were made.

4) *Interpretation of The Unitary Set of Consolidated Themes.* Categories were considered simultaneously to discern relationships between them and to provide a coherent explanation for the observed patterns.

Computer Software.

NVivo 2.0™ computer software was used for coding, storage, and retrieval of the data. This software is designed for qualitative analysis in which non-numerical and relatively unstructured information is analysed and synthesised. Although the process of analysis might also have been carried out manually, the large amounts of qualitative data collected meant that computer-supported processing made this task more efficient and hence manageable. The Nvivo 2.0™ software allowed me to shape and reshape data as new information was collected.

Some writers have argued that the use of computers to analyse qualitative data contravenes constructivist principles in qualitative research and there are concerns that the advent of computer software used in qualitative research might alienate the researcher from the data (Coffey, Holbrook & Atkinson, 1996; Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986). However, the use of computer software can clearly be helpful without intruding on the quality of analysis of textual data. Data archiving strategies of many types can be accommodated by computer software, leaving the researcher free to

determine the ways in which the information is coded and organised. Regardless of the computer package selected for data analysis, the researcher must construct an organising scheme before any text segments can be grouped. For example, in the present study I was able to choose the categories of supervision activity according to observed groupings in participant data and to determine to which category each new item was assigned. As applied in the present study, code-and-retrieve programmes simply carry out tasks that the researcher does manually in qualitative analysis that does not make use of computer assistance.

2.3.3. Analysis of the Dimensions

The analysis constituted an understanding of the presenting supervision situation for the educational psychologists who participated in the study. To obtain an overall analysis for the situation, all three dimensions were considered in relation to one another. To manage the large amounts of data, I analysed the summaries of each dimension simultaneously and looked for relationships between the dimensions. That is, I considered the theories in educational psychology and the aspects of current practice derived from these, in relation to the supervision activity reported by the participants and the social factors reported in published supervision literature. I looked for similarities and differences in theory and practice. The common aspects of practice and supervision were shown in a Matrix (Miles and Hubermann, 1994). This is illustrated with examples of actions taken by educational psychologists (Table 2).

Table 2. Table for points of similarity and difference in practice and supervision.

	Examples from Field Practice	Examples from Supervision
Points of similarity between supervision and practice		
Points of difference between supervision and practice		

Any discrepancies between theory and practice were discussed in relation to the mediating factors identified earlier in the study.

2.3.4. Principles to Guide Development of an Alternative Conceptualisation of Supervision

A set of critical specifications for the development of the framework for supervision was derived from the analysis of the three dimensions. These principles related to common elements of current educational psychology practice and the supervision activity of the psychologist community. Chapter 6 presents a list of priority components for a framework for supervision.

2.3.5. Development of a Supervision Framework

Guided by the analysis of the supervision situation, I developed an alternative conceptualisation of supervision and presented this as a framework for supervision practice. The framework was based on the *community of practice* structure described by Lave and Wenger (1991). This framework was particularly helpful as it accommodated the important specifications of the alternative conceptualisation and illustrated the relationships between the dimensions of the supervision situation. The ecological view taken on supervision was accommodated comfortably in the community of practice structure. Chapter 7 contains detailed information about the alternative conceptualisation and the framework for analysis of supervision conceptualised this way.

2.3.6. Consultation and Review

The framework for supervision was reviewed in consultation with a reference group of educational psychologists working in the participants' community of practice. During this consultation phase, a means to demonstrate participation in supervision activity within the proposed framework was collaboratively developed.

Objectives. The purpose of the consultation phase was to:

a) Introduce the framework to a community of educational psychologists.

b) Provide opportunities for representatives of the community to provide information about their initial responses to the framework in relation to its validity and application.

c) Develop a means to demonstrate participation in supervision within a community of practice.

Rationale. Although the knowledge on which the framework was constructed originated from the reports of the psychologists themselves and published writings of the profession, a degree of interpretation remained with the researcher in its construction. The process of consultation served to verify that the framework reflected the activity the psychologists' representative reference group observed. The consultation also provided a preliminary opportunity to discuss the implications of the alternative conceptualisation for supervision in the profession, with regard to the recognition and legitimisation of the broadened view of supervision.

The reference group suggested ways in which the supervision activity of educational psychologists might be documented. This was an essential aspect of the development of the framework as psychologists are expected to have "explicit understandings of their responsibility for the work, or behaviour of those they teach, supervise, and/or employ (NZPsS, 2002, 4.4.7)".

Participants. The review process initially involved a series of negotiations with the area manager, the human resources manager, and the area management team with regard to the practicalities of involving the particular area office in the review. This process itself involved discussion of the framework and much of the feedback regarding the validity of the framework was provided at this stage. Indeed, had the framework not been considered valid, I would not have gained permission to present it to staff members. Once permission to proceed was granted from the aforementioned

community members, the framework was presented and discussed in seminars with the volunteer reference group. A liaison psychologist and the professional practice leader worked with the researcher to convene seminars, coordinate the activity of the reference group, and to distribute information sheets and consent forms.

Five volunteer psychologists working in a community of practice in one district of MoE: SE formed a reference group. Group members belonged to the psychologists' community from which the survey participants were recruited. One of the reference group members had also taken part in the supervision survey of this study and two had been involved in the consultation process as I gained permission to review the framework in this setting. As the validity of the framework had been largely established in the negotiation process, subsequent discussion between reference group members and myself focused on the second aspect of the review, the application of the framework.

Procedure

a) I obtained permission to review the framework in the area. The representativeness of this framework for the area was an important aspect of this negotiation (See above).

b) The reference group was invited to attend a two-hour seminar/workshop in which the results of earlier phases of the research were presented and the proposed framework for supervision was introduced.

c) Group members were invited to critically evaluate the framework for supervision. At this meeting the participants were asked to comment on the extent to which the framework reflected their observations of activity within their community of practice.

d) In addition to group discussion of the validity and applicability of the framework, members of the reference group provided written responses about

the usefulness and practical application of the framework. They answered the following questions.

- In terms of your own practice, what do you think supervision, positioned within a community of practice, offers over traditional dyadic notions with regard to personal and professional support, professional development, and accountability to the profession?

- What precautions, if any, would need to be taken when implementing a supervision system within a community of practice?

- How would you demonstrate participation in supervision practice within a community of practice?

e) The collective reference group response regarding framework applicability and demonstration of participation in supervision was structured by compiling composite statements that accommodated all contributions for written responses and main points of discussion at consultation meetings. This method ensured that all group members shared ownership of the information.

f) When all adjustments had been made, copies of the changes were distributed to reference group members.

3.3.7. Summary of the Situational Analysis Process

This section provides a summary of the present study. I present this summary in a table, briefly describing the tasks taken at each step of the situational analysis (Table 3).

Table 3. Summary of the situational analysis of professional supervision in educational psychology

Steps	Tasks at each Step
1.Selection of the study area	Reports of research from New Zealand and overseas have indicated continuing low rates of participation in supervision and widespread dissatisfaction with the practice. The clarified study area focused on the development of an alternative conceptualisation of supervision that would support research and development in this area.
2. Develop research questions	Specific research questions were developed so that information gathered would be relevant to the development of this understanding. a. What is the nature of supervision in this community of psychologists? b. How does supervision function in this professional community? c. How must supervision be viewed in this community to recognise and facilitate participation and assess or address adequacy of supervision practice?
3. Planning for data collection	The planning process involved identifying, on the basis of information collected to this point, tentative dimensions for investigation in the next step. Specific procedures for data collection were also delineated.
4. Examining and determining dimensions	The examination of the three selected dimensions involved a process of supporting and challenging the dimensions. Dimensions that were strongly supported remained as dimensions in the final analysis. In this case, all three dimensions were supported by evidence and no new dimensions were added. Each dimension was analysed separately

	(a) Dimension 1. Theories in educational psychology. This section examined the theoretical foundations of Educational Psychology in New Zealand, the USA and Great Britain and presented a socio-historical view of the context of current educational psychology practice. *(a) Dimensions 2. Mediators of participation in supervision* The research involved the review of literature that identified factors that had been found to be associated with psychologists' experience of supervision. *(c) Dimension 3. Psychologists' supervision theories-in-action* Members of the educational psychology community throughout New Zealand engaged in working conversations in order to investigate psychologists' experience of supervision. This examination identified supervision theories-in-action for this group
5. Analysing the dimensions	The overall analysis involved simultaneous analyses of the three dimensions to explain the relationships between them.
6. Proposing guiding principles for development or intervention	Principles to guide the development of the framework for supervision were derived from the analysis of the three dimensions.
7. Intervention or development	This section involved the development of the new conceptualisation of supervision in educational psychology, illustrated as a community of practice framework.
8. Review intervention/development	The alternative conceptualisation of supervision was subject to review by representatives of the educational psychologist community.

2.4. Ethical Considerations

I planned this research project in accordance with the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Teaching and Research Involving Human Subjects (updated 16.02.00). The study was approved by Massey University Human Ethics Committee (Albany Campus) on 19.04.02 (see Appendix B for letter of approval). The following ethical issues related specifically to the present study.

Permission to conduct the study within an organisation

I obtained permission to conduct the study within MoE:SE from The Senior Advisor Professional Practice at the National Office in Wellington. The Advisor sent an email to psychologists in MoE:SE requesting that prospective participants make contact with the researcher if they were interested in learning more about the project and the requirements of participation (a copy of the email sent to the psychologists can be found in appendix A of this report).

Workplace functioning

Care was taken in this study to ensure that the project did not disrupt the regular functioning of the employing agency, particularly as this professional group had been involved in several research projects in recent years. The study was, therefore, conducted as unobtrusively as possible, ensuring that scheduling of working conversations considered participant timetables. I attempted to make the best use of participant time through efficiency of conversations.

Informed consent

Participants at each phase of this research were asked to complete informed consent forms before data were collected (see appendices C and D for copies of consent

forms). The participants at both the interview and review stage of the project were given information sheets that were developed within the guidelines of the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct (2000) (see appendices E and F for information sheets). The information sheets were distributed to prospective participants at least two weeks before informed consent sheets were collected to allow participants sufficient time to reconsider the implications of their participation and to discuss any concerns with the researcher.

Interviewee rights

The study involved individual interviews and, in the case of the reference group, shared discussion. All participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. In addition, participants were informed that they had the right to:

- Decline to participate without penalty
- Refuse to answer any particular questions
- Withdraw from the study at any time before the data had been analysed and integrated.
- Ask questions about the study at any time during participation
- Provide information on the understanding that participants' names would not be used unless permission had been given to the researcher
- Access a summary of findings of the study.

Letters to participants expressing appreciation for their involvement in the study and a summary of the findings of the review process can be found in Appendices G, H, and I. The interview participants were forwarded a copy of chapter 5 of this thesis.

Benefit to participants

All participants in this study were psychologists whose employers and relevant professional bodies expected them to engage in supervision with peers within the

parameters of their regular professional work. Many were involved in the supervision of trainee psychologists and of practitioners from related professions. I expected that their involvement in this study would provide opportunities for reflection and further professional development in this area.

Maintaining participant relationships

As the supervisory relationship can be a powerful factor in influencing the quality of supervision, I ensured that effective relationships were not adversely affected through this study. To protect individual psychologists and their supervisory relationships, information collected about the effectiveness of partnerships was kept strictly confidential and reporting of results was carried out in such as way that individuals were not identified.

Confidentiality

At all times during the study, I took care when reporting data to ensure that individuals or groups contributing information were not identifiable unless express permission had been given.

Role clarity and information

Where participants were asked to perform specific tasks, I provided sufficient information to ensure that the psychologists and I had clear and mutual understandings with regard to our respective roles.

Beneficence

I took care to ensure the resulting framework of supervision and the means of demonstrating participation in supervision, at the very least, did not reduce the psychologists' accountability to clients and the profession. Although the alternative conceptualisation of supervision was constructed on participants' own reported theories and practices, the research required that the psychologists who took part,

momentarily at least, took a new perspective on the current situation, thereby setting aside views that may have, in some respects, served to support their practice and therefore the well-being of their clients. I ensured that the conceptualisation of supervision was offered only as an alternative way of thinking about supervision and did not impose the alternative view. However, I acknowledged that by unsettling the assumptions of the participants that some change must necessarily occur and checked that the positive supports of the current situation were recognised and incorporated into the alternative conceptualisation. This consideration was in accord with the NZPsS Code of Ethics (2002) stating that, "*In carrying out research, psychologists recognise that a basic ethical expectation is that research activities will benefit members of society or, at least, do no harm* (2.6).

Chapter 3

Dimension 1: Theories in Educational Psychology.

This chapter discusses some salient aspects of ecological practice in educational psychology. The first section of the chapter presents a global perspective on current practice, considering critical points of the journey of educational psychology from its inception to the present day. This brief history highlights important features of current practice by contrasting them with previous ways of working. It makes reference to a selected number of the many theories that have influenced the progression of educational psychology. The history is followed by discussion and illustration of the main elements of current ecological practice as reported by a group of New Zealand educational psychologists (Ryba, Annan & Mentis, 2001a). The key elements of ecological practice identified were: (1) multi-systemic units of analysis; (2) collaboration in multiple relationships; (3) supportive learning environments; and, (4) evidence-based practice.

This dimension is included in the present ecological study of supervision because the theories that guide supervision are necessarily selected from the total set of theories that participants in supervision hold (Argyris & Schön, 1974). The development of ecological meaning requires that situations be viewed from a socio-historical perspective. That is, situations under review must be understood in relation to the knowledge and activity at the various levels of the current context and the historical development of knowledge to that point (See Figure 6).
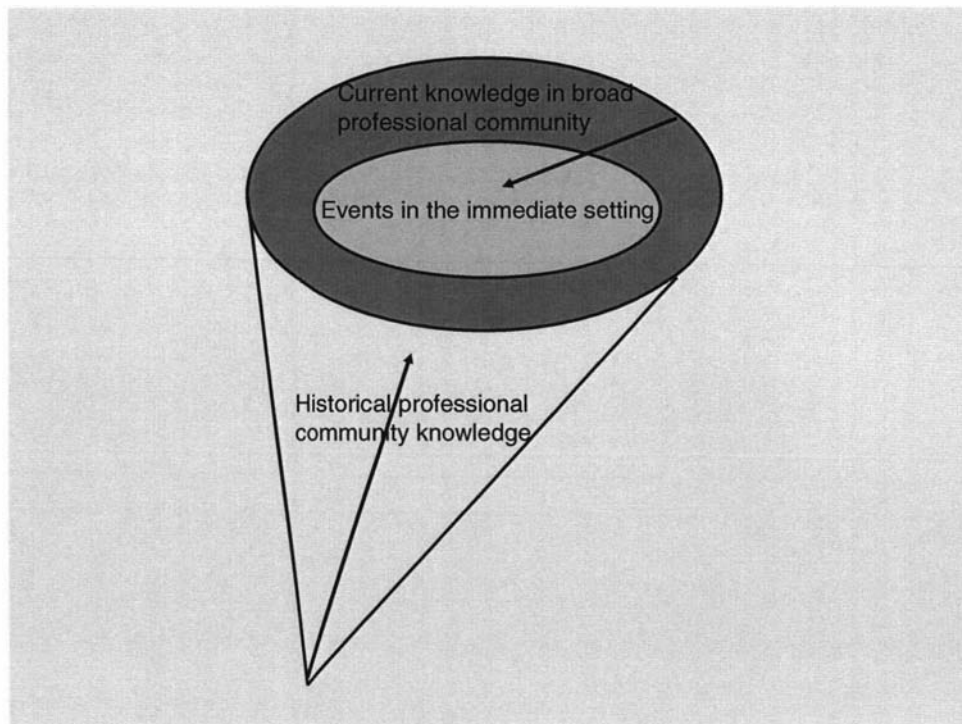
Figure 6. The socio-historical perspective of educational psychology.

3.1. The Changing Perspective of Educational Psychology

The discipline of educational psychology began in the late 1800's in response to depersonalising social changes in the western world. As the trend toward urbanisation gained momentum, the focus of education changed, bringing into view a new set of problems that had not featured in rural society (Oakland, 2000). Since this time, the focus of research and practice has swayed in response to the movement of perspectives on human development. There is general agreement amongst educational psychologists today that ecological understandings underpin their practice (see Pianta, 2005; Fantuzzo, McWayne, & Perry, 2004; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000; Woolfson, Whaling, Stewart & Monsen, 2003). The theorists whose ideas hold most appeal for psychologists are those who have embedded understanding of development within the dynamic systems of the broader social environment. This focus on context resembles

the earliest conceptualisations of educational psychology. At the outset, educational psychology was a discipline concerned with the influence of a range of societal factors on the development of young people (Berliner, 1993). This community focus, however, narrowed in response to modern society's increasing trust in scientific inquiry to produce definitive and universal understandings of human development (Alexander, 2003; Flynn, 1997).

The drive for efficiency in the newly industrialised western world and wide-spread belief in the power of science to discover universal truth led researchers to study the abilities of the mind. Some psychologists, like Henry Goddard, who translated the Binet-Simon IQ into English in 1908, believed that intelligence could be defined and measured and that this measurement would identify those with skills or functional behaviours that would contribute to the productivity of the modern world. The chief determiner of human conduct, in Goddard's view, was a unitary inborn mental process known as intelligence (Goddard cited in Plucker, 2003).

Psychologists endeavoured to isolate human actions and to study them apart from their social and cultural contexts. They assumed that all behaviours would eventually be quantified and measured, and they involved themselves in a practice that reflected largely person-centred, deficit views of human action. From the time James Cattell established a psychological laboratory to study individual differences in mental abilities without the distraction of setting events, psychological researchers made efforts to ensure that the effects of contextual variables, considered extraneous to investigations, did not contaminate assessments. Some psychologists, for example G. Stanley Hall co-founder of the American Psychological Association, also took a strong interest in the individual differences of children and the degree to which an individual's functioning veered from normative paths. Hall did not, however, consider that such measures should be decontextualised and suggested that intellectual development was influenced by genes, learning environments, and the nature of social interaction (Berliner, 1993; Fagan & Wise, 2000). The laboratory, in Hall's view, was

not the place to learn about human development. He proposed that purposeful and valid study could only occur in children's natural environments and, furthermore, that ordinary people in these settings could participate in the collection of information relevant to the investigation. Hall instigated the *Child Study Movement* to broaden the focus of scientific inquiry. However, the profession did not progress directly from this point. The child study movement was successfully challenged by scientists who considered that Hall's research methods lacked sufficient rigour (Wozniak, 1999). Psychology had much to gain from adhering to a visible, measurable and genetic notion of human intelligence, and its expression in behaviour, interpreted in isolation to the subjectivity of people's perspectives. The discipline maintained a comfortable place in society throughout the first half of the twentieth century on the promise that behaviours that might further the productivity of the industrialised world would eventually be identified and nurtured.

By the 1970s, sectors of the educational psychology community directed challenges at the tight scientific approach. Although some important psychological principles had been discovered through scientific research, psychologists observed that decontextualised research and practice did not correspond with the interactions they observed in the social environments of young learners. They did not help them explain or accommodate the diversity and complexity in their work situations. In addition, the usefulness of decontextualised methods, designed to improve learning and behaviour problems, was not systematically demonstrated (See Moore, Anderson, Timperley, Glynn, Macfarlane, et al, 1999; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). Some psychologists, for example Cronbach (1975), called for increased attention to the interaction of factors influencing the education of young people. Cronbach pointed out that many of the products of social science research did not hold for long and cited decade discrepancies in the applicability of findings to demonstrate the need to imbed educational psychology in the socio-historical world of participants.

Deliberation on the tight scientific process of inquiry and the dubious outcomes of practice during the middle years of the twentieth century led to new conceptualisations of the profession that, in some respects, incorporated many of the broad notions of practice evident at its establishment. Present-day educational psychology is concerned with events in both the immediate situations of developing people and the wider societal influences on this development. "It is now routinely conceptualised in the literature as an interactive and contextualised process, the environment, both social and physical, being recognised as a powerful determinant of learning and behaviour" (Moore, 1998, p. 4). Ecological practice locates the forces that power social relationships and human activity in the interaction between individuals and their surrounding environment rather than within individuals alone (Christenson, 2004; Engelbrecht, 2004; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000).

Ecological psychology involves the assumption that interpersonal circumstances and the meanings of interactions between individuals and their surrounding environments are socially constructed and unique to particular circumstances. Accordingly, psychologists recognise the multiple and individual subjective realities of those involved in their work in the field. They expect and value differences among people (Atkins, Graczyk, Frazier & Abdul-Adil, 2003; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000; Pianta, 2005). Increasingly, methods of practice involve active collaborative examination and reconstruction of people's dynamic social worlds.

3.2. Current Educational Psychology Practice

Twenty six educational psychologists throughout New Zealand participated in a study of special educators' ways of working (Ryba, Annan & Mentis, 2001a). This study examined the theoretical underpinnings of their work. Many psychologists interviewed in this study considered that their approach was ecological and described practices that fell into four strong themes. Each of these themes is illustrated by the

reports of the psychologist participants. The illustrations are followed by brief discussions of each theme.

3.2.1. Multi-systemic Units of Analysis

Illustration from practice: The psychologists indicated that their practice was guided by a range of theories of human development, the most common being those that supported them in considering the broad social environment. For example, participants described the theoretical foundations of their work as "holistic", 'ecological", "multi-element", 'social constructivist", and "social cognitive". Some mentioned that they were guided by Kaupapa Maori pedagogy, a way of understanding situations that considers the development of people in relation to the social, historical, cultural, physical and spiritual environment in which they develop. They reported that the works of several prominent theorists had strongly informed the practice. These included Uri Bronfenbrenner, William Glasser and Lev Vygotsky. Participants also explained that the theories of behaviourists such as B.F. Skinner and Albert Bandura continued to influence specific aspects of their practice. Several incorporated social constructivist approaches, e.g. narrative methods.

Theoretical Underpinnings of Multi-systemic Practice

Possibly the most prominent theorist to influence current educational psychology practice throughout the world is Bronfenbrenner. In 1977, Bronfenbrenner published *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by nature and design.* In this work he presented his ecological theory that has served as a catalyst for massive change in direction for educational psychology (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000).

Bronfenbrenner recognised that his approach contrasted sharply with the prevailing research models of the mid-twentieth century and considered that the strict scientific method adopted by psychologists during the previous era had blinded their vision of

the environmental aspects that determined human development. Psychologists, in Bronfenbrenner's view, had developed methods and perspectives that greatly underestimated human capacities. Contexts of development had been viewed as static structures that did not take into account the on-going processes that influenced the initiation or development of behaviour. He viewed environment or context as not just a single setting but one that was shaped by the influences of systems outside the immediate setting. This view is reminiscent of that of John Dewey who, in *Experience and Education* (1938), concluded that "control of individual actions is effected by the whole situation in which individuals are involved, in which they share and of which they are co-operative or interacting parts" (p. 53).

The ecological model of human development encompasses the entire range of environmental influences on developing people and is based on two fundamental premises; (1) each person is an inseparable part of a social system; (2) disturbance is viewed as discordance or a lack of balance in the system in which an individual's demands or expectations of the environment are mismatched with their experience (Apter and Conoly, 1984). Bronfenbrenner portrayed the total environment or ecosystem as a set of nested structures or layers bound together by the interaction between them (See Figure 7). The microsystem comprises the immediate settings in which a person lives; the mesosystem refers to the relationships between the various microsystems; the exosystem consists of structures or settings that might not directly link with the developing person but nonetheless, influences their life; and the macrosystem is represented as the culture in which the individual lives. Recognising that all of these systems impact upon the individual, the model adapted for this thesis places the person's self-system at the core of the learning context. Inclusion of the internal context of the learner recognises the active role that a person plays in the co-construction of knowledge through interaction within the total environment. The self-system refers to the person's developing cognitive, metacognitive and emotional processes that impact on their learning and functioning in life circumstances. Bronfenbrenner (1986) also identified the chronosystem, the environment's temporal

dimension that produces varying interpretations of events in different eras and at different periods throughout the lifespan. The chronosystem has been omitted here as it is implied in the interactive, dynamic and transformational functioning of the entire ecosystem.
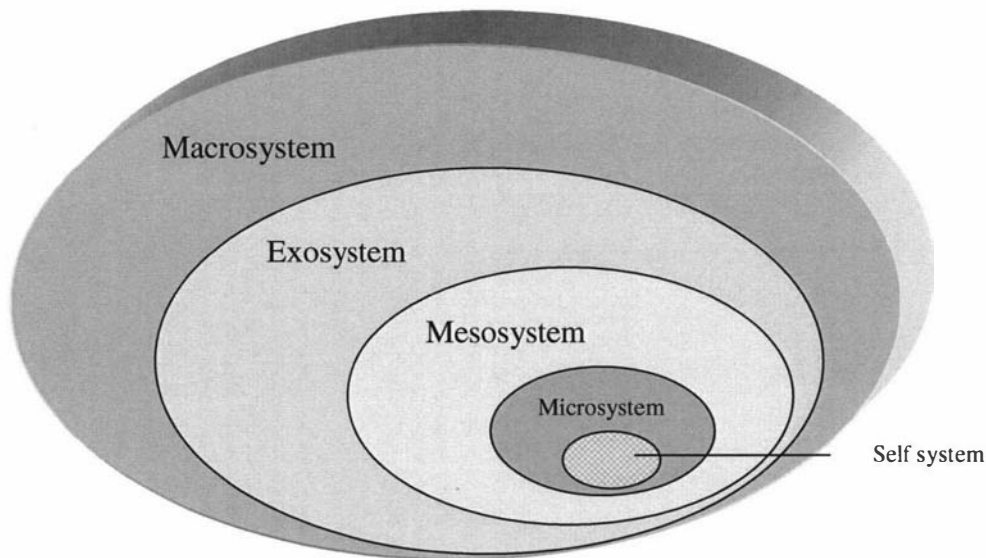
Figure 7. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) nested structures with self-system included

As all levels of the ecology were implicated in human development, Bronfenbrenner encouraged researchers to look beyond single settings and explore the interaction between settings. Interactions between the levels, and between settings within levels, were potentially as powerful as the events occurring in the immediate settings of the developing person. Differences in behaviour of people within similar settings were explained through examination of the various meanings they ascribed to settings, their perspectives on the settings being influenced by their social and cultural background and their lived experience. Individuals did not remain passive in the process of development but engaged with the surrounding world to co-determine their positions. Bronfenbrenner noted that settings from the same culture seemed to be similar, while there were clear distinctions between settings from different cultures. He suggested that cultures possessed a 'blueprint' that determined the nature of each layer of the

ecology. This blueprint was not static but contestable and, when challenged and altered, resulted in changes in the actions of individuals (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Bronfenbrenner proposed that development resulted through a dynamic set of reciprocal interactions, rather than a single linear process. Analyses of the environments in which these interactions occurred, therefore, required a *systems* approach to understanding and the development of applicable intervention. As the extent to which any setting was able to lend positive support to a person depended largely on the existence and nature of social connections between settings, support for development was dependent on the situations of significant others. The role demands, stresses and supports stemming from other settings all played a part in determining the capability of those with a support role to offer such assistance.

While the profession of psychology has changed its focus from individuals (including students, teachers, and parents) to the social systems surrounding particular circumstances, psychologists have faced a long struggle in developing methods of practice that guide them to work in ecological ways. To some extent, this might be attributed to the failure of ecological theory to provide practical understanding of the mechanisms involved in connecting across settings. In addition, psychologists have found themselves wrestling with less than receptive work environments where expectations of psychology practice reflect former perspectives (See Moore et al, 1999). The movement from a practice intent on explaining human development through decontextualisation of behaviour and isolation of variables to one in which all aspects of young people's ecosystems are taken into account has required psychologists to re-examine their theories regarding their role and methods of service delivery. Psychologists have been asked to make a one-hundred-and-eighty degree turn. In many respects, psychologists who accepted the shortcomings of decontextualised practice were faced with an unknown future and were required to place enormous challenges on their own worldviews. Not surprisingly, they were not always able to fully divest themselves of their regard for narrow abstractions of the

functioning of individuals (Flynn, 1997). While modern methods of practice did not translate well to the field, psychologists and the teachers and parents who were stakeholders in the process were themselves immersed in societal discourses about the superiority of knowledge gained through traditional scientific endeavour. Assessment methods in many school systems continued to focus solely on the isolated performance of individual students rather than on the interaction between these performances and the surrounding systems (see Gipps, 1994). In addition, some sectors of the profession feared that ecological methods threatened the rigour of their practice. Accordingly, resistance to change came from both within and outside the profession (Bruner, 1996; Pajares, 2003). However, despite the magnitude of the required shift in perspective, Bronfenbrenner has provided a strong, cohesive and well-articulated theory that has supported the profession to make much headway.

The ecological view of human development has challenged the profession to develop ways to manage the enormous complexities of dynamic systemic analysis. Psychologists must identify the influences on particular human interaction and understand the ways in which the various factors contribute to observed situations. Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 4) argued that the detection of "wide-ranging developmental influences becomes possible only if one employs a theoretical model that permits them to be observed". Models of practice, including functional behaviour assessment (Miller, Tansey & Hughes, 1998; Miller, 2000; Skiba, Waldron, Bahamonde, & Michalek, 1998), problem analysis, (Robinson, 1987) and situational analysis (Annan, 2005) are examples of frameworks for practice used by educational psychologists in New Zealand. These assessment frameworks support the collection and analysis of relevant information relating to a range of settings that represent significant ecological layers influencing referral situations.

3.2.2. Collaboration in Multiple Relationships

Illustration from practice. The psychologists emphasised the value of their connections with others and reported that they had established multiple relationships with people who took various roles in the educational environments they examined in their work. In addition to the relationships they developed with students, teachers and their parents, they worked to construct effective relationships with people from other disciplines, other cultures and other agencies. The vast majority of the psychologists (96%) said that they accessed most support for their work from participation in their practice teams. They negotiated their respective roles and collaboratively planned procedures. This was clearly reflected in the comment of one participant who explained that "collaborative consultation with non-hierarchical decision-making is the key" to ecological practice (Ryba et al, 2001a, p. 21).

Social Construction of Knowledge in Multiple Relationships

The ecological approach to understanding human development rests on the premise "that what matters for behaviour and development is the environment as it is perceived rather than as it may exist in objective reality" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 4). Development reflects and is the way people perceive and deal with their unique but interrelated environments. Therefore, fieldwork guided by Bronfenbrenner's ecological model necessarily includes the active involvement of the developing person, the environment and significant players. It is integrally involved with the interaction among them. Ecological understandings highlight the need for the development of methods that support psychologists to understand the particular ways of knowing of all people involved in fieldwork.

The ecological perspective implies a social constructivist view. That is, it assumes that reality is constructed through social interaction. Ecological theory belongs to a set of theories that, in the latter part of the last century, issued challenges on the focus of mainstream psychology. For example, Bruner (1990) was concerned that the

discipline remained entrenched in a search for universal understandings through decontextualisation and categorisation of human behaviour. He considered that this quest had served to distract psychologists from the meanings people ascribed to their experiences. Others, such as Kenneth Gergen, were uneasy also about the political positioning of psychology. Gergen (1973) questioned the existence of value-neutral psychology, making reference to many examples of experiments that had served to support some kinds of actions and discredit others. Events, from a social constructivist viewpoint, could be assigned a multitude of meanings that had emerged and disappeared across cultural history. The constructivist view has refuted the dualistic concepts of normality and exceptionality, giving rise to more inclusionary views of learners. An example of this is Foucault's (1967) comment on society's dualisms, such as saneness and insaneness.

The ecological viewpoint has challenged the belief that psychologists and other educational professionals can make accurate analyses of situations. It implies that what psychologists do offer are their own personal interpretations of observed situations, based on their personal or professional beliefs. Psychologists' helpfulness with regard to referral situations now lies in their ability to share professional knowledge and to work with those directly involved in referral situations, to co-construct analyses of their own circumstances. The psychologist role has become one of active participant in the construction of the emerging interpretation rather than that of objective observer.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) explained that each person perceived experience in any given context in their own way. People brought to each situation their social and cultural histories that served to filter their perception of events, and they demonstrated this in their varying characteristics. Challenges in describing contexts were compounded by the variation in the behaviours of each person in different settings and the role of observers' perceptions, influenced by their own culture and experience of observed events. Bronfenbrenner was not alone in considering the influence of culture and

perspective on development. Vygotsky (1978), who described human development as an interactive process, considered that the socio-cultural aspects of any particular group determined both the nature of pedagogical processes used and the means for development of consciousness itself. The process of development was mediated by 'tools', the most important of which was language. He portrayed reality as a system of managed symbols, a system of meanings that served to support the development of social relations. In Vygotsky's view, human development was first and foremost 'social', arising from social relations that then determined individual development.

Referral situations are frequently fraught with complex interactions between players and present as ill-structured or difficult to understand (Robinson, 1987). They are not experienced by all participants in the same way. Ecological psychology requires that psychologists develop methods and frameworks that support the development of relationships that foster motivated and harmonious engagement in the fieldwork process (Miller & Leyden, 1999). New partnerships with families and agencies concerned with the development of young people are becoming a familiar aspect of educational psychology practice. These partnerships give rise to the need for the development of skills to establish and maintain community networks of integrated services in ways that recognise the diversity that is a valued characteristic of today's society. To be effective, psychologists must be competent at working in diverse circumstances and strive to understand the many ways in which their various collaborative partners understand their world. Value patterns, concepts of right and wrong and other culturally specific practices cannot be assumed by those who are facilitating fieldwork processes. Sheridan and Gutkin (2000) suggested that systems must be accessible with reference to physical, psychological, social, and cultural factors, as well as being oriented toward full participation, partnership and empowerment.

While educational psychologists accept social diversity and value its role in the creation of new knowledge, they also recognize the importance of creating common

understandings between key participants. For example, the psychologists reported that, when working across cultures, they either consulted or worked alongside people who had or who could access the particular knowledge required to construct applicable new solutions (Ministry of Education, 2004). Decontextualised analyses, or those constructed with insufficient cultural knowledge, provided little information to inform the development of acceptable alternatives.

3.2.3. Supportive Learning Environments

Illustration from practice: The approach adopted by the majority of psychologists surveyed was to focus on identifying the strengths of the situations they encountered, in order to build new solutions upon these strengths (Ryba, et al, 2001a). Many reported that their view of practice was generally optimistic, the purpose of their work being based on the belief that all children can learn. They also explained that their work in each situation was individualised, designed to respond to particular needs. It focused on the inclusion of all children in the education system and the improvement of the quality of their lives. The psychologists taking part in the study sought constructive rather than disruptive involvement and reported that they worked toward developing the least intrusive alternative solutions. They considered contextual factors in the environments of those people, such as teachers, who supported children and implemented interventions.

(a) Positive Foundations for Intervention

The integration of narrative inquiry into psychologists' practice has provided some answers for those caught between the questioning of traditional methods developed in relation to the scientific method and the vacuum created by the absence of tools to work ecologically. These tools, for example 'co-researching the effect of a problem situation on the lives of several individual participants' support the engagement of those people involved in referral situations on an everyday basis and who, necessarily, take varying perspectives on the matters of concern (White, 1988; White and Epston,

1990). In addition, White and Epston's narrative approach to understanding and reconstructing social situations has permitted many psychologists to support others to make sense of events, guiding them to seek solutions within the supportive aspects of situations, rather than in the problems that so often dominate initial referrals.

Educational psychology assessment is no longer focused solely on the identification of deficits in student functioning, or the shortcomings of teachers and parents, but emphasises the detection, construction and consolidation of strong and respectful foundations for intervention. Psychologists working ecologically continue to identify the learning needs of students but must also invariably discern beneficial behaviours and positive environmental supports for development (Bear, Cavalier, & Manning, 2002; Barnett, 2002; Fantuzzo et al, 2003; Jenson, Olympia, Farley & Clark, 2004; Moore, 1998; Terjesen, Jacofsky, Froh & DiGuisseppe, 2004). The purpose of fieldwork in educational psychology is to make systems work for young people and their significant others; to construct solutions upon the unique strengths of the broad situation and the helpful skills of students. In order to influence the systems that interact with child behaviour and learning, these systems must first be understood or interpreted in ways that foster the construction of better alternatives to problematic situations.

This change in focus has coincided with the introduction of *positive psychology* (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), an approach that encourages psychologists to consider and understand not only people's experiences and consequent actions but also their emotions in response to their environments. Positive psychology integrates well with educational psychology's focus on supportive social systems and the development of interventions constructed on positive foundations (Barnett, Bell, Gilkey, Lentz, Graden, Stone & Smith, 1999; Waldron & McLeskey, 2000; Zins, Elias, Greenberg & Weissberg, 2000).

Positive psychology is the study of pleasant or desired subjective experience. It suggests that people who experience positive affect are more likely to demonstrate qualities such as creativity and flexibility and to interpret events in ways that allow them to ascribe positive meaning to the events they observe. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi propose that positive experiences are constructive, leading to exploration and mastery. Negative experiences, on the other hand, are destructive, leading to the stifling of development and the default to actions that are familiar and safe, regardless of their applicability to the particular situations. Clearly, such understandings have important implications for educational psychology with its focus on behaviour and learning (Akin-Little & Little, 2004; Chafouleas & Bray, 2004). In order to nurture positive affect, supportive aspects of environments must be identified or created and then maintained.

(b) Inclusion

The inclusion of all people in educational settings is one of educational psychology's strongest values. Again, Vygotsky commented on this aspect of social interaction, explaining that his theory of human development was applicable to all learners. He chose not to draw distinctions between types of learners through the process of diagnosis and categorisation. Vygotsky viewed all children as being placed upon a single continuum of educational ability, a strong departure from the deterministic biological perspectives in his own early twentieth century social and political environment where certain people were dismissed as uneducable (Wertsch & Bustamante Smolka, 1993). Vygotsky argued that the effectiveness of educational provision must be taken into account in every situation. He considered that the failure of any individual to progress satisfactorily to be a secondary problem, originating from a primary problem found in the social relations associated with the individual concerned. Similar views are echoed in the words of many present day educators who advocate for systems that support effective and inclusive education for all children

(Ballard, 1994; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Slavin, 1996; Stainback & Stainback, 1996; Villa & Thousand, 2000; 2003).

(c) Zones of Proximal Development

The work of Vygotsky has provided a means for psychologists to demarcate optimal learning contexts. Vygotsky described the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD), a context that represented a social learning field in which the tools of development were both used and developed. This zone was bounded at the lower face by the cognitive processes an individual could undertake independently and, at the upper face, by the processes that could be satisfactorily performed by that same individual with the assistance of a social context that extended mature knowledge. Vygotsky differentiated between mature and maturing processes, suggesting that useful learning environments were those that fostered the maturing of cognition (Vygotsky in Gredler & Shields, 2004).

The concept of the zone of proximal development' has profound implications for psychologists in all aspects of their practice. Its application has permitted them to appreciate how teachers, parents, and others with skilled knowledge take a key role in supporting the development of young people by creating the conditions for positive development within the ZPD. Experienced others, aware of novices' learning needs, provide appropriate support and encourage independence in performance as knowledge and skill are acquired. Pedagogical processes occurring within the zone of proximal development resemble those described by Wood, Bruner & Ross (1976) who observed that significant others in the lives of developing people applied measured degrees of support for the learning process. This process of 'scaffolding' involved experienced people applying large amounts of support to learners in the early stages of the acquisition of any particular skill and, as the learner progressed from the novice to a mastery stage, the support was gradually lessened until the learner could function independently within the specified domain.

It is now routine practice in educational psychology to determine firstly what a student can accomplish unaided and to plan for the socially supported development of manageable new goals. As the upper and lower boundaries of zones of proximal development may be influenced by many factors, some learning zones may be easier to discern than others. Therefore, high levels of collaboration are required to make these decisions.

3.2.4. Evidenced-based Practice

Illustration from practice. Seventy-seven percent of the psychologists interviewed about their ways of working commented on the importance of systematic data-based methods of inquiry for decision-making. They noted that their practice was based on a coherent set of theories and identified specific practices derived from this knowledge. The participants stressed the importance of basing analyses on assessment data collected in collaboration with others and collaborative planning of interventions guided by sound analyses. They reported that working across cultural boundaries was an integral part of collaborative consultation rather than a separate component of practice (Ryba et al, 2001).

Evidence and Practice

Educational psychology is currently reviewing its stand on the place of evidence and is, more than ever, being required by schools, employers and the community to demonstrate sound practice (Hoagwood & Johnson, 2002). For example, in New Zealand the new Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act (2003) requires that psychologists, and other health professionals, can establish that they meet standards set by their respective authorities to determine clinical, cultural and ethical competence. Educational psychology, with its history of alliance with the scientist practitioner position, is unsurprisingly responsive to current demands for evidence-based practice. This response is visible in the emphasis placed by the profession on the implementation of *evidence-based* interventions (Fox, 2003; Kratochwill &

Shernof, 2004; Hoagwood, Burns, Kise, Ringeisen, & Schoenwald, 2003; White & Kratochwill, 2005). The current drive for an evidence-based practice reflects an increasingly rational political climate in schools in OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries such as New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States (Borman, Hewes, Overman & Brown, 2003; Fuhrman, 2002). However, this movement also signals the need to update traditional notions of evidence so that measures of effectiveness are aligned with current understandings of practice.

The relationship between research and practice for educational psychologists is strong. Psychologists, co-researching in their everyday practice with people involved in referral situations, will apply their theories of research to practice. Taking contextualised approaches to practice and recognising the social construction of knowledge does make the task of providing evidence of sound practice in educational psychology more complex than in previous eras. Individual, subjective experiences of people must be considered, as well as the objective views of observers. Clearly some factors will be easier to detect and more amenable to measurement than others. However, accepting a broad notion of research does not mean that the scientific process has no place in the design and evaluation of interventions. Rather, contemporary approaches to research and practice offer an enriched view of science and require that a new range of questions be asked (Gergen, 2001; Potter, 2002; McCaslin & Hickey, 2001; Pratto, 2002; Rosiek, 2003). Psychologists continue to be mindful of evidence. However, recognition of the importance of context does alter the criteria by which evidence is determined.

The evidence-base of ecological educational psychology practice concerns the construction of the processes of practice, as well as demonstration of the effectiveness of psychologists' work. With regard to the educational psychology process, two aspects must be considered. The first aspect refers to psychologists' background of knowledge of psychological theory and their ability and willingness to develop and

flexibly apply practices derived from these understandings (Fox, 2003; Hughes, 2000). The second aspect is concerned with the extent to which psychologists' practice reflects local cultural knowledge and the voices of individuals involved in particular situations. In ecological practice, applicable understandings are constructed in relation to psychological theory, research, and particular social and cultural knowledge gained through collaborative inquiry. The most easily discernible form of evidence is located in the demonstration of the effectiveness of intervention. However, an ecological approach to practice assumes that such evidence is not established in isolation to the contexts in which the assessments are made. For example, Hoagwood and Johnson (2002), when discussing the measurement of effectiveness of intervention, also made reference to the quality, robustness and validity of service practices. Similarly, Kratochwill and Shernoff (2004) placed the evidence-base in the evaluation of interventions but argued that the contexts in which the evidence-base designations are obtained and the contexts of implementation must be understood.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of psychologists' practice must involve a sufficient range of measures to take into account the various views of the multiple participants and the nature of the presenting issues and interventions. Peters & Heron (1993) offered criteria for sound or 'good' practice that may currently have applicability for psychologists. They described good practice as that which had an explicit theoretical base, concurred with current literature, produced desired outcomes and was considered by participants to possess a high degree of social validity. In ecological practice, social validity has an important part to play when making judgments regarding good practice as ways of working that are most acceptable to participants, and viable in practice, are most likely to be those that can accommodate the perspectives of all participants.

Evidence-based practice in New Zealand is a professional and industrial concern. Psychologists must be prepared to practice in ways that meet all appropriate ethical,

professional and legal standards to protect the rights of all of the people with whom they work (The New Zealand Psychological Society, 2002). Furthermore, in New Zealand, the Ministry of Education: Special Education encourages its employees to engage in evidence-based practice and to apply methods of practice derived from applicable theories or legitimate knowledge. It values evidence-based practice for its capacity to restore links between theory, research and practice in the organisation (Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 62). Irrespective of the theoretical orientation of the psychologist, each practitioner is asked to show that their approach to practice is guided by sound and coherent theory and that the outcomes are examined.

3.3. *Summary of Dimension 1*

This chapter has considered the socio-historical context of educational psychology in order to understand the theory on which an applicable conceptualisation of supervision can be constructed. Four features were seen to characterise current practice. These were the multi-systemic units of analysis, the development of multiple relationships in practice, focus on the development of supportive learning environments and engagement in evidence-based practice. Educational psychology practice was ecological. Practice involved the development of meaning through the analysis of the many levels of the environment, from the point of view of those whose lives were embedded in the situations investigated.

The overarching principle advanced in this thesis is that supervision that serves to support psychologists to carry out their work must be aligned with current practice. The theories that psychologists select to engage in supervision will necessarily be selected from the total set of theories they hold and that are evidenced by the actions in their work. A congruent system of supervision will be one that includes the features of ecological practice identified in this chapter. Such a supervision practice would be guided by articulated theory, would consider the particular cultural understandings of

the participants and would be evaluated in terms of its capacity to provide support, professional development and to maintain professional standards.

Chapter 4

Dimension 2: Mediators of Participation in Supervision

Psychology has retained some valuable learning gained through scientific research, even though the profession now looks back with distain at some of the ways in which that knowledge was obtained (Berliner, 1993). One aspect of this knowledge, generated through the classic behavioural studies of researchers such as B.F. Skinner (1938; 1950), Ivan Pavlov (1927) and Albert Bandura (1986), was the understanding that people's experience of a circumstance affects the likelihood of their continuing participation. Psychologists have concluded, and now assume, that people participate in activities that are rewarding for them, that serve to meet their conscious or subconscious goals. This understanding was important in this study. It helped to identify some of the mediating factors that stood between knowing about supervision and engaging in supervision activity.

Dimension 2 concerns factors associated with psychologists' experiences with supervision and their perceptions of the adequacy of supervision provision. It is presented in two sections. The first section reviews literature that refers to factors that influence psychologists' participation in supervision. The second section reports the information that the 38 participants of the present study contributed during the working conversations, regarding supervisor qualities and actions. This particular mediator was selected for further investigation with the participants because it was widely considered to be the most important factor in determining satisfaction with supervision (Cohen & Debetz, 1977; Holloway, 1995; Worthen & McNeill, 1996).

Section A: Participation in Supervision in Educational Psychology

In selecting the factors to report in this section of the thesis, I was guided by previous research, in particular, the findings of Nolan (1999). Nolan had examined educational psychologists' experience of supervision in the United Kingdom and observed that interpersonal problems in relation to supervision arose in response to certain aspects of the supervisory environment. These included the absence of overt and shared understandings about the dynamic nature and multiple purposes of professional supervision, different views of the particular funds of knowledge on which professions are founded, and the extent of participants' choice in the selection of supervision partners. The key points arising from the review of literature on previous research are displayed in italics at the beginning of each section.

This section considers the theoretical bases of supervision, the way psychologists currently think about supervision, supervision methods and their application in the professional community. While this review centres on the supervision of educational psychologists, reference also is made to supervision knowledge generated in other social service disciplines such as social work, clinical psychology and psychotherapy. Literature from several countries has been reviewed in order to gain a broad perspective on the topic.

4.1. The Status of Supervision

4.1.1. Rates of Participation in Supervision

Educational psychologists in New Zealand and overseas have reported low rates of participation in professional supervision. They have also reported low rates of satisfaction with supervision.

Psychologists working in educational settings have regularly reported low rates of participation in supervision. Fischetti and Crespi (1999) found that, although 91% of school psychologists surveyed in the USA reported they desired supervision, only 10% actually participated in or were recipients of supervision. Similarly, Chafouleas et al, (2002) found that 5% of 500 respondents reported receiving formal supervision, 54% considered they received informal supervision, and 35% had no available supervision. Other studies carried out in the United States reporting similar findings regarding participation, also indicated that satisfaction with provision was low (Ross & Goh, 1993; Zins, Murphy & Wess, 1989).

Although in the United Kingdom greater proportions of the school psychology population have reported that they were receiving supervision, a large number did not consider that they participated in the practice. Of 117 participants in a British study carried out by Pomerantz (1993), 44% reported that they received supervision. Although 65% of this group considered supervision to be valuable, concerns were raised by the majority of participants in relation to the degree of choice of supervisor, levels of trust and confidentiality in supervision, blending of professional supervision and appraisal processes and the neglect of emotional well-being. Many considered that the number of concerns indicated the need for training for both supervisors and supervisees. Most of the 56% of participants who did not receive supervision said that they would welcome supervision.

Similarly, in New Zealand, psychologists who were asked about the ways in which their fieldwork was supported made frequent mention of the importance of supervision, but also noted difficulties associated with access and participation (Ryba, et al, 2001a). Recently, 236 MoE:SE staff were asked to identify factors that supported their professional practice. The participant group of special educators, some of whom were educational psychologists, indicated that supervision and professional development potentially offered the greatest support (Ministry of Education, 2004).

4.1.2. The Profile of Supervision

Psychologists are not always able to give priority to formal supervision in their busy work schedules and new contextualised ways of working. Although formal supervision is espoused as a highly regarded practice in educational psychology, psychologists appear to have supplemented their formal supervision with other more situated methods.

A low profile of formal supervision in relation to other psychology professional activities might work against participation (Nolan, 1999). Despite psychologists expressed high regard for formal supervision, it may not always be effectively prioritised by individuals or organisations with busy work schedules. Many societal influences and new perspectives such as inclusionary placements, contextualised practice and user-pay policies, necessarily impact on the scheduling of psychologists' work. Formal supervision requires a proactive approach to work management and, in a busy schedule, may compete with activity undertaken in response to immediate situations.

Traditional methods of supervision appear not to be easily accommodated within new ways of working that have developed in response to new policies and perspectives. In fact, there is some evidence to suggest that participation in formal supervision has actually decreased over recent years. Chafouleas et al (2002) compared the results of two surveys of school psychologists conducted ten years apart. In 1989, Zins et al found that 23% of educational psychologists were engaged in supervision, but by 1999, Fischetti and Crespi observed that only 10% of their sample participated.

Although supervision has been described as time consuming in school psychology, (Ward, 2001) it is usually not well recompensed. Ninety-three percent of psychologists surveyed by Ward said that they had no release time from their work to

perform supervisory duties with intern psychologists. Seventy-seven percent of participants were not offered any incentive for supervision by their employers and 64 percent were not recompensed by the universities. In areas where psychologists were offered incentives, the workplace usually offered some form of payment and the university recompensed with continuing education credits and access to university resources. Supervisors of intern psychologists in the Ministry of Education, New Zealand, currently receive nominal release from duties to supervise students, while those in private practice charge modestly for their time. Intern supervisors have access to some on-line university resources.

4.2. Conceptualising Supervision

4.2.1. Historical Influences on Thinking About Supervision in Educational Psychology

Supervision was originally conceptualised within a deficit medical model and was intended to maintain accountability of the first social workers. Subsequent models of supervision have largely been developed outside of educational psychology. Many available models of supervision do not reflect ecological perspectives on human development.

It is difficult to chart the exact origins of supervision although it is probable that it began in the Charity Organisation Societies of the late nineteenth century (Munson, 1993). Early supervision was based on the medical model of consultation in England as the first social workers starting working in close association with physicians. Supervision was located within a deficit perspective, its primary purpose being to ensure the accountability of social workers. Although the content of supervision has changed periodically to reflect shifting perspectives since that time, the dyadic structure of supervision in the helping professions has been largely retained.

Clinical supervision in educational psychology has been guided largely by models from the fields of counselling and social work. Most training courses made available for supervisors in recent years have included counsellor presenters, e.g. Daphne Hewson, who has advocated models of practice based on counselling methods rather than those adopted by educational psychologists. While information from closely related helping professions may have made important contributions to educational psychology, some approaches are incongruent with current field practice for this professional group. Educational psychologists no longer work in person-centred ways that locate issues of concern within individuals, but work collaboratively with people in their everyday environments to address learning and behaviour problems occurring in the interaction between individuals and the many levels of their surrounding ecology (Cooper, 1998; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). Psychologists, in their efforts to adhere to traditional models of supervision, appear to be locked into a person-centred, decontextualised way of thinking about the practice, even though the models of supervisory practice adopted by educational psychologists appear to be out of date or to be incongruent with current ways of working.

4.2.2. Functions of Supervision and Roles of Participants

Supervision is intended to achieve three purposes: (1) support, (2) professional development; and, (3) maintenance of professional standards. Imbalances in the relation to these goals hinder satisfactory participation in supervision.

Supervision has long been acclaimed as a key activity to enhance the quality of educational psychologists' professional practice (Harvey & Struzziero, 2000; Murphy, 1981; Nolan, 1999). Personal and professional experiences can leave some blind spots that prevent people from usefully discerning the salient aspects of circumstances. Supervision is recommended as a mechanism through which psychologists and other health professionals select to reflect on their practice and consider new options in the

light of fresh knowledge (Hawkins & Shohet, 1989; Inskipp & Proctor, 1994; Nash, 1999; Nolan, 1999; Scaife, 2001).

The specific purposes for which supervision systems are established vary. In some situations, supervision may be arranged in order to provide personal and professional support, performing a *restorative* function for psychologists. In others, it may serve a *formative* function by providing a dialogical context in which old knowledge can be challenged and new knowledge acquired or created. Supervision may also create circumstances in which psychologists' professional practice can be scrutinised in relation to accepted ethical codes, thereby serving a *normative* function for the profession and for individual practitioners. However, in effect, the roles of supervisors, and supervision, are usually simultaneously restorative, formative, and normative, the extent to which emphasis is placed on any one of these functions being relative to the situation in which supervision occurs (Inskipp & Proctor, 1994; Scaife, 2001). For example, supervision arranged between peers may perform a strongly restorative function, while university supervisors may place more emphasis on the normative function as they ensure that graduates have reached the standards set by the profession. Variation in emphasis need not only be a function of the origins of the supervision arrangements. Within arranged supervision, the emphasis on particular sessions may change in relation to the tasks at hand. For example, one session may have a normative focus with a psychologist wishing to check that a planned project is ethically sound. In another session, the emphasis may be placed on the restorative function of supervision, the same psychologist sharing their thoughts and feelings about a difficult professional experience

The opportunities offered through supervision for reflection on practice, affirmation and support, may, in addition to promoting the development of new and useful understandings of educational psychology, serve to preserve the mental health of professionals. Good supervision is believed to play a major role in the prevention of burnout in those who work to help others. For example, supervision and formalised

support have been found to be associated with a decrease in depersonalisation reactions of school psychologists (Huebner, 1993b). However, while frequent claims have been made that supervision supports psychologists to address problems associated with stress, it is possible that periods of high stress might be the very times when supervision is overlooked. Experience of difficult and intense activity might well deter psychologists from engagement in the challenging and time-consuming activity of supervision even though it may be more productive to slow down their work pace and reflect on matters at hand (Senge, 1994).

Stress and burnout are frequently consequences of working in challenging environments, such as those of educational psychologists, where addressing interpersonal difficulties is part of the job (Kirk-Brown & Wallace, 2004; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Links have been identified between the emotional well-being among people-oriented service professionals and their ability to facilitate or impede effective service delivery (Hensley, 2002; Huebner, Gilligan & Cobb, 2002). Burnout in the profession is a serious problem as it not only places consumers at risk through continued employment of those who do not contribute positively to the lives of clients, but may also result in the resignation and further personal distress of professionals and consequential depletion of the psychologist community.

The prevalence of burnout among educational psychologists has been shown to be higher than that of clinical and counselling psychologists. Huebner (1993a) found that 25% of educational psychologists who participated in a national study reported high emotional exhaustion, 3% reported high depersonalisation, and 12% reported reduced perception of professional accomplishment. Alarmingly, 35% of the participants indicated their desire to leave the profession within five years. Contextualised understandings of the work environments in which burnout is experienced may help to address these situations. Such circumstances are influenced, not only by personal and professional factors, but also by social and organisational systems (Jennett, Harris & Mesibov, 2003; Kirk-Brown & Wallace, 2004; Hastings, Horne & Mitchell, 2004;

Maslach, 2003; Maslach & Goldberg, 1998; Senge, 1994; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Burnout itself may deter people from participating in formal supervision. Nolan (1999) found that barriers to participation included the fear that colleagues would view those undertaking supervision as incompetent and in need of compensatory assistance.

The simultaneous operation of all three supervision functions does not always proceed unimpeded. Tensions are frequently evident in relation to the relative priority placed on the supervisory function of ensuring accountability, advancing professional skill and knowledge, and accessing personal professional support (Bernard & Goodyear, 1998; Harvey & Struzziero, 2000). These concerns often relate to the possible impact on the support function of supervision activity in cases where the supervisor is also required to evaluate performance against a set of standards. Nolan (1999) discussed the dilemma supervisory participants often experienced when the distinction between the 'support function' and the 'management function' was blurred. The aims of supervision, the respective responsibilities of participants and the roles each participant was expected to perform were not clear in such circumstances. This observation indicates that perceptions of adequacy of supervision involve not only supervision events, but also the expectations of the participants in relation to the purposes and procedures associated with the supervision arrangements.

Possible inconsistencies between professional codes highlight the need for professional supervision to check that psychologists do not compromise ethical standards in their workplaces. For example, MoE:SE the largest employer of educational psychologists in New Zealand, has a code of conduct covering the professional practice of all employees. Some of the expectations made explicit in the Code of Conduct (NZ Ministry of Education, 2000) are largely administrative, although some expectations relate to professional practice. In the main, the expectations are consistent with the ethical standards set by the profession, although this is not entirely the case. Employees cannot publicly "criticise, or offer alternatives

to, a proposed or actual Ministerial policy or department programme ..." (p. 6). In the unlikely event that the ministry proposed a programme that was in conflict with the psychologists' code of ethics, any psychologist, aware of the plan, would be obliged to intervene in some way.

One aspect of supervision that is frequently questioned is between-discipline supervision (Nolan, 1999). Clearly there is potential for both constructive dialogue when the perspectives of supervisory participants differ. However, such debates can also provide the grounds for the development of mistrust when the role of formal supervisor is assigned to those who hold line management positions, but who are not members of the psychologist profession (Harvey & Struzziero, 2000; Hosp & Reschly, 2002). Such situations underscore the need for supervisors and supervisees to have some choice in determining supervisory relationships that work in particular situations. However, sometimes, supervisors and supervisees must carry explicit dual roles, particularly in smaller rural areas (Herlihy & Corey, 1997).

Ensuing dialogue regarding supervision purpose may serve a constructive purpose through the creation of new knowledge and the maintenance of participant awareness of its restorative functions. However, while normative supervision procedures may be refined to render them more applicable for participants through this process, it will necessarily remain a component of all supervision activity. The competent performance of each member of the profession of psychology is determined by the profession itself, and observed through the eyes of members. Educational psychologists do not exist in isolation from their profession, but work in relation to a group of peers who share common knowledge and who purport to abide by the same codes. They make connections with other psychologists to preserve the integrity of the profession by upholding their code of ethics, by supporting individuals, and ensuring the beneficence of practice for clients (NASP, 2000a; NZPsS, 2002).

In New Zealand, all registered psychologists are accountable to the profession by way of the NZPsS Code of Ethics (2002), with responsibility to advise relevant people when problems are identified. This may or may not include an employer as indicated in Section 4.4.3. of the NZPsS Code of Ethics.

> Psychologists uphold the discipline's responsibility to society by taking relevant action in relation to bringing incompetent or unethical behaviour of colleagues, including misuses of psychological knowledge and techniques, to the attention of appropriate regulatory bodies, authorities, and/or committees, in a manner consistent with the ethical principles of this Code. (NZPsS Code of Ethics, 2002, Section 4.4.3.)

Conflict in supervision will not be avoidable on all occasions. Supervision is a complex, multi-functional practice in which required tasks associated with the various goals of support, professional development, and accountability will at times be at odds. The tensions resulting from conflicting goals may be overwhelming or may serve a constructive purpose. A positive net effect may possibly rely on psychologists' ability to expect, value, and manage the tensions presenting in this multi-functional practice.

4.2.3. Popular Notions of Supervision in Educational Psychology

Common understanding of supervision in educational psychology focuses primarily on formally arranged dyadic relationships.

Although psychologists may pursue the supervision goals in a variety of ways, community members do not always share understandings of what constitutes preferred or applicable methods. Proponents of traditional supervision view procedures outside of formal supervision sessions to be rather incidental or accidental.

At best they consider them to be of little use; and at worst they are viewed as harmful, competing with the established convention of formal supervision that is regarded as the most viable method to maintain professional competencies (McIntosh and Phelps, 2000; Ross & Goh, 1993; Zins et al, 1989).

References to supervision have generally implied that it is a discrete activity. For example, Chafouleas et al (2002) suggested that clinical or professional supervision involved one–to-one efforts, and recommended that psychologists undertake two hours of supervision per week. A dyadic relationship often is implied in the language used to discuss supervision and in the absence of discussion about any adjunct activities that might make up a broader supervisory experience. For example, Fishetti & Crespi (1999) describe clinical supervision as a one-to-one relationship in which professional skills are developed. A further example is provided by Allen et al (2000) who drew conclusions about supervision provision on the basis of responses to a questionnaire discussing the attributes and behaviours of a single supervisor.

Huebner, Gilligan & Cobb (2002) noted that, in addition to formal supervision, informal peer interactions also held a supportive function leading to the development of technical competencies, psychological insights and affirmative, supportive 'social reality sharing'. The researchers also made reference to the possible benefits of mentoring programmes in which experienced psychologists were teamed with those who were new to profession. They did not, however, consider informal interactions or mentoring programmes to be supervisory.

Although dyadic relationships feature strongly in trainee supervision, the scope of supervision appears to be conceptualised more broadly for this group than for registered psychologists. Trainee supervision has often included observations of trainees at work, or modelling of methods and techniques either by a nominated person or by others in placement agencies. For instance, Massey University approves trainee psychologists' supervision arrangements, not only on the basis of the

nomination of an individual accredited supervisor, but also on the suitability of placement circumstances (Massey University Internship Manual, 2004).

Thinking about supervision as a dyadic interaction appears to be inconsistent with the views that educational psychologists take with regard to their practice. In the educational settings in which they primarily work, psychologists examine the relationships between events occurring in different settings, in different circumstances and in collaboration with a variety of people (Ryba et al, 2001a). They consider the way knowledge is created in the dynamic and inter-related systems of people's lives

As, from an ecological viewpoint, all action reflects and contributes to the context in which it occurs, understandings of what constitutes supervision necessarily influence the selection of supervision processes and the forms of relationships between participants. Therefore, a comprehensive definition of supervision must accommodate these inherent contextual factors and the activities undertaken to fulfil its intended purposes. The description of supervision offered by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) on their website makes reference to the purpose of supervision and the nature of the supervision relationship. It implies that supervision occurs in the interaction between a school psychologist and a nominated supervisor, for the purpose of developing exemplary or improved performance. In this description, supervision is depicted as a dyadic process (NASP, 2000).

> ...an ongoing, positive, systematic, collaborative process between a school psychologist and school psychology supervisor that focuses on promoting professional growth and exemplary professional practice leading to improved performance of all concerned—school psychologist, supervisor, students, and the entire school community. (National Association of School Psychologists' Supervision Work Group in NASP, 2000)

McIntosh and Phelps (2000) have offered an alternative definition of supervision for educational psychology. In their definition, quoted below, they described supervision among educational psychologists as an interpersonal interaction that serves to support and promote competence and accountability.

> Supervision is an interpersonal interaction between two or more individuals for the purpose of sharing knowledge, assessing professional competencies, and providing objective feedback with the terminal goals of developing new competencies, facilitating effective delivery of psychological services, and maintaining professional competencies. (McIntosh and Phelps, 2000, p. 33/34)

This definition supports a broader conceptualisation of supervision. It implies that supervision is activity that allows psychologists to pursue the supervisory goals and that does not restrict activity to specific forms, such as formal dyadic interactions.

4.2.4. Understanding Supervision in Practice

Educational psychology has not developed a sufficiently open or content-free supervision framework that explains or accommodates the range of activities possible through application of multiple models. Educational psychologists are not always able to articulate their supervision practice.

Although supervision is portrayed as an intentional activity, some educational psychologists have difficulty identifying models of supervision practice they follow and articulating their supervisory interaction. Nolan (1999) investigated, by way of focus group interviewing, the supervisory activities of educational psychologists in Britain. When asked about models of supervisory practice, some noted the use of problem-solving models, while others considered that they had no model of practice to follow. In fact, the psychologists reported that the question relating to models of

practice was 'hard to answer'. Difficulties articulating practice suggest that supervision is not always deliberately structured. This may indicate the requirement for the construction of new knowledge about supervision practice. It may also signal that that supervision methods have become somewhat 'procedural' involving many automated responses, like, for instance, the typing of words on a computer.

Ward and Ward (2000) asked school psychologists in the United States to indicate the model of supervisory practice that best described their orientation to supervision. The school psychologists most frequently mentioned developmental, behavioural, or problem-solving models, or a combination of two or more. Regardless of the models guiding supervision practice, supervisor participants in this study reported that their style was more consistent with a consultant role than with a counsellor or teacher role.

Many models of supervision have been developed to enable participants to organise their ideas and structure their participation. Most of these are orientation-specific and based on brands of therapies and approaches to practice that practitioners believe are most effective. The selection of models of supervision might predictably be based on the extent to which the underlying theory of any particular supervisory model fits with the approaches adopted in other areas of professional work. Approaches to supervision, like professional practice and service delivery, are determined by sets of assumptions about how knowledge is constructed (Scaife, 2001). Therefore, the structuring and functioning of practitioner's supervision requires self-awareness of the theories of learning and development they hold.

In the United States, Harvey and Struzziero (2000) described a largely behavioural approach to supervision for educational (school) psychologists. This approach reflected the emphases placed on school psychology practice at the time the model was developed, e.g. the high profile of functional behaviour assessment (Miller, 2000; Miller, Tansy & Hughes, 1998; Quinn, Gable, Rutherford, Nelson & Howell, 1998). Psychologists also have available models of supervision that have been developed for

counsellors and teachers, but that are based on theories familiar to educational psychology. For example, social cognitive (Larson, 1998), developmental (Hewson, 1992; Stoltenberg and Delworth, 1987; Stoltenberg, McNeill & Delworth, 1998), solution-focused (Rita, 1998) and cyclical (Page & Wosket, 1994) models of supervision. As the input of many theorists guide psychologists' eclectic practice in the field, appropriate supervisory practice for this community is likely to reflect a similar range. Some models place emphasis on the structure of supervision, others on the roles each participant plays. Some models focus on the communicative and interpretive skills of supervisory partners. For instance, developmental models such as those advanced by Stoltenberg and Delworth (1987) and Hewson (1992) help psychologists to make decisions about the levels and nature of support required for supervisees at various stages of their training and careers. Behavioural approaches help supervisory partners to set goals and to structure sessions. Social cognitive models address the interactive environment and encourage the development of human agency, while psycho-dynamic models assist psychologists to view and consider intra-personal aspects of professional practice.

Very little information about the supervision activities of educational psychologists in New Zealand has been published. Intern psychologists from the Massey University Educational Psychology Training Programme are provided with some guidelines for supervision activity, although specific procedures are not explicitly noted (Massey University, 2004). Programme staff request that students engage in face-to-face interaction with nominated supervisors. These intern psychologists are also encouraged to seek help from other psychologists and those who have specialist knowledge in particular areas. They are expected to carry out some shared fieldwork and to observe the work of more experienced psychologists.

Most references to supervision of educational (school) psychologists in United States have investigated the supervisory experience of those involved with the training of new psychologists, rather than the supervision of registered psychologists. In *Effective*

Supervision in School Psychology, Harvey and Strazziero (2000) make reference to a number of activities that USA trainee psychologists can undertake in order to become qualified. In this model, the authors place strong emphasis on the developing competency of the trainee psychologist. The focus of supervision, conceptualised in this way, rests heavily on the accountability and professional development aspects of supervision, rather than the support function. Some researchers have examined the activities undertaken in supervision. The most common activities reported to Fischetti and Crespi (1999b) in a national survey of clinical supervision practices of USA school psychologists were the review of reports, case presentations and direct observation. Ward (2001) asked another group of field supervisors of intern psychologists to rank the activities undertaken. The most commonly mentioned activities, in rank order, were case presentations and feedback, review of reports, modelling and observation of practice, sharing resources, planning professional activity and evaluating performance. Supervision was reported to take place in both dyadic and group situations. In both of the above studies, the supervisory interaction noted occurred, as in most internship programmes, in formally arranged professional relationships.

Methods of supervision that have meaning for participants will be those that reflect their particular theoretical orientation with regard to gaining professional support and maintaining accountability. These methods will be sufficiently robust to accommodate changes required as participants' perspectives alter through the development of new knowledge. Therefore, psychologists need not only be aware of models of practice, but must also have a framework for supervision into which activity emerging from the various models of supervision can be integrated. Bernard and Goodyear's (1998) discrimination model goes some way toward this, although it continues to be detailed and perhaps too prescriptive to cater for all supervisory situations. Similarly, Scaife and Scaife (1996) presented a framework for supervisors that, while intended for application to traditional dyadic situations, made a substantial contribution as it offered a guide for participants to consider the purpose of supervision sessions, the

various roles of the supervisor and general session foci. To date, the profession of educational psychology has not developed a sufficiently open or content-free framework for supervision to explain or accommodate the range of activities possible through application of multiple models.

4.3. Relationships in Supervision

4.3.1. Social Relationships

Personal and professional relationships are strongly influential in determining the extent to which supervision participants deem their supervision satisfactory. The particular qualities and behaviours of both supervisors and supervisees contribute to the strength of the relationship.

The supervisory relationship has consistently been found to be a strong and determining factor affecting the perceived adequacy of supervision experience (Nolan, 1999; Ramos-Sanchez, Esnil, Goodwin, Riggs & Touster, et al 2002; Worthen and McNeill, 1996). For example, Hensley (2002) observed in a study of clinical social workers' supervision that supervisory relationship was the core ingredient running through every aspect of quality supervision. Supervisory relationship was also found to be associated with the quality of supervision in independent studies by Nelson and Friedlander (2001) and Gray, Ladany, Walker & Ancis, (2001) although these researchers noted the potential of poor supervision relationships to cause harm. Similarly, Nolan found that discomfort with the one-to-one relationship was associated with dissatisfaction in supervision.

Some supervision events, or supervision participant qualities or behaviours, are more important than others in determining the perceived quality of supervision. For instance, Shanfield, Matthews & Hetherly (1993) analysed the actions of highly

regarded psychotherapist supervisors and found that they developed a safe environment for supervisees to freely express the challenges and dilemmas they encountered in their work. They affirmed the decisions of the supervisee, and furthered their understanding of practice. Well-regarded supervisors also conducted their supervision with minimal use of technical language. An important observation in this study was the extent to which the supervisors were able to simultaneously attend to the learning, accountability and support roles implied in the supervision process. A follow-up study by the same researchers has supported the findings that good supervisors provide professional guidance while maintaining their concern for the well-being of the supervisee (Shanfield, Hetherly & Matthews, 2001).

Henderson, Cawyer & Watkins (1999) investigated the supervision experience of psychology graduate students and supervisors The supervisee participants reported that quality supervision was a function of supervisor general knowledge and experience, the capacity of the supervisor to facilitate learning, and the ability to offer constructive evaluation of supervisee performance. Participants in this study also stressed the importance of relationship factors such as trust, approachability, respect, and attentiveness. The supervisors in this study placed emphasis on ethics, accountability and adaptability.

The reciprocal nature of the supervisor-supervisee relationship has prompted some researchers to consider the qualities, behaviours and contributions of supervisees identifying attributes that are helpful. For instance, Westervelt & Brantly (cited in McIntosh & Phelps, 2000) noted that presenting information clearly, being assertive, considering feedback, being prepared, and requesting additional feedback at appropriate times were associated with more satisfactory supervision. Other behaviours, such as being overly dependent and poorly organised, were viewed as problematic. Swain (in Holloway, 1995) identified some critical qualities that affected supervisors' perceptions of supervisees. These included interest in the welfare of the people with whom they worked, preparation for supervision, theoretical knowledge,

self-awareness, openness to suggestions, expertise, interpersonal skills, boundary management and decision-making abilities.

Most studies of supervision events have focused on the supportive aspects of supervision despite the potential dangers of ineffective supervision. However, a few studies have examined unhelpful factors or those that hinder, are unhelpful or harmful to learners' growth. Magnuson, Wilcoxon, & Norem (2000) carried out a qualitative study of eleven experienced counsellors who identified several aspects of poor supervision. They were inadequate attention to the task of supervision, developmentally mismatched approaches, intolerance of differences, professional apathy, inappropriate personal-professional interactions and insufficient training to address supervision problems as they arose. Nelson and Friedlander (2001) interviewed masters and doctoral students about the supervision experiences that had been detrimental to their training. The participants viewed poor supervisors as not being invested in the supervision relationship and unwilling to acknowledge their role in conflicts. These participants noted that they relied on their peers and other professionals to compensate for unsatisfactory supervision.

Poor supervision events may be determined not only by what is provided, but also what is *not* provided. Allen, Szollos & Williams (1986) surveyed 142 doctoral students and concluded that poor supervision involved supervisors failing to give clear and direct feedback or to create a safe environment for this to occur, or failing to encourage students to extend boundaries. They also found that unsatisfactory supervisors were avoidant, critical and preoccupied in their communication. Similarly, Kennard, Stewart & Gluck (1987) surveyed psychology students who reported that poor supervision was associated with little support, instruction or interpretation. Interestingly, these aspects of professional life are the areas that supervision is intended to address. In some cases, supervisors have, through omission, even demonstrated unethical practice with a consequent weakening of the supervisory relationship (Ladany, Lehrman-Waterman, Molinaro & Wolgast, 1999). Whether acts

of omission or commission, any violation of the supervisory partnership may reduce supervisees willingness to seek support (Jacobs, 1991).

The quality of supervision is difficult to measure by participant satisfaction alone as supervision is not always experienced as a comfortable process and, at times, may involve some personal upheaval (Bernard & Goodyear, 1998). Clearly, intense and difficult processes in supervision have the potential to influence the participation rates and levels of satisfaction. Some topics presented in supervision may require significant challenge to the views of either of the supervisory partners, in particular the supervisee. Improved performance requires changes in knowledge and perspective and may be facilitated through the supported unsettling of the learner (Margetson cited in Butler, 1996; Scaife et al, 2001). As learning experiences involve some degree of uncertainty and discomfort, those who expect or welcome challenges, that is expect the unexpected, may view the experience of supervision to be more satisfactory.

Clearly, an environment that is not sufficiently challenging may not generate sufficient energy to move a supervisee from a settled position. In such circumstances, it would be unlikely that supervisees would report their supervision as satisfactory. However, too great a challenge may be overwhelming and may thwart the learning process. Effective supervision involves the development of a safe and supportive supervisory climate (Hawkins & Shohet, 1989; Mezirow, 1985; Scaife, 2001; Ung, 2002).

The supervisory relationship is complex and each partnership will hold unique qualities. Satisfactory supervisory relationships will be those in which there is a good match of supervisory perspective, style and expectation of participant roles.

4.3.2. Cultural Perspectives and Supervision Relationships

Cultural differences between supervisors may provide opportunities for dialogue and professional growth. They can, however, serve as barriers to participation. Matters of race and culture that impact on supervision relate, not only to the supervisory relationship, but also to the relationship between the supervision participants and their clients.

Cultural differences between people have been linked to the perception of adequacy of supervision provision. Firstly, the cultural match between supervisory participants influences the extent to which the relationships are viewed as supportive. For example, Nolan (1999) found that cultural differences between supervisors created a significant barrier to supervision of educational psychologists in the United Kingdom. Similar patterns also have been observed in the supervision relationships of counsellors. Ladany, Brittan-Powell & Pannu (1997) found in a study of 105 counsellor trainees that racial identity interactions were positively related to the strength of the supervisory alliance.

The practice of supervision, with its roots in the European culture, largely reflects the cultural values of this dominant group (Hird, Cavalier, Dulko, Felice & Ho, 2001; Patterson & Waitoki, 2002; Tummala-Narra, 2004). For this reason, some members of other ethnic groups suggest the development of models of supervision specifically for their community. Patterson and Waitoki, in New Zealand, suggest that as all knowledge is culturally derived, that a tangata whenua approach to supervision, one that reflects the gifts from their tipuna, would be more relevant for Moari professionals.

Salient cultural group membership is not restricted to race and ethnicity. Matters of gender, sexual orientation and social class are also aspects of diversity that might be

taken into consideration when psychologists connect with their professional community to gain support, professional development and to check their practice. Cultural matching is a complex matter as these factors can interact with one another (Constantine, 2002).

Although matching offers solutions to some cultural factors in supervision, it does not provide all of the answers. In most professional groups there are insufficient numbers of professionals who can fill the required roles. With the rapid intensifying of multi-cultural communities across the world, psychologists are paying attention to the competence of all psychologists to provide applicable supervision for people of increasing diversity (Constantine, 2002; Tummala-Narra, 2004). There is now wide recognition of the value of supervision as a context to support professionals to work with clients with diverse perspectives on the world. Supervision is a practice that is grounded in the values, beliefs and worldviews of its participants and is heralded as a major determinant for the acquisition of multi-cultural competence (Gatmon, Jackson, Koshkarian, Martos-Perry, Molina et al, 2001). Supervisors are now encouraged to increase their cultural awareness firstly through examining their own culture and then acquiring knowledge of others. This is not to say that supervisors must learn about all cultures, but that they require an openness to different ways of thinking and the ability to access information when required (Garrett, Borders, Crutchfield, Torres-Rivera & Brotherton, 2001). They need skill to apply strategies that constructively engage those whose views differ from theirs (Tummala-Narra, 2004).

The challenge of diversity, addressed within the context of supervision, offers opportunities for growth and development. Problems related to race and culture are most effectively resolved in a context that is safe and supportive, in a space where supervisory partners are open to consider new ways of regarding situations. One study has illustrated this clearly. Taffe (2000) found that supervision offered the greatest support to pre-doctoral psychology interns' ability to work with factors of race and culture when characterised by trust and openness.

Psychologists frequently move out of their formal supervision relationships to access specific cultural information from other people. For example, in New Zealand, non-Maori psychologists working for MoE:SE have access to a Kaitakawaenga or a Maori staff member who may work alongside them and who may be available to consult with them about their approach to particular casework (The New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2004).

4.4. Preparation for Supervision

4.4.1. Previous Supervision Experience

History of experience in supervision or similar situations affects psychologists' perceptions of the status or attractiveness of the practice. These lived experiences of supervision will influence subsequent engagement in supervision.

As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, psychologists have frequently reported disappointment with supervision. Numbers of psychologists who report to engage in supervision have been regularly low, and of those who do participate, many have not been satisfied with their supervision experience (Chafouleas et al., 2002; Fischetti & Crespi, 1999; Pomerantz, 1993; Ross & Goh, 1993; Zins et al., 1989). Clearly, if psychologists have had positive experiences of supervision they will be more likely to want to engage in further practice than they would had the experience been unhelpful or traumatic. Nolan (1999) illustrated this point with the finding that that the development of fears that act as barriers to participation for educational psychologists has demonstrated links with past experience of supervision.

However, psychologists who report they do not participate in supervision appear not to have lost sight altogether of the benefits that supervision might offer. Many who did not receive supervision continued to express their desire for its provision

(Fischetti & Crespi, 1999; Pomerantz, 1993). New Zealand psychologists, when asked about the ways their work was supported, placed emphasis on the value of supervision, but noted the need for greater access to this resource (Ryba, et al, 2001a).

A decade ago, psychologists in the United States were asked about their supervision experience. Of the psychologists who said they were participating in supervision, many claimed to engage in practice that was incongruent with professional standards set for supervision by professional bodies (Ross & Goh, 1993; Zins et al, 1989). In both the Ross and Goh and Zins studies, supervision was found most likely to be provided on an as-required basis rather than being provided through structured and regularly scheduled sessions. Neither of these studies explored the reasons that psychologists sought assistance in this way or made attempts to understand the practice that professional bodies had set for the professional group. Neither study questioned the applicability of the requirements of psychologists to formalise supervision in such ways.

4.4.2. Training for Participation in Supervision

Supervisors who have skill in supervision are more willing to participate in the practice. However, many psychologists who supervise other psychologists have not taken part in training for supervision.

In many situations where supervision does take place, it is not unusual to find that neither party has undertaken any training in professional supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 1998). Hunley, Harvey, Curtis, Portney & Grier et al (2000) found in a survey of school psychologists in the United States that only 10% had any significant training in supervision before taking on the task. Nolan (1999) observed that the supervision methods of educational psychologist supervisors in the United Kingdom had been acquired largely through previous experience in supervision as either

supervisor and supervisee. Incidental methods of supervisor preparation were also identified by Ros and Goh (1993), who found that although a few psychologists did receive formal training, the majority of the participants claimed that the source of most supervision training was informal consultation with colleagues. Ward (2001) compared the forms of supervision preparation undertaken by university training staff and field supervisors in USA. Again, informal discussions with colleagues were the most frequently cited method of supervision preparation for both groups. The participants did, however, make use of formal feedback on supervision and a small percentage (15%) undertook workshops or similar. Although both groups attended professional papers at conferences, attendance for university staff was higher (53% for university staff, 30.1% for field supervisors). Johnson and Stewart (2000), reflecting on the findings of their study of clinical psychologists' practice, expressed concern, in view of the espoused importance of supervision for the profession, at the striking absence of formal training in this activity.

Some authors have noted the rarity of supervision training courses in the United States that might prepare psychologists, not only to supervise their peers, but to engage in constructive supervision as supervisees (Crespi, 2001; Haboush, 2003; Harvey & Struzziero, 2000; Ward, 2001). Similarly, in New Zealand, supervisors are not, as a matter of course, systematically prepared for the task but may select to enrol at courses in universities, seminars offered by professional bodies or occasional workshops conducted in workplaces (Massey University Educational Psychology Training Programme manual, 2004; University of Auckland, 2004).

Psychologists' call for access to more training in supervision (Johnson & Stewart, 2000; Nolan, 1999) reflects an important professional topic. There is evidence that development of skill in supervision is associated with psychologists' willingness to participate in this activity. In a survey of 500 school psychologists in the USA, a significant relationship between self-reported skill level in supervision and rates of supervisory activity was found (Fowler & Harrison, 2001). Although much has been

written about the need for training, there has been little offered in terms of the nature of supervision training in psychology or related professions. An exception to this is the work of Bradley and Ladany (2000) who have devoted a chapter of their book, *Counselor supervision; Principles, process, and practice* (3rd Edition), to supervision training. They have detailed a comprehensive training programme that addresses matters linked to the theoretical bases of supervision, as well as the methods and strategies undertaken in the application of the theoretical knowledge.

Psychologists who support others in their professional work must be able to take a birds-eye view of the supervisory circumstances. In order to do this, the psychologists must develop schemata that accommodates a variety of intentional approaches to supervision and must be sufficiently familiar with the processes involved in supervision to adjust practice to suit the dynamic situations in which they carry out their work.

4.4.3. Research Support for Supervision

Research in psychology has yet to identify and describe the core components of supervision. Further research is required to delineate the parameters of supervision and to understand its place and functioning in the professional practice of educational psychologists.

McIntosh and Phelps (2000) consider that research in the area of educational psychology supervision remains at a formative stage. They have questioned what they perceive as a lethargic response from educational psychologists to initiating systematic research that demonstrates the benefits of supervision for recipients.

Such research may, however, remain some distance away until the activities of supervision and the theoretical bases of these are more fully articulated or understood.

McIntosh and Phelps have suggested that interpersonal processes, contexts, attributions and interactions between these factors need to be recognised before they can be linked to preferred outcomes.

Where research in supervision has been carried out, it has often involved the supervision of psychologists during training (Nolan, 1999). While elements of training supervision reflect similar processes to the peer supervision of registered practitioners, developmental factors mean that the ways psychologists access new knowledge and develop skills may change throughout their careers. In addition, the roles taken by supervisors and supervisees, and the nature of the relationships between them, change over time (Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987).

In 1977, Sandoval and Lambert discussed the irony that psychologists, who were equipped with a vast knowledge of research methodology, were in a position where they had not developed mechanisms to evaluate their own practice. Similarly, in the current supervisory situation, it appears that psychologists who have developed sophisticated means of problem-solving within contextualised frameworks and in-depth knowledge of ways of supporting others have yet to develop sufficient understanding of their own supervisory situations to surmount the barriers to professional support and guidance.

Section B: Perceived Qualities and Actions of Supervisory Participants

Although the main focus of the working conversations with the 38 psychologists who took part in the present study was to discuss theories of supervision in action (See chapter 5), participants also were asked to comment on the supervisory relationship, a factor that is fundamental to satisfactory supervision. The psychologists indicated their preferences in relation to the qualities and actions taken by supervisors and supervisees. All participants commented on supervisor factors and contributed qualitative information. The data from the 31 of these participants who had responded to the initial request for participation were considered for quantitative analysis. Initially, the participants were asked only to discuss supervisor qualities and actions, but it became clear during the conversations that, as supervision is a two-way process, the qualities and actions of the supervisees also were important mediating factors. Twenty participants commented on supervisee qualities and actions. Therefore, the number of participants commenting on the qualities and actions of supervisors and supervisees was not equal. Consequently, although the sample size was small, the data are presented in this section as percentages of the number of participants to illustrate the different preferences associated with the two roles.

Preferred qualities and actions in supervision

Participants clearly identified the qualities and actions that they associated with satisfactory supervision. They considered that supervisory style, or the personal aspect of professional supervision, was important when both providing and receiving supervision. However, the extent to which other factors were important in the relationship, that is, level and nature of expertise, theoretical orientation and level of trust, depended on whether or not the participant was in the role of supervisor or supervisee.

Four categories of supervisor and supervisee qualities and actions that influenced the development of supervisory relationships in all forms of professional interaction were identified by the psychologists interviewed (Fig. 8). Although participants tended to comment on similar dimensions of both supervisor and supervisee qualities, the relative importance placed on each dimension differed between the two groups.
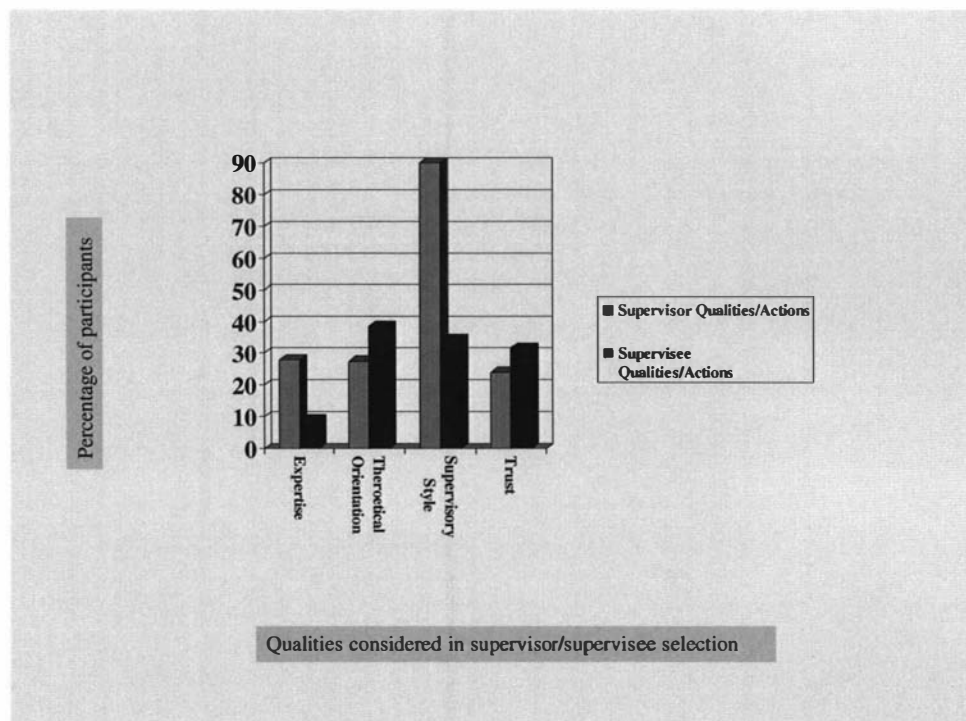
Figure 8. Percentage of participants who mentioned particular supervisor and supervisee qualities or actions sought in supervisory relationships.

Expertise

Ninety percent (28/31) of the participants said they considered supervisor expertise in selecting supervisors and many said that this was the most important supervisor attribute. Most emphasised the need for the supervisor, in both formal and integrated supervisory situations, to have expertise in the topic area related to their particular professional concern. They sought people whose fieldwork had gained peer respect. One participant described this supervisor quality as, "Skill, expertise and knowledge"

and "street credibility" (24.26). Others said that their supervisor was 'the best in the field, is held in high esteem" (29.84) and "she is a star, walks the talk, has credibility" (29.89). Participants valued the supervision they obtained from not only psychologists, but with people from other disciplines or cultures who held particular expertise. For some psychologists, expertise overrode other factors. For example, "I would put up with imperfect interpersonal [skill] to maintain professional integrity" (38.27) and "Competence is put before trust, even if [the supervisor was] a gossip I would put competence above this" (7.34).

Some participants indicated, however, that there were some limits on the extent to which a difference in levels of expertise between supervisory partners was constructive. One participant noted that she did receive supervision from a more experienced person but that perceptions of power differences in this relationship negatively influenced her feelings about the supervision. "It can be scary. I don't think I am experienced enough" (1.95).

Forty five percent (9/20) of participants who commented on supervisee qualities said they considered expertise in selecting supervisees. Many participants noted the contributions that knowledgeable supervisees made toward supervisors' professional development. They regarded such situations as having reciprocal advantages and contributing to what one participant described as "professional renewal" (35.27). However, one participant indicated that some supervisors might prefer to place a ceiling on the level of supervisee expertise. "There was feedback from staff that people would not want to supervise a more experienced person" (30.55).

Theoretical Orientation

In the main, those seeking supervision reported that they looked for a supervisor who held similar values and whose theoretical orientation with regard to professional work was aligned with their own. However, several participants also noted the value of

working with someone whose position challenged theirs at times and noted that a balance of "difference and similarity is optimal" (18.33). The supervisory process, they said, was enhanced by the complementary nature of participant skills and knowledge.

> [The supervisor] is in tune with my values but necessarily too similar but someone who can make me think a bit wider, a different perspective. (15.28)

> We understand each others' thinking and language, understand each other's foibles. We've got complimentary strengths and needs, well balanced. (15.33)

> [The primary supervisor] would have to be a psychologist. I would go to people from other disciplines for specific issues. (2.151)

> She has similar training and can make sure my skills base is still there. (30.50)

In most cases, participants said they preferred to engage in supervision with other psychologists, although there were times when they sought specific guidance from people who worked in other disciplines or who were not connected with their organisation. Wherever supervision was sought, participants considered it was important that participants were "on the same wavelength" (26.75).

Trustworthiness

For most of the 77% (24/31) of participants who noted the importance of trustworthiness in their supervisor, this was considered to be of utmost importance in selection. One participant commented, "If I did not trust her, or thought she was judgemental, or if I didn't respect her it would be a waste of time, I wouldn't go" (13.21). Trustworthiness in supervisees, on the other hand, was mentioned by only

10% (2/20) of the participants. Those who did mention trust considered that the supervisory relationship must be based on mutual trust.

The degree of trust in supervisors varied across the participant group. Some had "high but not complete trust" (1.85) in their formal supervisor, but approached more trusted peers on matters where personal and professional safety was at most risk. Others said that they believed they might approach anyone in their office with the assurance of complete trust. Most of the psychologists interviewed worked with team leaders who not only carried out administrative tasks, but were also registered psychologists able to offer professional support. Of the 28 participants who were not themselves service leaders, 25 said that they had high levels of trust and respect for their team leaders and regularly sought professional support from them.

Supervisory Style

Eighty-seven percent (27/31) of participants mentioned specific aspects of supervisee style that they believed contributed to the effectiveness of supervision. *Supervisory style* refers to the relationship aspects of supervision and includes the supervisory participants' approaches and responses to supervision events (Ward & Ward, 2000). One participant commented, "Supervision is only good if the quality of inputs or issues are handled supportively by both participants" (9.44). Supervision involved more than a prescribed set of functional behaviours and was described by a participant as "an art more than a science" (25.29).

Although supervisory style was mentioned by participants in relation to both supervisors and supervisees, the particular aspects of interpersonal approach that mattered to participants differed with respect to the two roles. Aspects of supervisor style valued by the participants included friendship, positive professional support, reflective approach, ability to professionally challenge others, and expression of genuine interest in fieldwork and in supervision. Supervisors wanted supervisees to be

well organised, reliable, and prepared for supervision. They also wanted them to show enthusiasm for learning and the professional work they were undertaking and to be willing to accept feedback. Supervisors expected supervisees to be active in the supervision process, and to challenge and extend the supervisors' view.

Table 4. Supervisor and supervisee qualities and actions valued by the psychologist participants.

Valued supervisor qualities and behaviours	• Expertise in relevant areas • Level of experience just a little in advance of that of the supervisee • Credibility in the field • A theoretical orientation similar to their own • Trust and confidentiality • Friendship • A positive approach • Supportive challenge • Genuine interest in the work of the supervisee • Interest in and valuing of supervision
Valued supervisee qualities and behaviours	• Preparing for supervision • Organisation of practice • Timeliness • Openness to feedback and learning • Enthusiasm for psychologist work • Expertise in psychology practice • Willingness to challenge supervisor

Supervisor Style

The participants commented on the importance of supervisory partners relating personally and professionally. They said that it takes time to build up a relationship and to create the "connection aspect" of a "critical friendship" (34:19). One participant considered that the other person must be 'with' her (32:26). Participants made many mentions of the importance of supervisor interest in their work and in the supervision process. Some wanted supervisors to show excitement about the work, and to give their "undivided attention without interruptions during supervision

sessions" (38:47). They preferred that supervisors listened, were empathetic, supportive, affirming and non-judgmental. One psychologist commented that, for her, a supervisor who was "calm, reasonable and stable" was most helpful (7.32). Several participants commented on the value of supervisors acknowledging the influence of events outside the workplace.

Participants identified openness, honesty and reflection as good supervisor qualities and sought challenges to their practice. They considered the ability and willingness to challenge important in promoting safe practice. When in the position of supervisee, the psychologists wanted supervisors to require them to justifiy their decisions and to review the ethical implications of their actions. One commented that she wanted "professionalism" and not a "she'll be right" approach (18:29). The following examples further illustrate this point.

> A supervisor needs to be able to take you to the next stage. (16:45)

> I believe I have the answers somewhere. People need to question me so that it opens up a pathway. (26.95)

> I want to be challenged. With internal, transdisciplinary supervision I am not challenged...pussyfoot...buddy buddy ....you don't want affirmation, you want someone who makes you think. Obviously personal support is good. I want to learn through supervision. [Psychologists] need to look at ethics, safety. Others may overlook this or they might feel threatened [and not mention it]. (30:52)

> I want a supervisor to challenge me if I appear to be losing objectivity or professionalism for any reason. (38:37)

Some participants cautioned, however, that the nature and extent of challenge must be measured. One psychologist commented that, "If I'm not challenged enough it's a waste of time. If it's too much I feel crushed. You have to have a good relationship" (25:29). Another said, "My two supervisors have different styles - one will most often ask questions or flip back the issue. I hate it. The other is more direct, visual, draws as she is talking" (23:100). Some participants explained that their need for questioning or guidance differed depending on particular circumstances. For example, during formal supervision, psychologists might expect questioning and challenging but in spontaneous collegial interactions, initiated in response to pressing concerns, more explicit suggestions and sharing of explicit knowledge were appreciated. Whatever the case, psychologists preferred to maintain some degree of control over the nature of interaction.

Supervisee Style

The psychologists made much mention of the place of organisational aspects of supervisee actions. They said they wanted supervisees to reliably attend scheduled meetings, to turn up on time and to come to sessions prepared. One participant said, "The key thing is that they [supervisees] value supervision enough to have thought about it enough to have prepared for supervision, for example, by getting there on time" (27:45). They also wanted to be assured that supervisees would follow through on commitments made in supervision sessions.

Participants noted a preference for engaging with supervisees who valued knowledge acquisition and viewed supervision as an opportunity for growth. Several commented that they wanted to interact with psychologists who were enthusiastic about their work. Supervisees appeared to find greater favour with their supervisors if they were reflective on their own practice and demonstrated attempts to think through issues brought to formal supervision sessions. Supervising psychologists also stressed the importance of listening, openness to learning and willingness to accept feedback and

guidance. They hoped that supervisees would show "willingness to share issues that may be making them feel incompetent or inadequate" (21:32), "willingness to question their own practice" (20:32), and the "ability to consider alternative perspectives" (21:33). Supervisors also preferred that supervisees were prepared to challenge the positions taken by supervisors. Some commented that they wanted supervisees to play an active role in determining the supervisory context, to issue challenges to supervisor views and to provide feedback on the supervision process. They sought supervisee "willingness to put forward their own views and debate issues" (10:43) and to "challenge me as a supervisor" (25.37). They wanted supervisees to "take responsibility for the supervision process, that is, enter into a partnership with me". (20:33).

Selection of supervisory partners, particularly on a fixed basis, was an important decision to make although many participants explained that it was difficult to satisfactorily match supervisory partners. As one participant explained, supervision can be "awkward to get out of. [You] don't want to offend (3:20)". Some psychologists explained that they rotated supervisors regularly to ensure a range of contacts with people. Others addressed this problem by choosing not to select one person but to approach various others depending on the issue at hand.

4.5. Analysis of Dimension 2: Mediators of Participation in Supervision

This chapter has discussed some important influences on educational psychologists' participation in supervision. Figure 9 represents a summary of the information presented in this chapter and shows the relationships between the identified factors.

Preparation for Supervision

•Previous experience in supervision

•Training for supervision

•Research in supervision

Conceptualising Supervision

•Historical influences on thinking about supervision

•Functions of supervision and roles of participants

•Popular notions of supervision

•Understanding supervision in practice

Participation in Supervision

•Rates of participation in form supervision

•Profile of supervision

Relationships in Supervision

•Social relationships (Including qualities and actions of supervisory participants)

•Cultural perspectives and supervision

Figure 9. Mediators of participation in supervision

In the main, educational psychology has continued to conceptualise supervision as practice involving a unitary dyadic relationship, despite the professions' current emphasis on multi-systemic analysis. There are several reasons offered for the perpetuation of this notion of supervision, including the medical model origins of the practice and its development through previous eras when psychologists focused on behaviour changes of individuals rather than ecologies. Educational psychologists have not developed shared frameworks for supervision and have, not surprisingly, demonstrated difficulty in explaining their supervision activity. They are further deterred from engaging in supervision by the tensions that arise when the functions of supervision are not mutually understood or appreciated by participants.

The narrow perspective on supervision (relative to practice) and psychologists' uncertainty about the theoretical foundations of their supervision, have influenced the

way this topic has been addressed in research. Most supervision research has presumed that supervision is primarily a one-to-one activity, an understanding that has led to findings that are congruent with this presumption. As educational psychology practice is guided by its evidence base, psychologists training and preparation for supervision must be influenced by the findings of information gleaned from such research. However, training for supervision is an infrequent event and much preparation must, therefore, rely on the previous, not always satisfactory, supervision experience of the psychologists. The relationship between knowledge, experience and action is well established (Argyris, 1993; Argyris & Schön, 1974; Cole & Chan, 1990; Senge, 1994). Clearly, participation in supervision will be affected, either positively or negatively, by the quality and form of understanding of the practice and the nature of psychologists' preparation.

However, developing understanding of supervision theory and practice may be insufficient to ensure high levels of participation. Personal aspects must also be taken into account. Psychologists have repeatedly indicated that the supervisory relationship is the pivotal factor in determining if supervision is satisfactory to them (Worthen & McNeill, 1996). The psychologists participating in the present study indicated that they had particular preferences with regard to the qualities they sought in supervisory partners and the types of actions taken within the process of supervision. They considered the theoretical orientation of the supervisory partner to be an important factor, as well as the particular knowledge they sought. The participants were also concerned about the interpersonal style of the people with whom they supervised and the degree of trust they had experienced.

Clearly, a two-pronged approach must be taken to address participation in supervision. Psychologists must develop shared and applicable understandings of supervision, while simultaneously developing systems to recognise and promote good supervision relationships.

Chapter 5

Dimensions 3: Psychologists' Supervision Theories-in Action

Chapter 5 presents the findings from working conversations with 38 educational psychologists throughout New Zealand. During these conversations, the participants gave accounts of the actions they undertook in pursuit of the goals of supervision. These accounts provided an important basis from which to infer the participants' theories-in-action of supervision. In contrast to studies that seek to understand situations through identification of the most common practices, the present study acknowledged the place of diversity and collective knowledge in communities. This required that contributions from all participants be considered irrespective of the frequency of occurrence. Every activity mentioned during the interviews was incorporated into the overall analysis, even if only one participant made mention of an event. As a result, most of the data for this section of the study are presented in ways that emphasise the *nature* of practices rather than the *frequencies* by which they occur. Frequencies of occurrence in the community are shown, however, when reporting broad areas of investigation, for example the forms of supervision and the purposes for which this was undertaken. These frequencies indicate the popularity of some particular community practices at this time, but they do not affect the overall analysis and the generation of the conceptualisation of supervision practice. The findings are presented in this chapter in the following order.

- The purposes of supervision
- Forms of supervisory activity
- Processes for formal supervision
- Current levels of satisfaction with supervision

5.1. The Purposes of Supervision

The psychologists reported that they engaged in supervision to receive and provide support, to further professional development and to check that standards were maintained.

The purposes for which the participants sought supervision mirrored the reasons cited in most professional literature on this topic. They engaged in professional supervision for three reasons: (1) accountability (26/31, 84%); (2) professional development (26/31, 84%); and, (3) support (22/3, 71%).
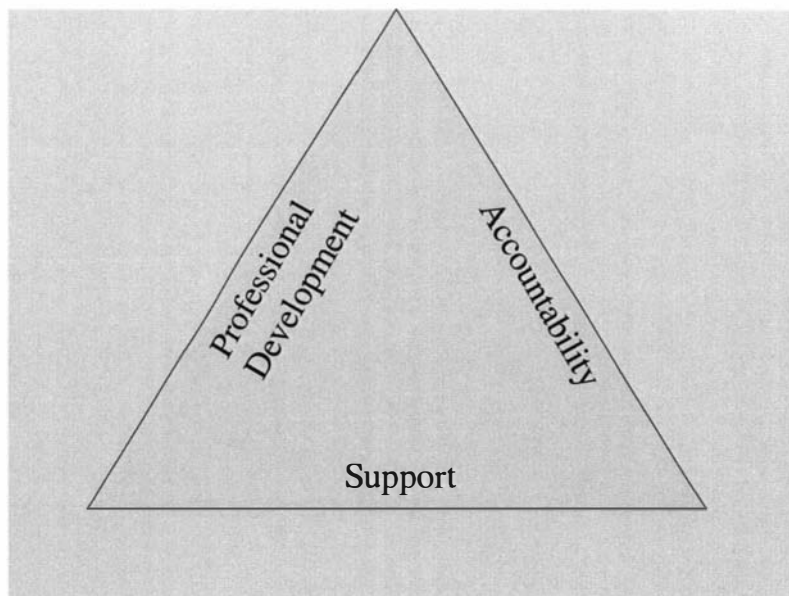
Figure 10. The purposes for which the participants reported they engaged in professional supervision.

Accountability

The psychologists considered that supervision was an important activity for monitoring the standards of their work and for supporting desirable outcomes for clients. They reported that supervision provided a context for examining fieldwork in relation to the NZPsS Code of Ethics. In situations where there were potential conflicts or ethical issues, supervision offered opportunities to take a broad view and to challenge psychologists' positions. Participants made comments such as "[Supervision] keeps my practice safe" (10:89), "[Supervision] monitors standards of work" (10:91) and "When issues are too close to you, you need supervision to help you stand back and look at the problem dispassionately" (7:80).

Professional Development

Supervision was a context in which psychologists could reflect on their practice with others and engage in dialogue to resolve the dilemmas they faced in their work. It was also an opportunity to learn from and with others, to reconsider perspectives on work and to reassess roles. One psychologist commented positively on the value of newcomers to the profession and their role in keeping established members up to date (29:209). Some examples of comments regarding professional development in supervision are listed below.

It's all about growing, being challenged, not getting in a rut. (15:70)

[Supervision] makes sure I grow - giving me space and time out to reflect and get feedback. I usually don't have time. (30:102)

Supervision is valuable, you can get entrenched in your case when you need to get outside it and reflect. [You] ask why? There are often new dimensions. (18:118)

> [Supervision] slows me down - reminds me that I have all the information I need – I just need to reshuffle my ideas. (26: 43)
>
> People come up with things I haven't crossed yet. I think, 'flip, what vicarious learning'. (21:82)

Support

The psychologists commented on the role of supervision in providing personal and professional support. They considered that supervision helped to reduce negative affect associated with the difficult work in which they engaged and helped them to maintain mental health and to increase job satisfaction. The context of supervision allowed them to debrief, obtain affirmation, and create renewed interest in their work. They appreciated being able to share their successes with others and to discuss personal issues that affected their work. Supervision offered, "support - a safe place to offload" (21:78), or an "opportunity to vent frustrations if I need to....or to share successes with someone who understands the work you do and the constraints you are usually faced with" (5:78).

5.2. Multiple Forms of Supervisory Practice

The psychologists reported that they engaged in multiple forms of activity to gather support, further professional development and ensure that the standards of the profession were maintained.

When asked to identify the activities undertaken in order to meet the goals of supervision, participants reported multiple forms of activity. The broad forms of activity discussed fell into five categories: informal supervision, teaming, formal supervision, attendance at professional gatherings, and accessing professional literature (Figure 11).
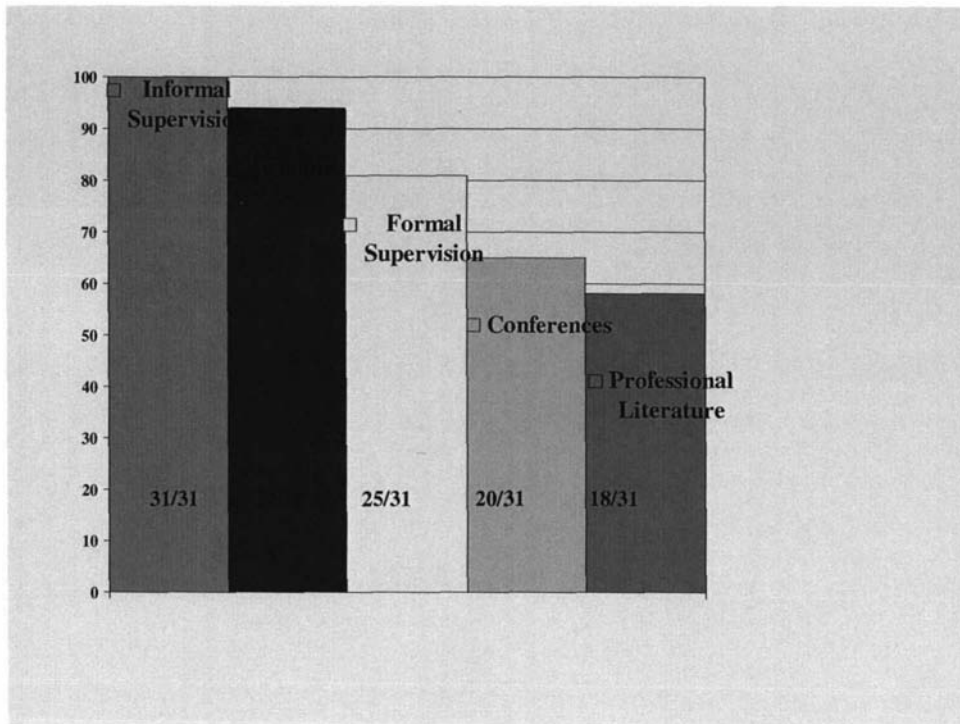
Figure 11. Percentage of participants taking each form of activity to pursue the goals of supervision.

Participants also noted the place of personal reflection in meeting these goals. As personal reflection was an individual rather than interactive process, it was not considered supervisory. However, the comments made in relation to personal reflection are discussed in this chapter because they add depth to understanding supervision. Personal reflection was considered both a product of social activity and a precursor to social connection.

Some participants reported that the selection of form was based on their personal professional beliefs regarding the best ways to ensure sound practice and their level of experience. Others offered explanations from the external environmental such as connections with other communities, location, and availability of suitable supervisors.

5.2.1. Informal Supervision

All participants reported that they sought informal supervision from colleagues in relation to issues arising in their fieldwork. Some participants noted that supervision was an integrated process and that "you are never really off-task at work" (27.93). One suggested it was what they did "eight hours a day" (21.90). However, all participants reported making informal but specific contact with selected colleagues to discuss their work. They most commonly sought consultation with experienced psychologists who had particular knowledge and expertise in relation to an issue at hand. The psychologists had a number of preferred colleagues who they approached first in relation to professional problems. Some of these professional relationships were reciprocal. Several psychologists noted that as they gained experience in the profession, colleagues increasingly came to them for professional support. "After five or six years of being a psychologist I became aware of people wanting to get supervision from me" (25.102).

Although most psychologists reported they would seek professional support from other psychologists, several noted that they also approached professionals from other disciplines or colleagues who held management roles. Sometimes contact was made with people who worked outside the workplace. Participants explained that such arrangements were often reciprocal. They also received requests for informal supervision from professionals in other agencies. The selection of a supervisor in such instances was based on the nature of the support required to address a particular issue. Sometimes supervisory relationships were developed within or outside the organisation for the duration of a specific project.

Informal supervision was the preferred mode in emergency situations. "Immediate things can't wait for two weeks" (22.34). The participants reported that the degree of formality in informal supervision varied depending on the urgency and magnitude of the issue. Sometimes a brief conversation with a roommate would suffice, while at

other times supervisory partners reported that they explored the situation systematically and in depth. For example, one participant said that he sought supervision around "meta issues" with "respected colleagues". This is not scheduled but [arranged] as required" (12.13).

Several participants indicated that informal supervision was their preferred mode of supervisory practice. They considered informal supervision to be efficient and to make "good use of time, as it is more focused" (10.20). It provided a level of support not always available in formal supervision. Some psychologists noted that they not only preferred informal supervision, but also believed that it offered benefits over formal supervision in terms of professional development, support and ethical practice. While the participants valued informal supervision, some were mindful of their reliance on the goodwill and schedules of the psychologists they approached. Below are some comments from participants who accessed supervision through informal interactions.

> What I don't have is a designated supervisor for professional supervision. If I was forced to see someone once every two weeks I am not sure if it would meet my needs. I would still do the other (informal). Reflection is an ongoing part of daily practice. (17.40)

> As a psych I have never had traditional formal supervision, possibly one or two sessions [were arranged] but I didn't turn up. I do believe in the apprenticeship model but it's not ideal. It needs to be backed up by training. Working with one person is not enough for me, not any one person. (29.13)

> I have observed discrepancies between what people say and do. It [formal supervision] is not necessarily safe. Formal supervision is not a good use of my time. I can go out with another person and receive feedback. (31.22)

Participation in informal supervision required that psychologists consider the positions of other people and constructed shared understanding of roles and responsibilities when supervisory relationships were developed over specific issues. One participant noted that she had to "watch out in terms of people coming to me. It can be distracting - I have to be careful - if something turned to custard, if [the situation was] in crisis I get more data" (25.109). Another noted that while she valued informal supervision she recognised her reliance on the goodwill of the person with whom she consulted and the constraints on their time (32.13).

5.2.2. Teaming

Ninety-four percent (29/31) of the participants discussed the supervisory benefits of activity within service teams and many spoke enthusiastically about the value of teaming in ensuring that their professional practice was sound. For example, a participant explained that "team participation provides supervision as part of discussions. Teaming includes school staff" (12.13). All participants belonged to interdisciplinary teams that varied in the extent to which they engaged in co-working in field practice. One participant who worked closely with team members described the team functioning as a "combination of shared working, shared reflection and shared planning" (23.133). Although members belonged to designated service teams, in practice the composition of working teams varied as the teams were formed around specific field tasks.

Those involved in joint fieldwork welcomed the opportunity to "work alongside [others], debrief, review and discuss case concerns" (12.70). The team context provided opportunities for efficiently evaluating professional practice and to engage in meaningful interaction. Supervision often occurred amidst activities associated with fieldwork, for example, en-route to and from site visits. One participant said that following meetings, team members might ask, "Could it have been handled any

differently?" (15.66) Another commented, "When I arrive home I have done debriefing" (17.63).

Teaming provided many opportunities for learning from each other in what one participant described as an apprenticeship system. Working with other psychologists and team members from other disciplines provided a context that supported the participants to gain a broader view of the field situations and formed the basis of knowledge networks. In addition to the interdisciplinary aspect of teaming, the composition of teams allowed people to work and learn alongside people from different cultures. Learning opportunities were available not only to newcomers to psychology, but to established members of the group who valued the opportunity teaming offered to associate with new people who encouraged the development of new perspectives on practice.

Most participants commented on the facility of teaming to ensure accountability to professional codes. One participant commented that when working with people closely that "it would be difficult to work unsafely, unnoticed or ineffectively" (2.167). When working alongside others, practice is visible. Teaming ensured that practice was "in the open" (12.17). There are "regular, weekly opportunities to ask and be asked, seek advice, clarify concerns" (12.15).

Teaming was reported by participants to promote personal and professional safety by allowing team members to identify when colleagues required help. It provided many opportunities to inform and affirm each other's practice on the way. Several participants commented that psychologists and other field participants should not work alone but that "checking the whole process out with the group as you go increases success" (31.91).

In servicing teams where co-working was infrequent due to area capacity or in referral situations where the engagement of a number of professionals was not considered

necessary or constructive, team members worked in relative isolation to their team members. Some of these participants noted that they would prefer to work alongside others more, although they made use of informal supervision within their office teams. The regular activities of these teams, such as interdisciplinary team meetings and in-office activity, provided opportunities for professional dialogue. Some psychologists commented on the value of psychologists' meetings to strengthen group identity and provide professional support and development.

5.2.3. Formal Supervision

Eighty-one percent (25/31) of the psychologists said they were receiving formal supervision from other psychologists and most were involved with the provision of supervision for psychologists and professionals working in related disciplines. Although most of the supervisory relationships involved experienced and less experienced psychologists in relation to the type of work supervised, several carried out supervision in reciprocal arrangements with peers and some had more than one formal supervisory relationship. Some psychologists belonged to supervision groups that comprised either similarly experienced peers, or psychologists with varying levels of experience and diverse backgrounds.

Most psychologists obtained their supervision from within MoE:SE, although others, particularly those with more experience, had made supervision arrangements with professionals who worked outside the organisation. Supervisory relationships developed around general professional work as well as specific aspects of psychologist work. For example, some psychologists obtained supervision for their work associated with the Family Court or for cultural aspects of fieldwork. One pakeha participant explained that she supervised a Kaitakawaenga but only on general aspects of practice: the supervisee sought cultural supervision from a more appropriate source (27.30). The psychologists might also make contact with their nominated supervisor on an informal basis if difficulties arose in their work.

Most psychologists who received formal supervision placed a high value on this practice as a means to reflect on their work. They ensured that planned supervision sessions took priority in their scheduling. Participants welcomed the opportunities formal supervision offered to reflect, to review programmes and debrief. "Supervision is very much a reflective process on my own and others' practice" (20.75). It also provided an opportunity to discuss matters that might not be appropriate in a more open forum and to consider general professional practice matters. One psychologist, who did not find the provision of scheduled supervision rewarding, said she was keen however, to work with colleagues to support them as matters arose and might suggest that they visit the field site together (31.50).

Some participants explained that they were required to demonstrate that they were involved in supervision through membership and participation in a supervisory dyad or group. While some viewed this requirement as supportive, others did not, and as previously discussed, chose to pursue professional development and support in other ways including arranged supervision from outside their organisation. However, these participants did not make overt challenges to the imposed measures and some said that if the requirement to participate in formal supervision within their organisation was strong enough, they would comply.

> You know you have to have supervision so I have chosen (nominated) those who are easiest i.e. less hassle. If [instructed] I'll definitely be in on it but I could go without rather than having to. (2:139)

> Sometimes I feel guilty not doing supervision. Some people don't have supervision but have nominated them [supervisors]. (31:19)

Some participants explained that they changed supervisors from time to time. One said, "I try to rotate supervisors" (25.15). Another discussed making a "conscious effort to change" (35.15). Others actively worked to ensure that their current

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relationships would endure, as illustrated by a participant's comment, "I don't want to get someone else, [I'm] comfortable" (22.19). Sometimes supervisory relationships continued when the supervisee did not consider them to be ideal, but recognised that they offered some degree of support. For example, one participant noted that in her supervisory situation there was a "mismatch of styles" and that the sessions were used "more as second opinions" than primary sources of support (25.16).

5.2.4. Professional Gatherings

Sixty-five percent (20/31) of participants mentioned attendance at courses, conferences, workshops or seminars as a means of accessing knowledge, skills and support for their work. In some cases training was sought on particular issues in relation to their current work. On other occasions, professional development activities were more generally focused and participants attended conferences and courses when they could. Most participants who mentioned attendance at training courses made reference to the cost of this activity in terms of money or time, and many attributed their low participation to the low priority they believed their employers placed on this activity.

In addition to attending training courses, participants viewed the opportunities they took to run training courses for other educators as valuable in promoting their own professional growth. Participants also noted that they gained knowledge to support their work through their participation in the work of professional committees and opportunities to be involved in research projects related to their work.

5.2.5. Professional Literature

Fifty-eight percent (18/31) of participants said they consulted professional literature to support their work. Most of the psychologists' reading related to specific topics relating to casework although some participants discussed keeping up to date with general professional developments. Participants discussed the value of internet sites

and on-line journals and made frequent reference to the MoE:SE library (Sources) that supported participants by making literature searches and supplying other professional materials. The participants' enthusiasm for the organisations' library was reflected in the following comments. "GSE has this fabulous resource, 'Sources', but I am so taken up with everything else I seem to be always catching up" (22:108). "Every month I send (to Sources) for papers of interest" (33:102). "[Sources] is one of the best things in GSE – wonderful!" (6:106).

Several participants noted difficulty keeping up with professional reading and one mentioned that she did not feel comfortable searching for written material or reading articles during her work hours, noting that such activities were difficult to justify or implicitly not sanctioned, in relation to measured work outputs.

5.2.6. Personal Reflection

Personal reflection was mentioned by 55% of the participants as a strategy used to promote sound fieldwork. As mentioned earlier, personal reflection does not sit within the parameters of supervision but is mentioned in this chapter because of its relationship with supervision as both a product of and precursor to participation. The psychologists noted that they had been trained to be reflective practitioners and that they were continually engaging in this process. They reported that they actively cleared time and space for reflection.

> I am a reflective practitioner. …. I probably do a lot on my own. What did I do wrong, right? What would I do next time? I seek opportunities for improvement but this is constructive – not running myself down. You still feel good about what you've done. (16:108)

> When there is a really hard case I do a Problem Analysis on a blank paper. This is a huge thing for me … I need one hour … [it is] extremely useful.

When I am stuck I need to slow …. stop, slow down and put my feet up. (26: 112)

After five years you know a lot of things. Now most of these can be handled, 90% can be answered from my own practice. (29:168, 170)

In behaviour work [you are] mostly on your own … make your own calls. I make hundreds of decisions per week. (9:74)

Some noted that they preferred to consider situations themselves before approaching other psychologists. One participant noted the importance of developing a set of guiding principles for practice to support reflection as it would not be possible to have all the answers to the many questions that are present in fieldwork (10.86).

5.3. Psychologists' Reports of Supervision Processes and Content

While all participants were able to identify tasks undertaken and content of interactions, only a few psychologists were able to recognise and discuss the models of supervision and the problem solving processes used in formal supervision.

5.3.1. Models of Supervision

A small number of participants (4/31) discussed the ways specific models of supervision, including narrative and developmental models, had influenced their practice. Developmental understandings about supervision were evident in accounts of practice. For example, "For the novice there's a lot more teaching, with the more experienced expert there's a lot more challenging, exploring" (25.56). Participants explained that they "responded to the needs of the supervisee" (14.37) and that supervision was "different for each person supervised" (1.83).

Participants who did discuss models of supervision did not consider that their supervisory practice was guided solely by any particular model. A few participants explained that they had developed their own models of supervision through "application and refinement" of available models. One participant described her model of supervisory practice as collaborative and operating within field practice, while another said he followed an apprenticeship model.

Most participants made no comment about supervision models at all. Of those who did mention models, some actively rejected them indicating that they impeded the supervisory process due to their failure to integrate with practice and their cumbersome implementation. For example, "[Models] don't fit ... we have models of practice...problem analysis is the closest to what we do [in supervision]" (1.77). One participant commented that "models of supervision must be brief and pragmatic" and acknowledged the value of their common tool, language, to guide supervision in a practice that was "familiar and efficient" (7.55).

Although some participants noted that they had been supplied with helpful suggested formats for supervision and some had a variety of checklist-style guides, there was little evidence that psychologists, as a group, were aware of the theoretical underpinnings of their supervisory actions.

5.3.2. Tasks of Supervision

The participants reported that, in supervision, they engaged in professional dialogue to solve problems, shared resources, exchanged knowledge about networks, and proof-read documents prior to distribution. Topics of discussion in supervision related to both individual cases and more general professional matters. For example, "We mainly focus on my cases, especially the difficult ones" (23.108). Sometimes discussion centred on a specified range of work, while at other times, participants

reviewed all active cases in a process described by one participant as 'tidying the wardrobe" (4.53).

Developmental factors influenced the content of supervisory conversation with the more experienced psychologists selecting to discuss systemic factors such as those related to motivation, interagency interaction, school systems, and organisational restructuring. This point is illustrated in the following comment. "We still discuss casework a lot but probably less than we used to. Casework is still the focus of supervision but we discuss systemic issues as well now. Only the experienced ones bring an issue" (25:67). One participant reported that they discussed individual case studies in an informal and spontaneous way and that the broader professional practice issues were more likely to be discussed in the scheduled formal meetings (36.85).

Several psychologists commented on the professional boundaries operating between personal and professional issues. While personal issues were acknowledged and their influence on practice discussed in supervision, psychologists recognised they were at times working close to their professional boundaries and at times, encouraged supervisory partners to approach relevant and more appropriate services in order to address specific issues. One participant commented that "If the issues are too personal or serious for clinical supervision I will refer the supervisee for professional counselling" (24:68). Another said, "Sometimes I go to another person with permission…on the edge of a boundary this has proved helpful" (25:94).

5.3.3. Problem-Solving Processes

During the working conversations, the participants discussed the problem solving processes they used in formal supervision. Although participants provided a variety of descriptions of supervision events, some patterns began to emerge.

Many participants began their formal supervision with an introductory activity that allowed for the recognition and discussion of the supervision participants' immediate

concerns. This introductory period allowed the psychologists to make connections with one another and to ensure that burning issues were addressed. Two participants illustrated the value of this opening routine. "We talk about how I am. The supervisor is concerned. Nurturing is done early" (4:46). "[We] catch up first. How are things going? That's nice!" (5.48).

Most psychologists reported that they then constructed an agenda which was, in the main, negotiated between participants. In situations in which a more experienced psychologist supervised a less experienced psychologist, participants reported the agenda was mostly determined by the supervisee, but in consultation with the supervisor. One participant said, "As much as possible I actively engage the supervisee (25:59)". She also explained that "when I'm supervisor, this [the agenda] is not entirely set by the supervisee but it would be rare that I would impose on the agenda (25:62)". She said that she might, however, table a concern in situations where a supervisee was unaware of the potential risks in their work. In such circumstances the participant said that her supervisor role would become more directive.

In reciprocal supervisory relationships, some participants said they took turns at taking the supervisor role and negotiated priorities for discussion. One participant commented that "immediate issues are prioritised, we bid for time" (1:71). Some participants preferred to address the most important matters first. "Sometimes there are burning issues, we talk about these first" (22:73). In some circumstances, participants said they clear the lighter issues first and then focus on the larger concerns. A few participants said that they spent some time clarifying the issues they were to discuss before proceeding with the supervisory process.

Although the participants discussed a variety of means to explore the situations they brought to formal supervision, most provided little detail about this process. A few did, however, report that they had developed methods of exploration. One reported the use of a specific model of inquiry and others noted that they explored the situation as

they would in a problem analysis, that is, they worked to determine relevant dimensions of the situation. However, most descriptions of the process of exploration were imprecise, described as problem-solving, micro-skills, discussion of the context, questioning and brainstorming.

One participant who applied a problem-solving structure that she used to guide her fieldwork considered that the specified structure provided some professional safety (6:76). Another noted how a mutual understanding of the process supported the process of exploration of a topic. "We have shared understandings of where things go" (20:24). A few participants said that their exploration resulted in analysis of the overall situation. This was achieved in a variety of ways. For example, sometimes a whiteboard was used to construct analyses (10.60, 17.40). On other occasions the analysis remained verbal (15.37).

The analysis of the situation was followed by "discussion about possible intervention, action, [and] follow-up" (4:56). The supervisory participants jointly constructed plans to address problems. One participant said that the discussion often resulted in the development of "guiding principles to follow rather than a concrete intervention, sometimes more a sense of direction than solutions" (25:76). The participant added that she "rarely let anyone go away from a session without an idea of where they're going to go next. At least one more step, even if its mission impossible, for example, if only to go and read" (25:78).

Some participants mentioned the documentation of formal supervision sessions and the decisions made during discussion. Some made summaries and took notes of the actions that the psychologists planned to take in their practice. Some commented that formal supervision records might not be detailed but covered "concepts, principles and actions to be taken" (9:80). Some supervisory participants took one shared set of minutes of formal supervision sessions, some of which were signed and filed. Others preferred to take their own personal set of notes. Participants noted that they

sometimes reviewed situations at subsequent supervision sessions and that supervisory partners might make contact between sessions to discuss ongoing concerns and progress.

5.5. *Satisfaction with Multiple Forms of Supervision*

When supervision was conceived of as encompassing the broad range of activities undertaken to meet the goals of supervision, most participants reported that they were satisfied with their current levels of supervision provision.

After discussing the various activities undertaken in order to meet the goals of supervision, and considering the possibility that all of these actions may comprise a broad conceptualisation of supervision, participants were asked if they were satisfied with their supervision circumstances. In the main, the participants were satisfied with their current supervision provision. Ninety percent (28/31) of the participants said that their supervision was satisfactory. Of the 90% (28) of participants who reported they were satisfied with their supervisory experience, 68% (19/28) had satisfactory formal supervision. However, 21% (6/28) of the satisfied supervising participants were not receiving formal supervision within their workplace. A further 11% (3/28) were receiving formal supervision and although they considered their current arrangements to be less than ideal, they were satisfied they could meet the goals of supervision through their participation in other forms of supervisory activity (Figure 12).
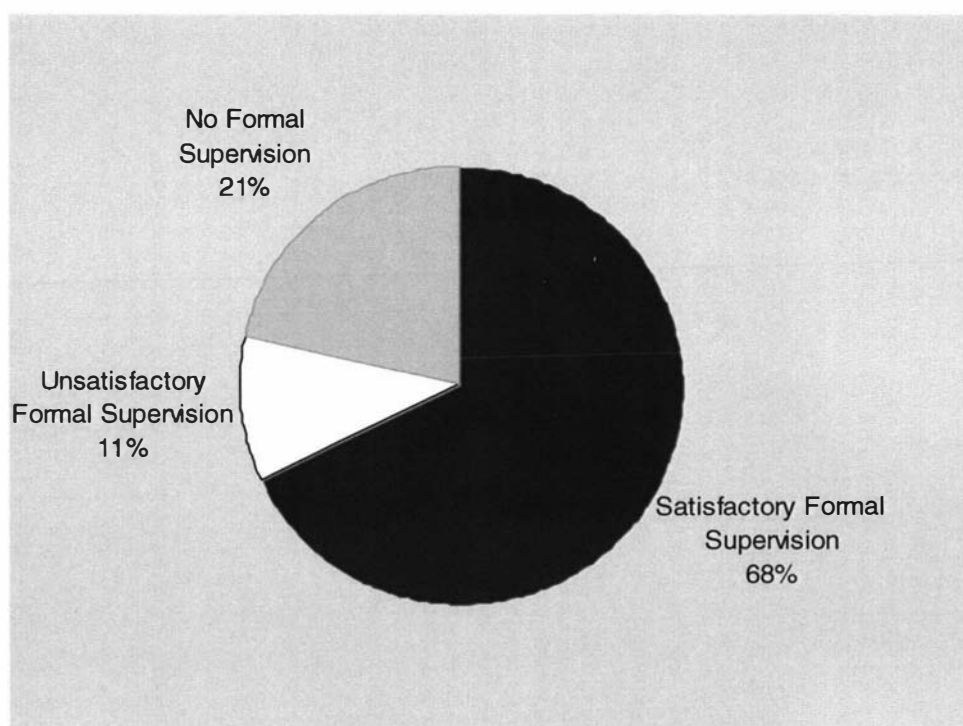
Figure 12. Graph showing levels of satisfaction with formal supervision arrangements experienced by the 90% of the total number of participants who reported overall satisfaction with supervision.

Below are comments made by some psychologists who reported that they were satisfied with their supervision provision. These comments illustrate the presence and importance of broad supports for the participants.

> Yes, I feel I have someone to refer to at any time. I would be worried if I had no-one to turn to. (22:94)

> What is being done is meeting my needs [participant did not have formal supervision with a designated supervisor]. We have responsibility for delivering good practice - its working. But if it was not working, would dyadic supervision help? (29:206)

Most of the time, yes. I am lucky to work with a group of colleagues with equivalent areas of experience, commitment and passion for work and I enjoy being with them. (17:36)

Yes, while loose within team structures and informal relationships with colleagues, it is readily available... needs more discipline focus but [is] with experienced practitioners. (12:15)

Not all participants, however, were content with their current provision of supervision. All negative comments related to mediocre or unsatisfactory formal supervision.

The group does not meet regularly, is not on track in session and they don't make the best of the opportunity. We don't have time to chat so they use this time. By the time this is out of their system they are not so focussed. (27:101)

No, it doesn't meet my needs particularly. In other aspects it is fine, I can't rant and rave, its OK. (10:72)

5.6. Summary of Results: Theory in Action

The participants undertook supervision to obtain personal and professional support, to further their professional development and to ensure that they maintained standards set by the profession. In order to pursue these goals, the psychologists engaged in informal discussions with colleagues, shared in team activities, took part in formally scheduled supervision, consulted reports from other members of the profession through professional reading, and participated at conferences and courses. They developed multiple relationships with people within and outside of their profession.

Before seeking supervision, participants reflected on their practice and endeavoured to solve problems themselves.

Although most individual psychologists did not clearly articulate the specific actions they took in formal supervision, collectively, the group described a general pattern. Supervision began with an introductory section that addressed immediate matters. Participants then constructed an agenda. In the main, this was negotiated and, where applicable, the supervisee often suggested the topics for discussion. The psychologists explored these topics, making analyses and working to create new solutions. Few psychologists mentioned models of supervision, although some noted the welcome influence of narrative understandings in their practice, while others rejected the imposition of any particular model. Developmental factors affected the way in which supervision proceeded. New psychologists tended to discuss specific matters while experienced practitioners were more likely to discuss general issues. In general, the way in which supervision proceeded was determined largely by the context of supervision and factors such as the relationships between participants and their experience and background.

Most psychologists were satisfied with their overall provision of supervision. That is, they were satisfied with the way in which they were able to pursue the goals of supervision through the various sources available to them in their everyday work. Knowledge that informed supervision, and therefore practice, was sought from a variety of people in a variety of contexts. These contexts included; (1) the local professional community to which the psychologists related on a day-to-day basis; (2) the broader national community accessed through attendance at courses and conferences; (3) the global educational psychology community represented by published literature; and (4) communities that were external, but related to, educational psychology. While formal supervision was a valuable activity for some members, it was not considered sufficient alone to meet all of the needs of the participants of this study.

Unlike previous educational psychology supervision studies which have assumed that supervision was a dyadic, formally arranged activity, this study considered supervision to comprise the broad range of activities undertaken in order to meet the goals of supervision. When supervision was viewed this way, all of the psychologists reported that they participated in supervision and the large majority were satisfied with their current supervision experience.

Chapter 6

Analysis of Dimensions

Summary of Analysis

For the 38 participants of the present study, participation in supervision comprised a complex set of activities that reflected the social and historical context of educational psychology practice. The psychologists pursued the goals of supervision through interaction within the multiple relationships they formed within their professional community. Participation in supervision, re-defined in this study as "activity intended to meet the supervision goals of support, professional development and accountability", was situated within the everyday operation of the psychologists' communities of practice and was mediated by social factors operating within that environment.
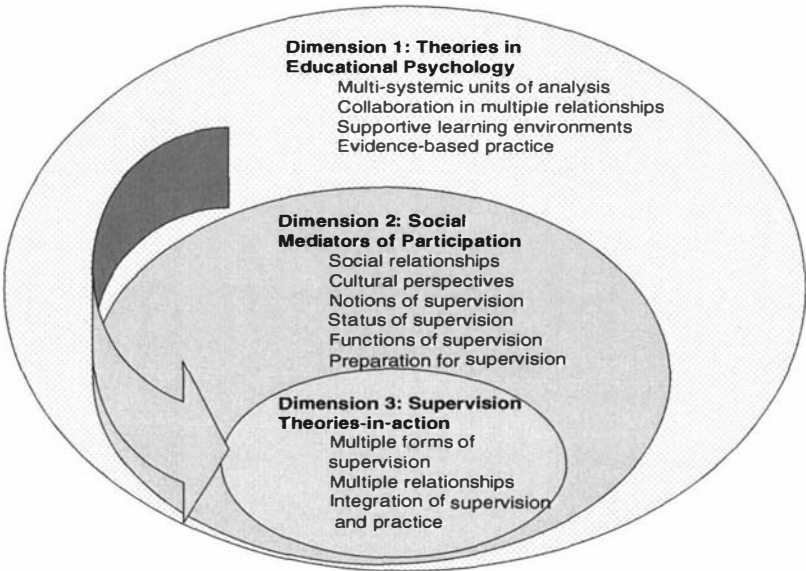
Figure 13. Analysis of dimensions showing sub-dimensions.

This chapter reports the analysis of the supervision situation for the participants of the study. The analysis consists of a summary of the three dimensions, considered in relation to one another (Figure 13).

In the main, this study has shown that the actions taken by the participants in order to meet the goals of supervision reflected the perspective they took on their educational psychology work. However, while the psychologists were able to clearly articulate the theoretical foundations of their everyday practice, they were less able to identify and discuss the theory that underpinned their supervision. (See Table 5 for a summary of the points of similarity and difference between psychologists reports of practice and their reports of supervision)

6.1.1. Ecological Perspective: Multi-systemic Units of Analysis

Overall, educational psychologists tended to adopt an ecological view of human development. This implies that they consider, in their work, the multiple systems that operate in people's lives and the interactive nature of development. They locate issues of concern within the interaction between people and the world and try to understand the relationships between the systems they identify. Accordingly, psychologists, carry out their work in everyday contexts, such as found in schools and family homes, in order to collaboratively construct suitable and authentic solutions. Similarly, with regard to supervision, the psychologists who took part in the working conversations reported that much of their supervisory activity was situated in the context of practice and the regular activity of the educational community. For example, they engaged in team work with other psychologists and members of other professions who were able to provide contextualised information, feedback and support. These situations created opportunities for the psychologists to further their professional knowledge and to maintain standards through visibility of practice. The goals of supervision were also pursued through the psychologists' links with the wider community by attending courses and conferences and through professional reading. Supervision, when

conceptualised as a broad practice that included all activities undertaken in order to pursue the goals of supervision, was situated in educational psychology practice.

6.1.2. Collaboration in multiple relationships

The psychologist participants reported that they work collaboratively in their practice. That is, they form teams with others involved in referral situations including students, parents, teachers and other professionals (Ryba et al, 2001a). The ecological approach to practice implies that the subjective realities of participants are of utmost importance with regard to development. Accordingly, the psychologists in the Ryba et al study of psychologists' ways of working, reported that they worked to ensure that each party was actively involved in the problem-solving process. From the outset, they developed multiple relationships applicable to specific circumstances, developing sufficient common ground to move forward but acknowledging, working to understand and accommodating the diversity they encountered. Correspondingly, the psychologists' reports of supervision activity indicated that they obtained support, professional development and accountability through interaction in the multiple relationships they developed in their professional community. Some supervisory relationships were formalised, either arranged on a long-term basis or developed for a particular project. Others were informal or situated in practice. However, regardless of the supervision arrangements, the psychologists who participated in this study indicated that the supervisory activity was uniquely determined by the particular circumstances of the participants. They indicated that no single relationship was sufficient to meet all of their supervisory needs.

6.1.3. Supportive Learning Environments

Collaboration within the multiple relationships that psychologists develop with participants in their everyday work provides opportunities to identify and construct strong foundations for development. New solutions are built on existing knowledge that is relevant to the lives of participants and recognises the sense-making processes

they apply to the development of solutions. Vygotsky (1978), in his description of the zone of proximal development, emphasised the importance of acknowledging the starting point in the development of solutions. Development, in his view, occurred within the zone between existing knowledge and that which could be attained through social interaction. As each situation is unique, operating within its specific social and historical context, psychologists must work alongside many others who contribute particular knowledge. The psychologists who participated in the present study reported that they appreciated being 'on the same wavelength' as the people with whom they consulted in relation to their work. A degree of commonality supported the recognition of starting points for supervision.

While the construction of common ground supports the engagement of participants, educational psychology recognises, values and accommodates the diversity found in an increasingly connected world. Psychologists work to include all children in educational experiences and actively seek the contributions of people from various cultures, backgrounds and disciplines. Interventions arise from supported challenges to existing perspectives. The psychologists in the present study reported that while they sought supervisory relationships in which there was a shared perspective on human development and practice, they liked to work with people who could challenge their views in order to effect a change in their thinking. However, they noted that this challenge must be measured and that receiving supervision from those whose development in specific areas was just a little in advance of theirs was most satisfactory. It is likely that such relationships allowed the psychologists to interact within their zones of proximal development through ease of access to its parameters.

The participants of the present study identified the need for the development of good supervisory relationships and positive contexts for supervision practice. The identification of the positive aspects of the contexts of people's lives is an essential focus of current educational psychology practice; the helpful aspects of situations supporting the development of applicable and acceptable interventions. Positive

events provide a window into the solutions that work for people and knowledge of these aspects can foster the development of positive affect in learning environments (Seligman, 2001).

6.1.4. Evidence-based Practice

One of the most surprising aspects of the study was the uncertainty expressed by many participants when asked about theoretical approaches to supervision and specific activities undertaken. This particular professional group utilised highly developed problem-solving frameworks in their practice, were trained in consultation, and knowledgeable about theories of learning and human development. Despite this wealth of applicable knowledge, many participants reported that it was difficult for them to articulate their process. Nolan (1999) obtained a similar response when educational psychologists in England were asked to comment on specific supervisory activities.

Most published models for supervision have been based on particular theoretical orientations that may or may not fit with community or individual perspectives. However, regardless of the applicability of models, the participants in the present study indicated they had little knowledge of the range available. This is not an isolated finding and educational psychologists are not alone in this situation. A similar finding was obtained by White, Butterworth, Bishop, Carson & Jeacock et al (1998) who noted during their interviews with 34 nurses throughout England and Scotland, that participants did not have confidence in their knowledge of models of supervision and reported that they "set it up blindly" or "make it up as we go along (p. 188)".

Many participants considered there was a need for further training for supervision in educational psychology. This finding reflects that of other researchers who report that psychologists' opportunities to participate in supervision training are inadequate (Fowler & Harrison, 2001; Hunley et al, 2000; Nolan, 1999; Ros & Goh, 1993; Ward,

2001). However, while increased access to training might offer opportunities to learn about available models of supervision, it is unlikely that instruction in the use of any particular theoretical approaches would be sufficient to guide the entire supervision process. Psychologists conduct their field practice in ways that reflect a range of diverse but compatible theories. That is, they work eclectically. In addition, psychologists work in diverse ways, placing their own emphases on particular theories. If psychologists' theories of practice and supervision theories-in-action share the same foundations, then it follows that the diversity observed in one will be evident in the other. In such circumstances, it is probable that psychologists would select particular aspects of a range of models of supervision practice. Borders, Bernard, Dye, Fong, Henderson et al (1991) came to a similar conclusion in relation to the supervision of counsellors noting that knowledge of a broad range of supervision models was not only supportive for the professionals, but also essential for ethical practice.

This study has demonstrated the need for adoption of an integrated conceptualisation of supervision that is inclusive of the various ways in which educational psychologists interact in order to achieve the goals of supervision. Participants stated that they valued the situated interaction, not only for the way in which it supported psychologist development and personal adjustment to practice, but also for its capacity to support the maintenance of professional standards due to the high level of visibility of practice and timeliness of interaction. However, in broadening the concept of supervision, care must be taken to ensure that psychologists' connectedness to the professional community is enhanced and encouraged, in order to further community and individual development and to promote accountability to the applicable professional bodies.

Table 5. Points of similarity and difference in practice and supervision.

	Examples from Practice (Ryba et al, 2001a)	Examples from Supervision (Present Study)
Points of Similarity		
1. Multi-systemic units of analysis *Supervision and practice is situated within everyday contexts. Intervention takes account of the systemic influences on particular situations.*	Educational psychology takes place in the contexts of clients' lives. There is routine involvement of families and community agencies in school related projects.	Psychologists apply ecological problem-solving models to examine supervision topics. Supervision in educational psychology takes place in a range of settings, many of which are the regular places of work the practitioners
2. Collaboration in multiple relationships *In supervision and in practice, psychologists develop multiple relationships.*	Psychologists place strong emphasis on relationship building, teamwork and collaborative consultation with field participants. Psychologists value the diverse background of experience and expertise of other participants. They access cultural knowledge from colleagues.	Psychologists have formal and informal arrangements with a range of colleagues and people outside their immediate professional community. Psychologist report that shared perspectives and complementary knowledge provide opportunities for psychologists to challenge their assumptions.
3. Supportive learning environments *In supervision and in practice, psychologists attempt to identify and create supportive and unique situations in order to optimise learning and development*	Psychologists identify the positive aspects of referral situations and base their interventions on these elements. Social, cultural and developmental factors are considered in intervention for clients. They begin by working on familiar ground and then co-construct new processes.	Psychologists report that they value supervision that identifies and builds on the positive aspects of their professional work. Psychologists tailor supervision to suit the needs of supervisees. They use familiar and shared language to discuss professional issues.
Points of Difference		
4. Evidence-based practice *Psychologists are able to justify and explain their field practice by making reference to the underlying theory. They are less able to recognise and discuss the theory that guides their supervision activity.*	Fieldwork practices are based on the theories of human development adopted by the profession of educational psychology. These have a common foundation of socially mediated learning.	Few psychologists are familiar with models of supervision and most are unable to articulate the theoretical basis of their supervisory practice.

The New Zealand Psychological Society Code of Ethics (2002) states that while psychologists are expected to assist in the development of fellow psychologists, they must have "explicit understandings of their responsibility for the work, or behaviour of those they teach, supervise, and/or employ (4.4.7)". Therefore, the development of systems that support and account for integrated supervisory practice must be given some priority if valid measures of supervision are to be made. The extent to which individual psychologists are receiving and providing supervision might be more appropriately assessed by considering levels of participation in a community of practicing psychologists rather than through examination of isolated professional relationships.

6.1.5. Connecting Supervision Theory to Supervision Practice.

Several factors mediate between psychologists' knowledge about supervision and their practice. On most occasions when the theory-to-practice gulf becomes the topic of discussion, the focus of the conversation is the uni-directional transfer of theoretical knowledge to practice. The discussion of theory-to-practice in relation to supervision practice in educational psychology is not as straightforward. The psychologists in the present study, through their reports of supervision activity and work practice have demonstrated that they hold applicable theory to meet the goals of supervision but that there are definite barriers to their recognition of this theory. This situation is problematic for several reasons. Without a theory of supervision, psychologists are constrained in the way they can demonstrate their participation. In addition, when there is no clear understanding of the supervision systems of their profession, psychologists cannot discern the coherence of the various aspects of their supervision or discuss its relationship to the work they carry out. They are restricted in their opportunities to recognise, understand and appraise the social and cultural factors that influence their relationships and their actions. Essentially, they cannot articulate, examine or improve their supervision.

In examining a range of mediating factors, the most fundamental of these seems to be the way psychologists conceptualise supervision. Although educational psychology practice has evolved over the last century, the way that psychologists think about supervision has not. As a result, there is now a mismatch in theory between supervision and practice. Unchallenged historical influences constrain current thinking about supervision and remain evident in the way people talk and write about supervision. These artefacts of previous educational psychology restrict the focus of research and training in supervision. However, as psychologists select to spontaneously or covertly act in ways consistent with the theories to which they subscribe, they are predictably pursuing the goals of supervision through participating in activities located outside the boundaries of traditional supervision.

This study, in the beginning, was concerned with the low rates of participation of educational psychologists in supervision and their dissatisfaction with the provision of this resource. The results have shown that not only is one group of psychologists engaging at high rates of activity to pursue the goals of supervision, but they are largely satisfied with current provision of support in this regard. The present study has indicated is that supervision is perceived as more problematic when it is conceptualised solely as a formally scheduled dyadic relationship.

By conceptualising supervision as all of the activity undertaken within the professional community to access support, professional development and accountability, a supervision practice that is better aligned with the ecological theories of the educational psychologists emerges (See Table 6). Supervision, viewed from this alternative, broader perspective, is seen to be a practice that is reliant on the development of multiple relationships and integrates with practice. It is situated within the contexts of educational psychologists' interaction and integrates with their practice. Supervision is primarily concerned with psychologists' connectedness with the professional community. With regard to the restorative, formative and normative functions of supervision, it is surely more important to know whether or not

psychologists are pursuing the goals of supervision than if they have established a uni-relationship with another psychologist.

Table 6. Comparison between the ecological and traditional views of supervision.

Alternative ecological view of supervision	Traditional view of supervision
Supervision viewed as all of the activity undertaken in order to obtain support, professional development and maintain accountability.	*Supervision viewed as a formally scheduled dyadic or group interaction*
Supervision involves multiple relationships	Supervision relationships are restricted.
Supervision integrates with practice	Supervision is located alongside or in addition to practice.
Supervision activity is guided by the theories participants hold in relation to the goals of supervision.	Supervision is a practice guided by particular models of supervision.
The analysis of supervision within a profession or an organisation must involve examining its theory, relationships and practices. (Context)	The analysis of supervision involves examination of the supervisory dyad

Chapter 7

A Framework for Professional Supervision within a Community of Practice

Building on the analysis presented in the previous chapter, this section introduces an alternative conceptual model of supervision. The alternative conceptualisation depicts supervision as a multi-relationship activity, situated in professional practice and guided by the theories participants hold in relation to support, professional development and maintenance of accountability. Justification for this conceptualisation of supervision has been established in three main ways: (1) analysis of supervision and community functioning indicated by the psychologist participants in the present study; (2) results from an earlier study concerning psychologists and special education advisors ways of working (Ryba et al, 2001a); and (3) knowledge disseminated by the broad psychologist community through their published writing.

Illustrating an Alternative Conceptualisation of Supervision.

The observation that supervision-in-practice was a multi-relationship activity meant that literature relating specifically to professional supervision did not offer support for the illustration of the alternative conceptualisation. Existing supervision literature focused largely on psychologists' disconnections rather than their connections with the professional community. The alternative conceptualisation required an articulated framework that focused on psychologists' connectedness and the professional community.

The connectedness of community members to one another and the role of these connections in human development has been the subject of much recent discussion of *Communities of Practice* (e.g. Brown & Druid, 2000; Buysse, Sparkman, & Wesley 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Stamps, 1997; Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al, 2002). The concept of communities of practice was first coined by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger who had observed that, within professional communities, members furthered their knowledge and skill in particular areas through their interactions with other members. They concluded that authentic and applicable learning was situated within the everyday practice of communities. Lave and Wenger's model of situated learning within a community of practice presented as a suitable platform for articulating a conceptualisation of supervision that functioned within the interaction of a professional community as it supported the integration of theory and practice and emphasised the role of multiple community connections. The three ecological dimensions of educational psychology supervision examined in the present study related directly to Lave and Wenger's community of practice model. They had identified three critical aspects; (1) the 'domain', or shared knowledge bank; (2) the 'community' comprising the people and the relationships between them; and (3) the 'practice' comprising the actions and tools required to perform these actions. Figure 14 illustrates the relationship between the community of practice framework and the ecological perspective taken on supervision in this research. The *domain* represents dimension 1, educational psychology theory; *community* represents dimension 2, social mediators of supervision participation; and *practice* represents dimension 3, the supervision actions of the psychologists.

In describing supervision within communities of practice, reference in this thesis is frequently made to the seminal work of Lave and Wenger (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al, 2002). This reference is an acknowledgement of the important contribution their research has made to countless professional communities with regard to the development of viable learning organisations. Based on these

authors' description of communities of practice, I was able to create a three-dimensional design showing the context of supervision within a professional community of psychologists. Within each dimension, the aspects of community of practice functioning that I have selected, reflect the input of many people. This includes those who have written about communities of practice, theorists of educational psychology and the psychologists who supplied information about their supervision practice.
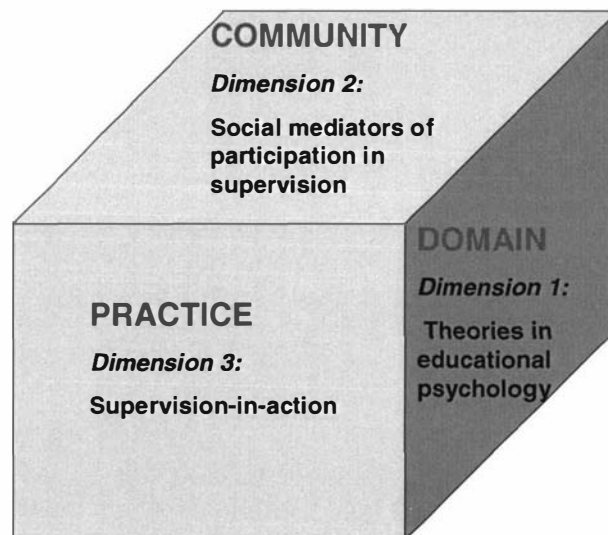
Figure 14. The three dimensions of the ecology of supervision in a community of practice framework.

This chapter introduces communities of practice. It explains what they are, their origins, the criteria for community of practice designation and an overview of its three domains. The domains are then described in detail and discussed in relation to supervision. The chapter concludes with discussion about the application and

implications of the community of practice framework for supervision in educational psychology.

7.1. Communities of Practice: What are they?

Communities of practice are socially constructed contexts in which individual members of a group learn through their participation in shared activity. They comprise groups of people bound together by a common body of knowledge. Members of communities of practice have a mutual interest in a particular field and shared commitment to the establishment and furthering of the knowledge base and practices of the group. In communities of practice, members learn through their shared work to discuss matters as they arise and to resolve dilemmas related to events in authentic work situations rather than relying solely on formal coursework or scheduled meetings alone. Communities of practice are now receiving recognition as a leading means for developing ways of working and maintaining professional standards (Brown & Druid, 2000; Buysse, Sparkman, & Wesley 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Stamps, 1997; Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al, 2002).

Communities of practice are not simply 'communities' or 'groups' in the sense that they live, work or play alongside one another. There are particular features that make a group of people a 'community of practice'. Members share a concern for common knowledge and codes of practice. They are also agreeable to establishing and maintaining connections with other community members.

The structure and operation of communities of practice varies greatly. Some are clearly discernible while others are not so easy to distinguish. They may be carefully and intentionally constructed but are frequently established without deliberate effort. Community members may be groups of people who belong, for instance, to a particular profession, who share in the manufacture of the same product, or who

belong to the same sports team. Communities of practice are not new by any means, but the significance of their role in learning has only recently been recognised by Lave and Wenger (1991).

The Theory of Situated Learning

The development that occurs in communities of practice is explained through the theory of situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991). These researchers, originally investigating the developmental processes involved in apprenticeships, had assumed that the learning context was restricted to interactions between master and student. However, they observed that learning also took place, or mostly took place, when the students interacted with 'journeymen' and more advanced apprentices. In fact, the term *Community of Practice* was used to describe the social structure that supported this interaction.

This 'near peer' interaction is reminiscent of the processes associated with Vygotsky's (1978) *zone of proximal development* described in Chapter 5 of this thesis. In the zone of proximal development, learners interact with more experienced people in an optimal learning zone bound by what can be achieved independently by an individual and what can be achieved by that person only with the assistance of another. Other areas of educational research have examined similar relationships. For example, peer tutoring arrangements, in which the skills of participants are only a little discrepant, have proved beneficial for the development of all participants (d'Arripe-Longueville, Gernigon, Huet, Cadopi & Winnykamen, 2002; Franca & Kerr, 1990; Greenwood, Carta & Hall, 1998; Martella & Marchand-Martella, 1995). The nature of near-peer interactions alerted Lave and Wenger to the many and various communities of practice operating in which learning occurred despite the absence of official apprenticeship arrangements.

The basic premise of *situated learning* is that knowledge is situated in experience and constructed and understood in the contexts in which it occurs (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989). During the past decade, the concept of communities of practice has been shared through Lave and Wenger's documentation of many examples of communities. During this time, there has been growing recognition of the learning that takes place through participation in the context of shared endeavour, not only in education and psychology, but also in the fields of management and manufacture (Barab & Duffy, 2000; Brown & Duguid, 1991; 2000; Gherardi & Nicolini, 2002; Palincsar, Magnussen, Manaro, Ford & Brown, 1998; Perry, Walton & Calder, 1999; Wenger et al., 2002). This premise fits well with social constructivist views on learning that emphasise the central role of the student as the builder of their own intellectual structure. Operating from this perspective, individuals make use of their own understanding.

Interdependent Learning Relationships

Relationships are important elements of communities of practice as they support the interaction of members with regard to their particular domains of practice, allowing members to participate and contribute optimally to the life and work of the community. Learning in a community of practice is a two-way process in which both those who hold large stores of community knowledge and newcomers, who bring fresh knowledge from outside the community, contribute to the construction of new and shared knowledge. Communities are held together by the interdependent relationships that develop through shared endeavour and by the mutual commitment and sense of belonging that results from the interaction of members. While members extend their understanding and construct new knowledge and practices, they simultaneously preserve the standards set by their profession. In short, they operate to support effective problem solving and to safeguard and further develop the community's store of knowledge (Wenger et al., 2002).

People belong simultaneously to several communities and often these communities have sub-communities nested within them (Buysse et al., 2003). The MoE:SE psychologist community provides a good example of nested communities. Psychologists employed by MoE:SE belong to the community of psychologists in their area or regional offices. However, they also belong to the larger group of psychologists that make up a defined national group of practitioners. In addition, these psychologists also belong to a wider group, the MoE:SE community as a whole and then, to the community of interdisciplinary service providers for special education. Supervision undertaken within a community of practice is mostly, although not entirely, carried out in the most immediate communities. These communities operate within area offices where the practice of supervision can be most nearly *situated* to the context of practice. The nature of each individual's involvement may vary from one community to another. For example, a person with extensive experience in the particular field might be a core member in one community, while in another community the same person may be a newcomer and operate on the periphery.

The Structure and Organisation of Communities of Practice

Communities of practice, in contrast to organisational work units, are informal, loosely structured and self-managing. The relationships that bind members are based on collegiality and participation in community interaction rather than organisational association. However, the recent appreciation of the benefits of communities has resulted in increased emphasis, within workplaces in particular, on making communities operate more intentionally and systematically. Communities of practice have been legitimised due to their recognisable contribution to group concerns, and organisations are placing new emphasis on the cultivation of these groups (Buysse et al., 2003; Wenger, 2002).

Communities of practice operate through the integrated functioning of three dimensions (See Figure 14). These three dimensions are the *community* that comprises

of the people or members, the shared knowledge known as the *domain*, and the shared collection of actions, stories, rules, tools and principles that constitute the third element, *practice*. Viable communities of practice are those that allow the community, domain and practice dimensions to interrelate with one another in constructive ways (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

Communities of practice are in a perpetual state of transformation throughout their lifespan. Wenger (2002) has suggested that the momentum for this change is maintained by the ongoing interaction between diverse groups of community members. Members interact with one another to solve problems, affirming and questioning the assumptions they hold about their work. It is through the resolution of contradictions in this interaction, in cycles of action and reflection, that new solutions are constructed and new questions are generation.

Reflection in Practice

Reflection is a meta-cognitive process that facilitates the transmission of theory to practice (Schön, 1983). Over the last century, several theorists have noted the significance of this process. For example, Dewey (1933) explained that reflection required active involvement of participants and persistent, careful consideration of knowledge. Similarly, Freire (1972) commented on the development of knowing through reflection on action, suggesting that knowledge construction, or praxis, required *true dialogue*. True dialogue is the interaction that occurs when people are free to share authentic thoughts and have a genuine willingness to challenge and change their own views. In dialogue, both parties contribute their knowledge. This process contrasts with *discussion*, an activity that means to impose the view of one person on another, such as occurs in much instruction for professional practice. As members of communities of practice are necessarily voluntarily involved, community structures can offer a dialogical context.

Knowledge Transformation through Supervision

Individuals bring unique personal views to dialogue. Argyris (1982) proposed that people filter their experiences through their own perception that has been influenced by their interpretation of past events. Their worldview leads them to select particular features of events. They assign meaning to these, make assumptions and draw conclusions that guide their subsequent action. The conclusions individuals draw in this process guide their decisions to modify or confirm existing worldviews. While the reflection of each actor clearly provides opportunities for challenges to their worldview and for transformation of thought to occur, information brought to this decision will have already been largely determined by their original worldview. Hence, the worldview is highly, but not entirely, resistant to change. This phenomenon is illustrated on a collective scale within communities of practice. Community members fiercely guard the baseline knowledge of their community. However, through their social interaction, changes to the knowledge base inevitably occur, transforming, even if only slightly, the whole community.

The transformation of one community of practice can affect the functioning of other communities with whom members have developed professional relationships (See Figure 15). For example, Yanow (2004) examined case studies involving communities of technicians and Israeli government employees concerned with community development and noted several ways that the actions of community members had transformed the community on the inside and the outside. Analysis of these case studies illustrated a bi-directional transfer of knowledge. Knowledge was transferred from the core of the community to the periphery, and from the periphery to the core. Those who produced the goods or services within the community were observed to operate at a double vertical-horizontal periphery. The vertical periphery denoted their position in the professional or organisational structure; the horizontal periphery referred to members' position on the community borders, crossed in the performance of their professional tasks. From the vertical periphery, they *translated*

up, contributing by drawing the knowledge from outside the community. From the horizontal periphery, they *translated out*, taking the knowledge of their community or organisation to other communities.
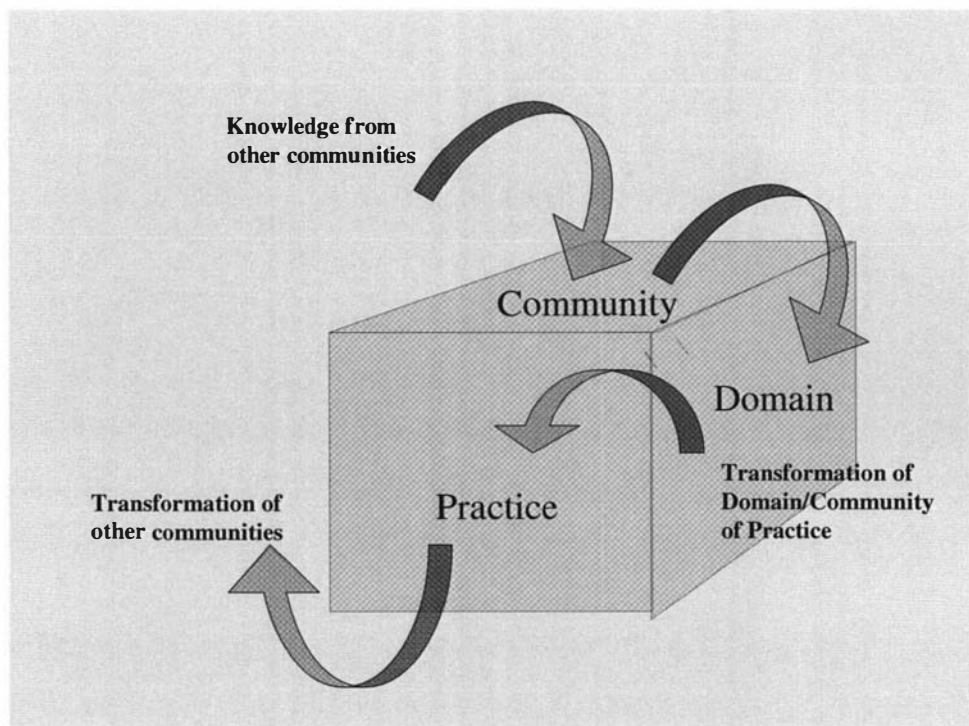
Figure 15. Transformation of knowledge through supervision within communities of practice.

The mechanisms involved in the functioning of the community of practice allow groups of people to make a positive difference both within and outside their own community. However, the direction of change is not guaranteed and there are many examples of communities of practice that have become too insular and developed practices that harm (Wenger et al, 2002). Community of practice members must work to ensure that there are ample opportunities for true dialogue to occur among their group and with the members of other communities with whom they interact at the periphery of the community. One means to promote beneficence in practice through

increased opportunity for dialogue may be to create an environment that supports professional supervision.

7. 2 Supervision within Communities of Practice

Lave and Wenger's situated learning theory, as illustrated in their description of communities of practice, shares some common ground with the socially mediated theories followed by educational psychologists in New Zealand and overseas and with the supervision practice described by the participants of the present study. Both practice and supervision involve the development of multiple relationships, analysis of activity at a systemic level and situated learning within the context of practice. This section of the chapter discusses the functioning of each dimension of the community of practice in relation to supervision.

7.2.1. The Community Dimension

The Functioning of the Community Dimension.

Through participation in activity with established members, newcomers to the community gain access to a domain of specialised knowledge. In turn, they make new contributions to this knowledge through the process of becoming a full member (Lave and Wenger, 1991). A common sense of identity emerges through people's concern for, and ongoing transformation of, a critical body of knowledge (Wenger et al, 2002). The relationships formed in the process of sharing and generating new knowledge create the interdependence that binds members together, strengthening the community of practice in the process. Modes of interaction between members may range from daily face-to-face contact to communication through the internet, and may be formally or incidentally scheduled. Regardless of the interactive setting, community members

typically share information and insight, solve problems, consider new ideas and support each other with issues that impact on community matters.

Communities of practice may be prone to power conflicts when changes occur in the membership. For example, a newcomer may enter a new community with knowledge from outside the community but may meet with resistance from long-standing members who mobilise to protect the existing practice from the contaminating influence of the new knowledge. Although members typically have no formal authority within the group, power appears to be created and exercised through the interactive functioning of the community (Wenger et al., 2002). The inherent issue of power differential in communities of practice has been recently questioned, with varying explanations being offered. For example, Fox (2000) argued that situated learning theory has a specific weakness in the way it addresses, or fails to address, issues of power in the learning process.

Legitimate Peripheral Participation

Lave and Wenger (1991) have argued that triadic group relations observed among experienced community members and newcomers differed from dyadic relations as newcomers were required to learn from more experienced members while simultaneously contributing to the work of the community. They termed this engagement *legitimate peripheral participation* implying that the work of the newcomers contributed to community learning. Continued involvement on the part of newcomers resulted in their increasing legitimacy of place within the community. Inevitable struggles for power in a community of practice, while not always immediately welcomed, may serve a constructive purpose. Wenger (1998) has suggested that they constitute essential tensions that, managed well, promote reflection and useful outcomes. Alliances between experienced and less experienced members of the community are essential in this respect, requiring ongoing maintenance to ensure effective working relationships. Wenger et al (2002) explained

that communities pass through developmental stages, powered by triadic relations. The communities are generated and regenerated with the recruitment of new members who challenge existing stores of knowledge. Momentum is maintained through interaction in response to knowledge differential which results in transformation of knowledge. The existence of this continual process of transformation determines whether or not the community as a whole survives.

Knowledge and Power

It is not surprising that power issues present in the operation of communities of practice because of the central and pivotal positioning of the shared body of knowledge. Several theorists, including Barnes, Foucault, and Weber, have examined the relationship between knowledge and power. For instance, Foucault (1980) spoke simultaneously of both power and knowledge, *pouvoir/saviour*, and suggested that they were inseparable from one another. Power, according to Foucault exists, not in isolation, but in the productive relations between people. It is an essential force sustaining the life of the community and the continuing engagement of its members. Unequal relations of community members ensure that power is used and regenerated through continuous exchange of ideas and construction of knowledge. If this is the case, unequal relations may not threaten the community if they are well managed and are not so overwhelmingly discrepant as to hinder reflective interaction. Instead, they may provide a mechanism for the production of an essential force for transformation of knowledge.

Typically, structures within communities of practice are flat and based on collegial arrangements rather than line management. Leadership roles are assigned to peers by group members and tasks are distributed among members who present with particular interests and specialist areas of expertise. Collaborative structures allow members to utilise both formal and informal relationships to address issues related to their

particular field of work, to develop competence in important aspects of practice and to initiate innovative projects (Wenger et al, 2002).

Supervision and the Community Dimension

Supervisory Relationships

Members of supervisory communities of practice are individuals who have a common interest in, and concern for, a particular domain of knowledge. They interact with one another to access support, develop knowledge and check their practice. Supervisory relationships between members are characterised by reciprocity operating within a pool of goodwill rather than a direct exchange of knowledge. This reciprocation is usually generalised, involving multiple rather than singular relationships, as members contribute to, and extract from, the totality of knowledge constructed within the community (See Figure 16).
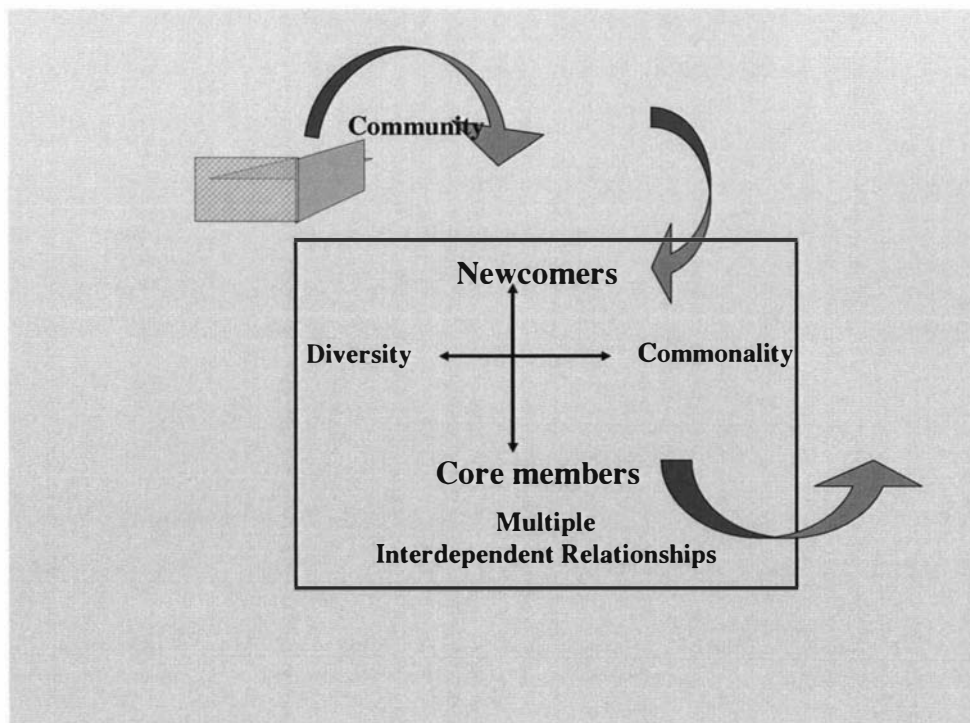
Figure 16. The Community Dimension of the Community of Practice

Supervision relationships within a community of practice may form spontaneously or be deliberately established. Members may select to join communities of practice to share in problem solving activities associated with their work, to gain new knowledge or to interact with like-minded people with a common view of the world. Others may join the community because of the value they place on connectedness to their professional group for the purpose of maintaining satisfactory standards of practice in their chosen profession. As the community evolves, the reasons for continuing involvement of members may change, as may the nature of their contributions and their supervision needs. Supervision arrangements, therefore, are not fixed but continually transforming in line with the ever-changing community of practice.

Although experienced psychologists are frequently called upon for professional support, and as core members might more often than not take a lead role, supervision, as for community functioning in general, does not rely solely on these people for expertise. Experienced or expert practitioners form the core of the community and make valuable contributions to the ever-changing domain of both explicit and tacit knowledge. They communicate essential community knowledge to the "newcomers" or novice practitioners who operate initially at the periphery of the community. Novice professionals, however, also make a contribution to the community as they bring with them perspectives from recent training and from outside the professional community. As novice professionals gain more expertise, they migrate closer to the core of the community and the ways in which they contribute change as this movement takes place. In time, those who once requested the expertise of experienced members eventually make available their own knowledge to connect newcomers to the community. A vibrant community that supports the various supervisory needs of its members will be one that involves a steady flow of members moving from the periphery to the core.

Developmental Change

The modes of interaction that support members who are relative newcomers may differ from those sought by more established members. Developmental theorists, most notably Stoltenberg and Delworth (1987), have presented models of supervision that have supported this notion. Stoltenberg and Delworth noted that supervisees' needs differed as they developed proficiency and confidence and proposed that supervisors adapt their practice in response to the presenting needs of the learners. They suggested that levels of proficiency were situation-specific and that a practitioner may be a new learner on one task and more proficient on another. Other models of knowledge and skill development have made similar points about the nature of professional support. For example, Dreyfus (1982) described a series of five stages of development from novice to expert in a particular skill area. Novices, while bringing to new situations their knowledge from their past lived experience, may require some direct assistance with new tasks and may request, from established community members, step-by-step methods. At a novice stage, new learners seek specific methods or strategies but are not able to view tasks in their entirety. As they become more familiar with tasks, they are able to work more independently and to take a wider view of situations. By the time they are fully established members, or are proficient or expert, they view the tasks as a whole, simultaneously discerning the principles, methods and strategies for the activity at hand. At this stage, they may well have difficulty articulating their practice in detail. Hewson (1992) observed the developmental path from novice to expert in supervision and noted differences over time in the topics of supervisees selected to discuss. Trainees, or newcomers, were most likely to request assistance with specific casework. More experienced practitioners were more likely to reflect on their own practice and to discuss more general professional issues. The participants in the current study also reported this pattern of change in supervisee focus over time (See Figure 17). Gradually, newcomers' early dependence on experienced practitioners decreases.
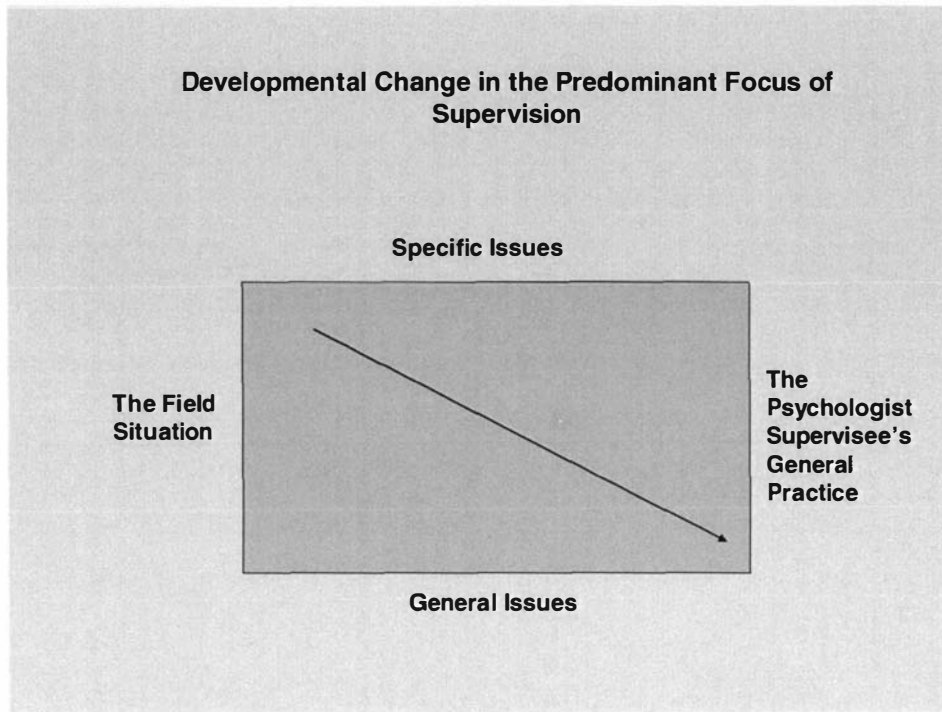
Figure 17. Direction of developmental change in topics taken to supervision (Hewson, 1992)

Members of communities of practice develop effective supervisory relationships on trust, a quality repeatedly cited as a primary consideration in making formal and informal selection of partners for supervision (See chapter 4 of this thesis; Worthen & McNeill, 1996). Viable supervisory communities of practice are those whose members have a keen focus on the domain of knowledge, that provide opportunities to safely explore issues and that encourage the contribution of authentic information to dialogue (Wenger et al., 2002). Through regular situated interaction and the development of shared understandings of the domain of knowledge, members can create opportunities to build relationships and learn to trust one another.

Educational psychologists' work teams reflect diversity on a number of dimensions. For example, teams may include both newcomers and experienced long-time

practitioners. In addition, members may differ with regard to gender, age, ethnicity and culture or the various official or unofficial roles they take within the communities. This diversity is a critical aspect of supervision within communities of practice as it provides the means for the generation of new knowledge and the consequent transformation of domains of knowledge. However, to support both supervision and the life of the community, membership, while diverse, must hold some critical areas of commonality. For example, members might draw on congruent methodologies and make use of mutually understood terminology to develop shared understandings of the domain of knowledge and to form consistent relationships with one another. Over time, they learn about the diverse attributes and particular knowledge bases of fellow members. They make decisions about who to consult regarding particular issues. They know who will be interested, who will be knowledgeable and who will be helpful (Wenger et al, 2002).

7.2.2. The Domain

The Functioning of the Domain.

Communities of practice, initiated by people who share and value a particular area of knowledge, are welded together by the knowledge held in the domain and the activity associated with the transformation of this knowledge. This dimension represents the *declarative* knowledge of the community and is composed of dynamic, socially constructed meanings or theories related to community concerns. It is embedded in community policies, processes, documents and standards. Knowledge, as understood in the community of practice context is described in a definition offered by Davenport and Prusak (1998) in *Working Knowledge: How Organizations Manage What They Know*.

> Knowledge is a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating

new experience and information. It originates and is applied in the minds of knowers. In organisations, it often becomes embedded not only in documents or repositories but also in organisational routines, processes, practices, and norms. (Davenport & Prusak, 1998, p. 5)

The shared understanding of the domain generates a sense of accountability and responsibility to the knowledge therein and to the development of a practice. The process of learning or development is located not in the minds of individual members or in deliberate structuring of the community, but in the increasing access that members have to full participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Meanings ascribed to the knowledge held in the domain reflect the history of interaction between community members rather than the activity of any party alone (Hung & Chen, 2001). Community of practice members make collective decisions about the composition of the domain, the body of knowledge acceptable to the community being built up through the dialogue between members. Through participation in the community of practice, individuals come to learn about the domain and develop clarity regarding its parameters. The dynamic nature of the domain does, however, issue a challenge for those who try to manage it. The ever-changing social understandings cannot easily be reduced to an object, quantified or packaged (Elmholdt, 2004). Management of this body of knowledge is a core professional activity.

Supervision and the Domain

The domain comprises everything that creates common ground for supervision participation. The participants in the present study illustrated the importance of the domain by discussing the priority they placed on finding supervisory partners who held the particular knowledge they needed to address specific problems. The domain is not a fixed entity but is constantly changing as new problems emerge and new solutions are created through the interaction of community members. Through the interaction of members within and outside the community of practice, existing

knowledge held within the domain is regularly challenged. Established community members reflect on practice and look outside the community for knowledge to extend the domain while newcomers take on board, or challenge, the assumed knowledge of their forerunners (See Figure 18).

Supervision may support the formation of shared identities and mutual understandings, but it also produces elements of difference amongst members. While commonality is important to maintain the baseline of knowledge in the community of practice, and to maintain the relationships between supervisory participants, a measure of diversity is required to challenge psychologists' positions and to support the extension of the knowledge base through dialogue. Supervisory participants bring complementary qualities, knowledge and skills to the community. The challenges offered through this differential input create opportunities for growth. Indeed, Wenger et al (2002) even suggested that strong individualities be encouraged within communities of practice to ensure sufficient disagreement and debate.
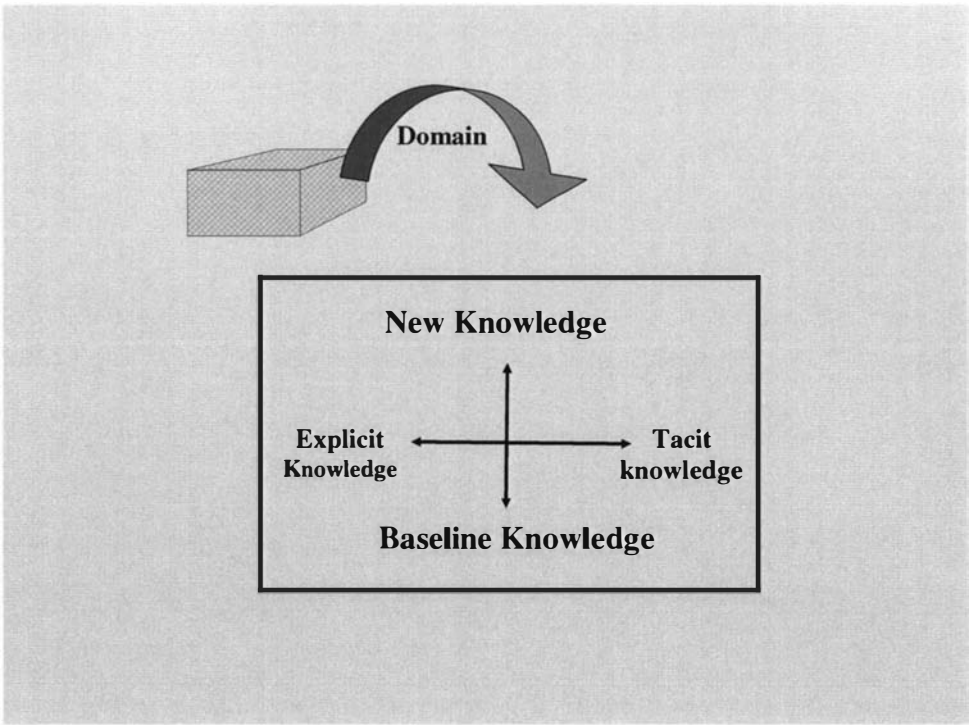
Figure 18. The domain dimension of the community of practice.

There may be mavericks, but it is through a process of communal involvement, including all the controversies, that a body of knowledge is developed. It is by participating in these communities, even against the mainstream, that members produce scientific knowledge. (Wenger et al, 2002, p. 10)

Through supervision in a community of practice, psychologists can share valuable explicit and implicit knowledge. Psychologists are able to articulate much of the knowledge of the domain, they are less able to discuss the tacit or implicit understandings that underpin their practice. Although strongly influential, tacit knowledge is not easily expressed and can be the most difficult to replicate. The acquisition of tacit knowledge requires participation as it becomes apparent only during shared interaction in such activities as work-related tasks, formal and informal consultations, and casual conversations in the workplace. This aspect of educational psychology has been underestimated in traditional conceptualisations that implied formally scheduled interactions in situations often removed from practice itself.

In efforts to retain the integrity of the community, managers and other invested community members may discount, or even disparage tacit community knowledge (Yanow, 2004). In doing so they actively discourage the creation of opportunities to acquire these critical understandings. Yanow commented that, in professional organisations, workers are sometimes caught between what they know that the whole organisation should also know and a situation in which the managers, through efforts to contain situations, are disinclined to value and use that available knowledge. For instance, members typically construct solutions to problem situations. The knowledge developed in this problem-solving process is local knowledge, derived from the familiarity that community members have of their domain and the specific situations in which events have occurred. New solutions are specific to the contexts in which they were developed and are pertinent to the group of people acting at the time. However, because this knowledge does not map directly on to explicit community

knowledge, the organisation management may impose a different, and less applicable, procedure.

Recognition of the critical role of implicit knowledge underscores the need for supervision to be carried out in the educational psychologists' working environments. This does not mean, however, that explicit knowledge is not important for practice or that there is not a place for professional training. Indeed, it is the explicit knowledge that most often legitimises communities of practice. What is important is that members have access to both forms of community knowledge.

7.2.3. The Practice Dimension

The Functioning of the Practice Dimension

The practice dimension contains the *procedural* knowledge of the community of practice and includes both the actions of members and the resources required to carry out their activity (Figure 19). The methods used by community members in practice are developed upon principles derived from the theory held in the domain. The resources that support psychologists' practice include the codes and standards recognised by the community and other professional material such practice frameworks, assessment methods, and data processing equipment. They also include less tangible resources such as the particular language that allows members to share precise understandings of circumstances.

Members transfer knowledge and create new solutions through their participation in community of practice activities. This situated activity acts as a vehicle for the transfer of knowledge from the domain to members' work. Training in professional work is, on its own, insufficient to meet the knowledge requirements of practice (Butler, 1996). Although training can support the transfer of important explicit professional knowledge, it does not address practitioners' need for the implicit understandings that are critical for the execution of their field tasks and their

increasing access to community activity. Actions members take within the practice dimension naturally reflect both the explicit and implicit social systems of the community of practice. Tacit knowledge of implicit systems is communicated to members and constantly transformed through historically based interaction in the course of everyday community activity. The importance of this knowledge cannot be disregarded in the analysis of professional practice (Brown and Duguid, 2000).

The activity structures of supervision reflect community perspectives on accessing professional support and the ways in which members think about, and respond to, presenting issues. Practice and supervision are therefore constantly changing as members reflect on their actions and review and modify underlying theories.
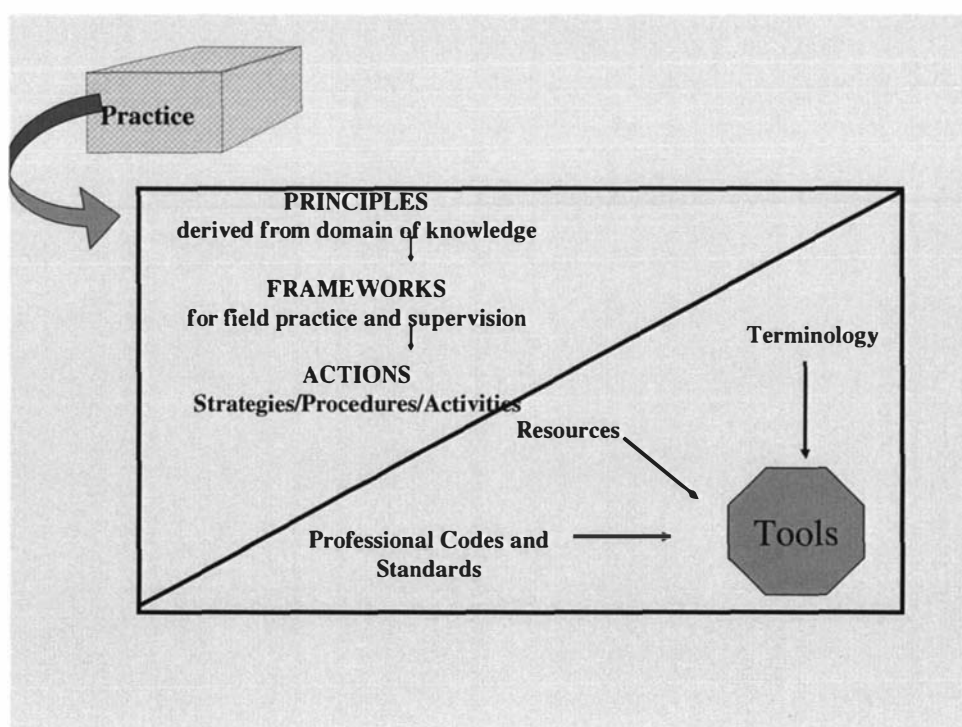
Figure 19. The practice dimension of the community of practice.

Community activity is mediated in practice through the tools, which include speech and language, processes of reflection, artefacts, signs and symbols. Vygotsky (1978) described tools as those items that allow natural behaviour to be modified so that people act on the world in culturally acceptable ways, and respond constructively to situations. Tools are socially created by groups of people for use within their particular cultural environments. They are therefore, culturally specific in nature, meaningful only in the contexts in which they have been developed. The nature of the tools shapes the knowledge base, which in turn constrains or mediates practice (Hung & Chen, 2001). Community activity results in the production of new tools and the further refinement of those in use. Tools are invariably developed in the interaction between members of social groups for particular social purposes. They function to support communication between members, facilitating social contact and the construction of new knowledge. They provide the means by which members influence their surroundings (Hung & Chen).

Supervision and the Practice Dimension

The same theory that guides the practice of psychologists in their field of work is applicable to supervision practice within their community of practice. Indeed, this study has shown that the actions of the psychologists in relation to the supervision goals do reflect ecological theory. When the alternative conceptualisation of supervision was applied to the analysis of supervisory practice, the psychologists in the present study indicated that despite the prevalence of traditional notions of supervision, they nevertheless pursued the goals of supervision in ways consistent with their theories of practice.

Ecological Perspective

Supervision within a community of practice can take many forms (Figure 20). At times it is situated deeply in the field work of the psychologists while at other times it is situated in the interaction of community members in activities away from their

referral situations. The activities in which psychologists participate may be intentionally supervisory. For example psychologists engage in formal supervision, they attend courses and conferences and ask colleagues to observe their practice in the field. On other occasions, the supervisory aspect of the interaction is not so easy to discern and is embedded in action for which the primary and overt intention is related to goals that are not supervisory. For example, psychologists may share transport to a school in which they share casework. On route they may discuss professional matters and take the opportunity to reflect on their practice in general or in relation to their current project. They may also meet in communal areas, for instance, in the staff room, where they incidentally discuss their work and develop the relationships that support their future supervisory needs.
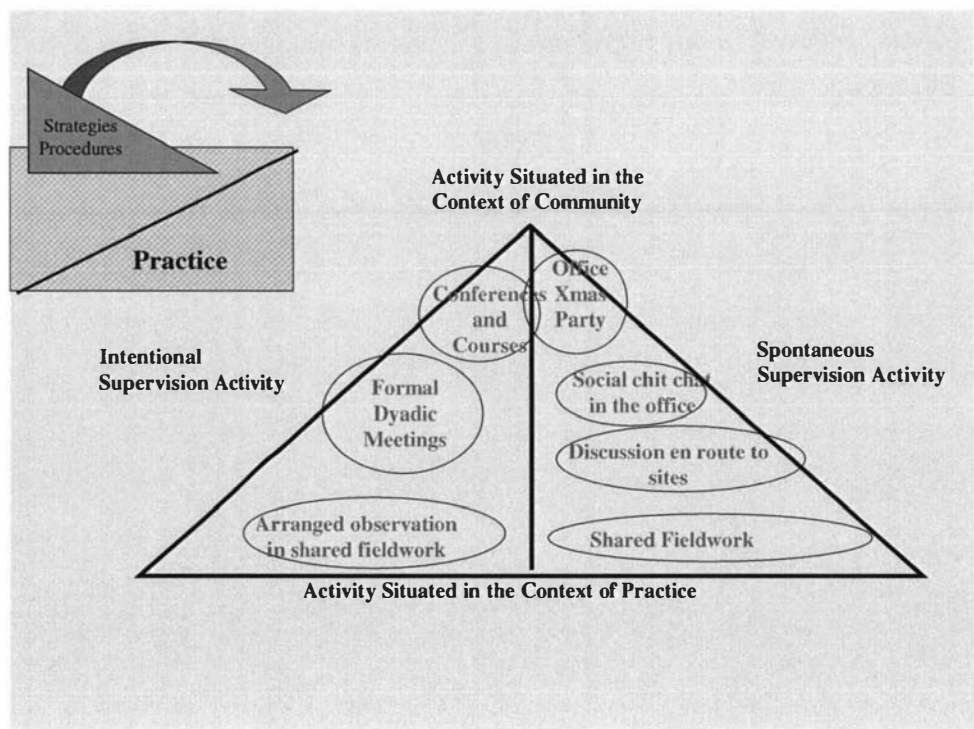
Figure 20. Supervisory activity within a community of practice (with examples).

Supervisory activity takes place in the many contexts of educational psychology communities of practice. Some supervision is situated in the interaction that takes place in the contexts in which psychologists reflect on their practice, plan their work and arrange the materials associated with this work. For example, psychologists attend team meetings and they make use of their professional networks in offices to obtain the knowledge required to construct solutions to problems. Other supervisory activity is situated in the contexts of practice. In such circumstances, psychologists share knowledge with colleagues in the course of shared fieldwork and allow themselves to be accountable by engaging in highly visible activity.

Multiple Relationships

In order to meet their many and various supervision needs, psychologists conducting supervision within a community of practice must develop multiple relationships. Their supervisory capacity is determined by the nature and quality of the connections they make within the professional community. Newcomers may seek the knowledge and support of more experienced community members and come to know where specific types of knowledge are located within the community. Some relationships may be formalised, some are established on a short-term basis for the duration of a project, while others remain informal and responsive to circumstances as they arise. These relationships are in constant transformation, changing as community members become further connected with the community of practice through their continuing participation. Relationships in supervision within a community of practice, as for any supervision relationships, are critical to the functioning of both supervision and the community of practice.

A supervision map can help psychologists to: (1) identify the connections they make within the professional community; (2) to broadly plan future interaction; or, (3) to demonstrate their connectedness to or, in other words, their participation, in the life of the professional community. The map is constructed by recording the relationships

and events that provide support, facilitate access to professional development and help to maintain accountability (Figure 21). In carrying out this exercise, the strength of connections can be identified then interpreted and reviewed in relation to the particular contexts of individuals' work. Different forms of connection are required to accommodate the various contexts of educational psychology practice. For example, if psychologists engage in shared and visible practice, as is common when team members work in close proximity to one another, their need for formalised supervision may be less than that of colleagues whose contexts of work are relatively isolated from that of other community members. Psychologists examining and recording connections will find that in constructing this seemingly innocuous map, that they are on sensitive ground that straddles the personal-professional boundary. Psychologists must take care, as in all of their professional work, to work within the parameters of their codes of ethics.

	Scheduled Meetings	Specific Arrangements	Team Interactions	Shared Work	Informal Consultations	Personal-Professional	Observation
Support							
Professional Development							
Accountability							

Figure 21. Grid for mapping, planning and documenting supervision activity.

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Supportive Learning Environments

Supportive supervisory activity within a community of practice relies on the availability of opportunities for situated learning and members' shared concern for supervision or the goals of supervision. Psychologists must ensure that they have opportunities to develop professional relationships and to take part in sufficient community interaction to provide access to support, professional development and accountability.

Psychologists' practices are simultaneously supported and challenged within the community of practice. It is the challenges that, developed upon the existing supports of current practice, allow psychologists to review and adapt their professional knowledge in response to the contexts of their work. A balance of commonality and diversity between members is required to ensure recognition of current knowledge and to effectively challenge ways of thinking and acting.

Supervision within a community of practice must accommodate contextual factors, for example, physical location, psychologists' background of experience and particular interpersonal styles. Generally, members make face-to-face contact to develop relationships that allow them to utilise a broad range of language tools. However, this may not always be possible. In such cases, members may use other means to sustain supervisory relationships. In the past decade, the use of computer technology with internet access has opened many new opportunities for social interaction. Educational communities are making good use of this medium to connect with one another for professional development and ongoing support (Mentis et al, 2002; Hung & Nichani, 2002; Ryba et al, 2001b; Stacey, Smith & Barty, 2004). The issue regarding whether or not face-to-face contact is a necessary component of the operation of communities of practice remains an ongoing debate (Wenger et al, 2002). However, at the very least, internet access provides an opportunity to support and complement other forms of supervisory practice.

Evidence-based practice

Theories of educational psychology practice and supervision within a community of practice are aligned with one another. As members of communities of practice know about, and are concerned for, the knowledge in the domain, they are also familiar with the theories of learning and accountability that underpin their supervision activity. In the way that psychologists are able to articulate the theory of their practice, they also have the means to articulate their theory of supervision. Recognition and understanding of the theoretical foundations of supervision in educational psychology permits psychologists to develop a shared language for reflecting on supervision and developing new theory and processes. It also allows them to demonstrate the evidence-base of their supervision through articulation of this theory.

7.3. The Integration of Supervision and Communities of Practice

Supervision within a community of practice refers to any activity that is carried out for the intended purposes of meeting the goals of supervision. This practice comprises any interactive action that helps members to access personal or professional support, to pursue their professional development needs in relation to the work of the community, or that supports them to maintain their practice in ways that meet the professional standards set by the community.

Each of the three dimensions of the community of practice is primarily concerned with one of the supervision goals (Figure 22). The *community* dimension provides members access to the personal and professional support they require to continue in their work. The commonality created by their shared interest in the domain supports them to recognise and acknowledge members' requirements for support while the diversity of the individuals within the community of practice creates a context for the construction of new solutions. The multiple relationships available to members in the community of practice provide access for support on a greater range of issues than is

possible when practitioners are working in isolation. The *domain* of the community of practice is concerned with the professional development of members. Through participation, members gain access to not only the explicit knowledge of the community, but also to the implicit understandings that are critical for community functioning and professional practice. The domain helps members to remain focused in their work, to avoid unhelpful drift from the core professional knowledge. Opportunities for dialogue within the community of practice support members to engage in shared reflection on practice and to develop new knowledge. The *practice* dimension is concerned with the actions that members take. It supports members to maintain the standards set by the profession and to deliver quality services and goods. Situated participation makes practice visible, challengeable, and accountable.
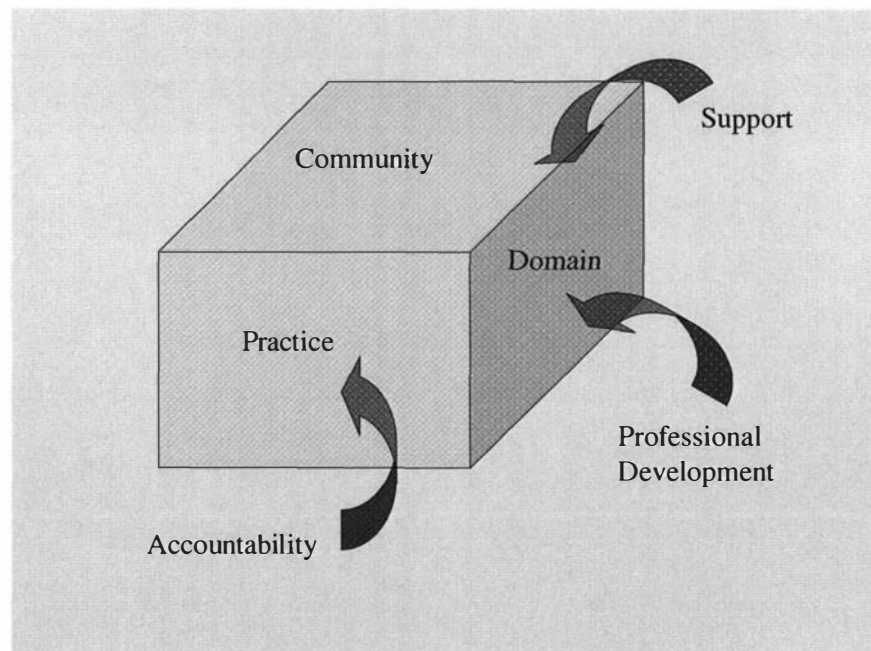
Figure 22. The goals of supervision and the dimensions of the community of practice.

Supervision within a community of practice is about participation and connectedness. It is developed on the premise that individuals do not exist in isolation but in relation to one another. They construct their social world through interaction, the breadth and depth of their construction being determined by the nature and quality of these interactions. The framework for supervision within a community of practice offers an alternative conceptualisation of supervision as a practice that integrates with the regular activity of members and supports the development of multiple supervisory relationships to access support, professional development and to remain accountable to relevant professional and public codes.

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Chapter 8

Consultation and Review

This chapter of the thesis reports the responses of a section of the participating community of practice to the draft framework for supervision. Member feedback on the framework was provided by a reference group of psychologists who worked in one New Zealand district. The group consisted of members who had already participated in the study by contributing accounts of supervision practice as well as those who were new to the project. The community reviewed the framework with respect to: a) the representativeness of the framework with regard to observed community activity; and, b) the implications of adopting an alternative conceptualisation of professional supervision as an integrated practice within a community of practice. As membership to the profession of educational psychology implies ongoing engagement in professional supervision, the reference group also discussed ways in which supervision participation could be demonstrated when conducted as an integrated practice within a community of practice. Details of the consultation procedure are provided in Chapter 2 (p. 59).

Although permission to conduct the study had been obtained from the Ministry of Education, I further consulted with staff in this particular area to gain specific consent for this stage of the project and to negotiate the review method. This negotiation process provided a check that the research results matched with the management group members' observations of the practices within the educational psychologist community. To be plausible and warrant review, the framework had to represent a

familiar practice. The negotiation involved conversations with members of the community's employing organisation including individual management staff (area manager, human resource manager) as well as the area management team as a whole (12 members including service team leaders and professional leaders). Not all of the management team were educational psychologists although all belonged to the larger community of special educators in whose community the educational psychology community is embedded. The management team interacted on a day-to-day basis with this community, were familiar with their practices and shared much common knowledge. The representativeness of the framework with regard to members' observations of activity of the community was largely established through the negotiation process although it was also later checked with the reference group.

Members of the reference group were selected by asking for volunteers from the psychologists who worked from the area office. This request was made by the professional practice leader on behalf of the researcher. Five of the 7 psychologists who volunteered were able to match schedules for the review. Two of these psychologists had also been members of the management team. The reference group members represented a range of different experiential backgrounds. Some were long-standing members of the educational psychology community while others were relative newcomers. All participated in the work of one organisation but represented different backgrounds in relation to their psychology training and extent of prior experience as well as the nature of their participation in supervision activity.

Once the representiveness of the framework had been further checked, the main focus of the review became one of considering the implications of thinking about supervision as a practice situated within the functioning of a community of practice. This chapter reports a summary of the views shared by the reference group. This report is followed by discussion of some factors that would mediate the application of the framework and which would require some specification in supervision systems.

8.1. Summary of Reference Group Responses

An inclusive approach to analysis of the reference group responses was adopted. Working from this perspective, all information and data provided by the reference group members was pooled to include the contributions of each member. In this report, therefore, comments made by individual reference group members are represented as the views of the collective group. No particular members are identified nor are the frequencies of responses reported.

The responses of the reference group related to three aspects of supervision within a community of practice; 1) supervision as activity situated within a community of practice; (2) enhancing supervision in a community of practice; and, (3) demonstrating supervision within a community of practice.

8.1.1. Supervision as Activity Situated in a Community of Practice.

The reference group indicated that the structure of the alternative conceptualisation of supervision did not require major changes. This finding is not surprising as the framework had been developed upon the data collected from their own professional community (See analysis and description of the framework for supervision, Chapter 6 & 7). Members provided constructive information regarding factors that might influence the suitability and legitimisation of the alternative conceptualisation. They identified several elements of the framework that they considered contributed to the acknowledgement and understanding of the practice of supervision along with some issues that might usefully be addressed in the development of viable community supervision systems. The reference group considered that communities of practice supported supervision by:

- Catering for a range of individual preferences for supervision
- Offering a wide range of relationships and expertise

- Creating opportunities for members to interact with those who have similar perspectives on practice
- Providing access to specific knowledge that contributes to particular situations.
- Promoting the development of environments conducive to a culture of sharing.
- Accommodating a wide range of supervision activities.
- Acknowledging the value of some spontaneous supervisory mechanisms.
- Offering a range of both situated and remote supervision opportunities.
- Promoting accountability through high visibility of practice and transparent processes.

Reference group members considered that supervision within the community of practice would be enhanced by the following.

- An explicit account of the supervision system that operated within the community of practice.
- Clear understandings in relation to ethics, confidentiality, safety, and professional boundaries.
- Integration of supervision systems with other professional and administrative systems.
- Shared and explicit understandings of the processes of contracting, planning, and accounting for supervision practice.
- Documentation systems that are not so cumbersome as to hinder participation in supervision or restrict the supportive value of incidental and informal interactions.
- Protection of the confidential status of informal interactions with peers.
- Emphasis on intentionality of supervision practices.

8.1.2. Enhancing Supervision in a Community of Practice

Shared understandings

The reference group considered that those participating in a supervising community "need to have shared understandings of what supervision is and means for the community of practice". To aid sound decision-making, participants suggested that work teams have a clear focus and open processes. One participant said, "if people know each other, and know the process, they are more likely to have confidence in sharing their views openly as part of the process". Without shared understandings of the role of the various supervision activities with regard to accountability, reference group members suggested that some community members might view the acknowledgement of integrated supervision practice as threatening. Similarly, members who placed high value on their formal supervision may need assurance of its protection in the acknowledgement of supervision within the community of practice.

One participant recalled a time when she had become aware of the supervisory nature of her situated practice within regular community activity.

> I was involved in very good professional dyadic supervision, but was unable to meet with my supervisor for a month. I remember saying to her that I didn't think it mattered too much because all of my decisions were going to be made within the context of collaborative teamwork. (Participant 5: 1.3)

However, the participant noted that such activity needed to be supplemented with opportunities to critically reflect on situations in ways that might not always happen unless intentionally arranged. This might be the case, the participant explained, when practitioners wished to stand back from field activity and review the assumptions on which the teams based their decision-making.

Accountability

Participants considered that the transparent processes involved in community of practice supervision assisted psychologists to make his or herself accountable to the profession. The group did, however, draw attention to some issues that may potentially serve as barriers to the legitimisation of supervision as a practice situated within a community of practice. In particular, they noted difficulties associated with the documentation of activities. This issue is further discussed later in this chapter.

The aspect of supervision practice within the community of practice that provoked the most debate was the legitimisation of informal supervision. While, in the main, the reference group considered that the various forms of supervision were complementary, there were concerns that the option of relying heavily on informal means for meeting the goals of supervision may permit unsafe practice to continue unnoticed. They considered that communities of practice may more readily promote *support* rather than the other two goals of supervision, *professional development* and *accountability*.

The reference group stressed the importance of intentionality in professional supervision and suggested that the 'practice' triangle be rearranged, as illustrated, to emphasise this point (*See Figure 23*). Intentionality is an important aspect of practice and one that, at this point in time, is not negotiable for psychologists. The psychologists' code of ethics, endorsed by the registration board, clearly states that supervision arrangements must be made explicit. It is essential, that psychologists develop ways of articulating their integrated supervision plans without compromising the benefits offered through spontaneous interaction.
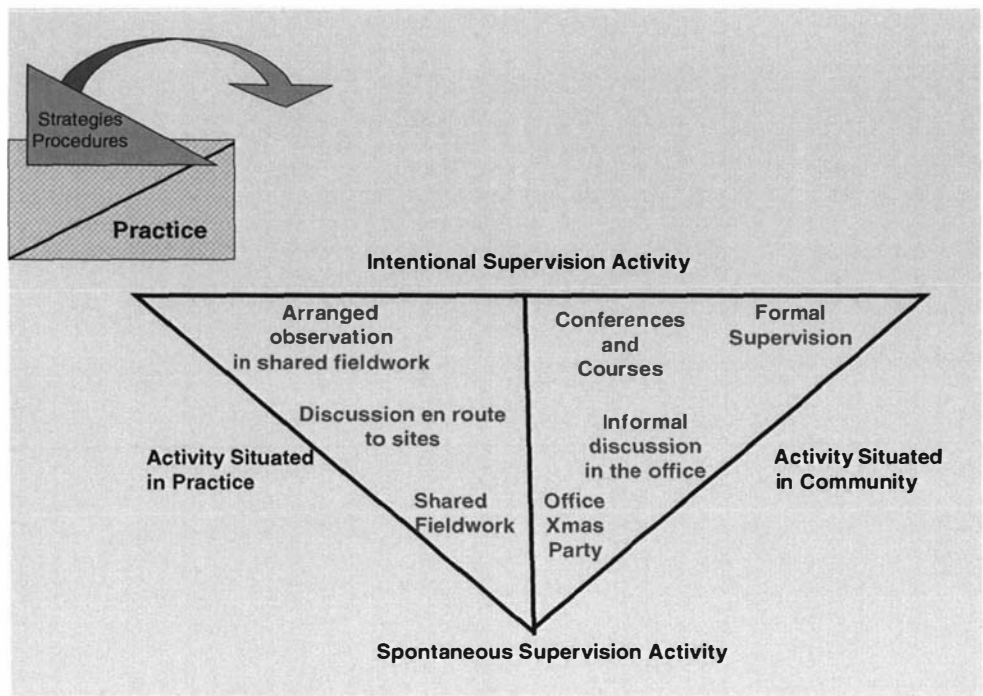
Figure 23. Supervisory activity undertaken within a community of practice (Revised)

Other aspects that required consideration in the cultivation of community of practice supervision were confidentiality of client data, and problems arising from team members in different disciplines working to different ethical codes. Participants emphasised the importance of having the opportunity to participate in various forms of supervisory activity to allow different experiences to complement one another and consider a broad section of their work. They also noted the importance of developing a context that ensured that at least one other member was familiar with each psychologist's total workload.

8.1.3. Demonstrating Participation in Supervision in a Community of Practice

The reference group members stressed the necessity to establish ways of ensuring accountability to the profession and to document supervision practice. The means for

demonstrating and documenting supervision activity had to be specified in a supervision policy that was well understood by all members. This process might include the recognition of existing peer case review procedures as relevant to supervision, and involve open questioning to foster reflection on the fieldwork. Peer review might also usefully consider issues related to what has supported practice, what has been less helpful, and what matters have arisen during the fieldwork.

The nature of psychologists' participation in supervision within the community of practice would need to be anticipated, possibly in collaboration with peers. This process may result in a set of intentions with regard to supervision or a plan with varying degrees of specificity across aspects. Participants suggested that where possible, a running record be kept of important spontaneous supervisory interactions. Running notes, kept in a supervision folder that also contained peer reviews and field observations, were considered most accessible. However, it would be difficult, and probably not advantageous, to document all spontaneous interactions. Such interactions frequently occur when psychologists are away from files and the means to take notes. In addition, over-documentation of informal interactions might erode the benefits of this activity. In practice, documentation would be unlikely to occur on every occasion.

Satisfaction with supervision might be communicated through the peer review system. This system is already in place in the community and may be an avenue where practitioners can speak freely due to the anonymous nature of the collated data. Some members considered peer review to be a suitable context to open up dialogue with people working in management positions.

8.2. Discussion of Reference Groups Responses

The framework for supervision in a community of practice constituted a reflection of what was already happening, whether legitimised or otherwise, within this particular psychologist community. This representation of current practice was discussed by reference group members as a way of conceptualising supervision and a means by which supervision practice might be examined. The responses of the reference group to the framework for supervision indicated some of the factors that would mediate supervision within their particular community of practice. These insights were invaluable for its refinement and development. They highlighted areas that might be readily accepted by the educational psychologists as well as aspects which may not be as comfortably acknowledged. Aspects of the alternative conceptualisation of supervision that would require articulation in every case were: (1) the roles and responsibilities of supervisory participants in relation to the level of formality of interactions; and, (2) the place of accountability and documentation in supervision. These points are discussed in the following section.

8.2.1. Roles and Responsibilities of Supervisory Participants in Relation to Varying Levels of Formality

Informality and Confidentiality

The reference group emphasised the high value placed on informal supervision and indicated that if a broad notion of supervision situated within a community of practice was recognised as legitimate, the safety and support experienced within the informal situation must be retained. Every psychologist interviewed in this study had mentioned the informal supervision in which they engaged. Preservation of the enthusiasm with which psychologists engage in this interaction is an important consideration in terms of furthering the supervision goals. The effects of affective experience on the acquisition of knowledge have been well established (Bandura,

1986; 1994; 1997; Greve, Anderson & Krampton, 2001; Licht, 1992; Seligman, 2001).

The reference group indicated their wish for informal interactions to remain confidential in order to retain the inherent support. Some members were concerned that if informal interactions were legitimised as supervisory by the professional community, confidentiality promised to clients might be broken. In informal or integrated supervision the danger of stepping outside the boundaries set in service agreements was considered greater than in formally arranged supervision sessions for which clients gave express consent to discuss casework issues. However, if informal discussions are already occurring, this does not necessarily mean that recognition that such conversations do take place within the community would affect the current level of confidentiality. The matter of greatest concern to psychologists and those who work with them might be gaining general community understanding of just what confidentiality means within the profession, the organisation, and the law as it stands. A community of practice framework for supervision may serve as a platform for explicitly addressing privacy matters.

Clearly informal supervision must be accounted for in ways that do not jeopardise its valued contributions. The greatest threat to psychologists' privacy was posed by the possible production of written accounts of informal interactions. However, in most cases, such interactions were not recorded. As one participant pointed out, it is unlikely that in practice they would be. Just as psychologists take care when working with client groups to "collect only that information which is germaine to the purpose(s) for which informed consent has been obtained" and record only necessary information (*NZPsS, 2002, 1.6.4, 1.6.5*), recording in supervisory situations need only occur when it is helpful to the either party in terms of their practice. However, the psychologists may wish to register that they are connected to the professional community and document such goals on supervision plans, noting that, at review, they will be able to illustrate the ways they had engaged in this form of interaction.

Regardless of the type of interaction, psychologists in New Zealand are expected to keep case matters within the parameters negotiated with clients at all times unless there are extenuating circumstances (The NZPsS Code of Ethics for Psychologists Working in Aotearoa New Zealand, 2002).

> 1.6.9. Psychologists do not disclose personal information obtained from an individual, family, whanau or community group or colleague without the informed consent of those who provided the information, except in circumstances provided for in 1.6.10 [below].
>
> a. Diminished capacity: Where a person is judged incapable of giving consent to disclosure themselves.
>
> b. Children/young persons: The level of a child's/young person's emotional maturity and cognitive skills should determine the weight given to their requests and consent to disclose personal information. (NZPsS Code of Ethics for Psychologist Working in Aotearoa New Zealand, 2002)

Except in cases of diminished capacity, urgent need to protect client or public safety, or legal requirement, confidentiality must be observed. When accessing assistance from other psychologists, identifying information should not be shared. In a viable and ethical supervising community of practice, such codes might be expected to be mutually understood and observed by all members regardless of the interaction.

Refining the operation of a community of practice may entail resolving some existing dilemmas that have been too hard to address. For instance, the discussion above refers to the tension between valuing opportunities to talk unofficially, and the concern that such discussions are in breach of confidentiality. The responsibilities that members have for the care of people's information and the maintenance of standards in the profession must be part of the explicit structure of any professional community. All psychologists' activity must adhere to the currently accepted code of ethics.

Roles and Responsibilities

The distinction between the support role and the accountability role of supervision appears to be of greater concern to the educational psychologists when considered in relation to personal and sensitive informal situations. However, supervision within a community of practice might, due to the high visibility of practice and the connectedness of community members to other professionals, promote rather than restrict accountability of psychologists. While informal supervisory interactions must be safeguarded, psychologists offering personal and professional support in fieldwork are by virtue of their adherence to the psychologists' professional code, bound to take action in cases of gross misconduct. This obligation is present irrespective of whether or not the community of practice is recognised as a vehicle for supervision. The NZPsS Code of Ethics demands that psychologists protect the profession and the clients for whom they provide service by taking action when the code is being contravened.

> Psychologists uphold the discipline's responsibility to society by taking relevant action in relation to bringing incompetent or unethical behaviour of colleagues, including misuses of psychological knowledge and techniques, to the attention of appropriate regulatory bodies, authorities, and/or committees, in a manner consistent with the ethical principles of this Code. (NZPsS, 2002, 4.4.3)

However, it would appear unlikely that psychologists would over-interpret this statement. Indeed, the code itself warns against making "ethics complaints that are frivolous and are intended to harm the respondent rather than protect the public" (NZPsS, 2002, 4.4.5). Reports from the psychologists surveyed suggested that they were comfortable with their informal supervision interactions and that, in some cases, these meetings offered more safety than their formal arrangements. Enhancement of the community of practice may include the development of shared understandings

associated with the level of implicit responsibility for psychologists engaging in any interaction with other community members.

The relative priorities placed on the three goals of supervision, support, professional development, and accountability may depend on the roles of those who rank them. For example, supervisees might rank support and professional development above accountability while employers and defenders of the profession, may understandably give higher priority to accountability. Accountability is an essential aspect of professional practice and is necessarily located within the political environment of professional practice. To create and manage accountability systems some questions that need to be asked. "Who is accountable?", "To whom are they accountable?", and "For what are they accountable?" (Fitz, 2003).

The psychologists involved in this study were employed by the Ministry of Education, an agency with its own code of conduct. They were also licensed to practice through the psychologists' registration board that expects members to work within the parameters of the New Zealand Psychological Society code of ethics. This code implies personal responsibility. However, work environments are also subject to accountability measures and must ensure that their organisation does not violate ethical principles, organisational regulations, or the laws of the country. Individuals within communities of practice must know to whom they are accountable, as it is possible for professionals to be accountable to more than one code, in addition to the laws of the land. Individuals are accountable to professional bodies that, in turn, have a collective responsibility for the conduct of the profession. The unethical behaviour of any psychologists, therefore, reflects on each individual within the community. Such collective responsibility calls for shared problem-solving.

Knowing *to whom* practitioners are accountable might make the task of deciding for *what* they are accountable a little easier. This is clearly the case when the body to which they are accountable has a specified code of conduct or code of ethics. As

psychologists involved in the present study belonged to both the psychologist community and the Ministry of Education community they were, therefore, accountable to both the NZPsS Code of Ethics, and the Ministry of Education Code of Conduct. The NZPsS Code of Ethics states that psychologists should consider their professional code when making practice decisions but that they should also consider workplace codes. However, the NZPsS add that if the "[NZPsS] Code of Ethics establishes a higher standard of conduct than is required in legislation or other codes", that psychologists "should adopt the higher ethical standard in reaching their decision" (NZPsS, 2002, preamble). In summary, this group of psychologists is accountable for ensuring that the two codes are upheld. However, as registered psychologists they are also asked to make professional judgements on the level of ethical principle in cases where the codes are contradictory.

The reference group noted that difficulties might arise with respect to interdisciplinary interactions between professionals working under different ethical codes. Supervision planning, like the practice of psychology itself, must take into account issues of professional identity and perspective, just as it addresses variables such as culture, ethnicity, and gender. In supervision, members reflect on casework and share their respective knowledge. The process of reflection is supported when team members align with the energies of individual members working toward similar goals, creating a sense of harmony and production (Senge, 1994). In some situations, teaming can work to complement members' specialities permitting the goals of supervision to be readily pursued within the context of practitioners' work. In others, where teams may be less aligned, or where practitioners are isolated due to geographic or structural factors, they may seek harmonious professional relationships with practitioners who are 'on the same wave-length' to check not only professional practice but to prevent or address burnout (Hensley, 2002; Huebner et al., 2002). Shared understanding in professional relationships is essential for supervision as when there is insufficient alignment, much energy is expended without desired outcomes (Senge, 1994).

8.2.2. Accountability and Documentation of Participation in Supervision

Clearly, not all of psychologists' interactions with colleagues or connections with the wider professional community could be, or would be, efficiently recorded. The documenting of all forms of integrated supervision activity in the workplace would be a daunting task, even an impossible one. One psychologist summed up the situation well by noting that; "Its [supervision] what we do eight hours a day". Psychologists would need to be selective in the recording of their action.

While recording of supervision events can be an important feature of accountability in supervision practice, many valuable supervisory activities are difficult to specify or objectify. Therefore, accountability might best be promoted by taking a pro-active approach to its development. This would mean that greatest emphasis be placed on the development of systems within the community to ensure sound supervisory practice, possibly through training, and the construction of supervision plans by community members. Psychologists might expect to be involved in the construction of such systems as their Code of Ethics states that "Psychologists help develop, promote and participate in accountability processes and procedures related to their work" (NZPsS, 2002, 4.4.1).

Recording systems might involve more specificity for some forms of supervision than others. For example, the log, recommended by the reference group, might be kept for formal supervision sessions and interactions that are arranged around specific projects. Within this same system, psychologists might describe the types of connections they have with other community members, possibly citing examples as illustration. In this way, the benefits of informal supervision, and connections with others at gatherings or through written communications are not lost to intrusive measures but are nevertheless acknowledged as legitimate and vital aspects of overall supervision practice.

Referring to the matter of accountability within communities of practice, Wenger et al (2002) suggested that stories might be the best way to explain the linkages between knowledge, actions, and outcomes. They suggested that these factors, and the interaction between them, may sometimes be difficult to codify and argued that only stories can describe complex relations in ways that incorporate the contextual factors necessary to understand actions. Regardless of the types of recording systems established by communities, the documentation must be manageable and must be purposeful for, not only organisations and the professional bodies to whom they are accountable, but for the individual practitioners themselves. Documentation procedures must allow for the acknowledgement of connections to the professional community and for the contextualisation of events recorded.

Although all community members share some critical knowledge, each member is unique. The particular experiences psychologists bring to the community, and the specific interaction within the community, influence the way in which members interpret events and construct solutions. Their needs for support, professional development and accountability will, therefore, differ from one individual to another. For example, members who work in teams where co-working is common may require less formal supervision than those whose team members work in relative isolation in the field but gather together in their offices. And within these teams, some practitioners may have greater or lesser experience or knowledge of community networks. Supervisory partners whose supervision has been imposed upon them will make different arrangements from those who have voluntarily planned to engage in this practice. In addition, as the supervisory relationship is one of the most influential factors in determining satisfaction with supervision (Worthen & McNeill, 1996), history of relationships will also affect the development of supervision plans. A proactive approach to the development of a supervision system would place greatest emphasis on the construction of supervision knowledge and individualised, contextualised supervision plans for each member. Standard formats and categories may provide the commonality required by rendering the system manageable and

cohesive, but the content might be negotiated between the supervisee and appropriate peers. Once negotiated, supervisory participants would take responsibility for implementing the plans.

8.2.3. Change

The framework for supervision within a community of practice requires that psychologists take a new perspective on a valued aspect of practice, professional supervision. As the status quo generally allows little space for movement, it was important to acknowledge that the situation would be understood by the individual members in relation to their existing circumstances and the feasibility of change for them (Arygris, 1982; Fullan, 1991). All change, even when welcomed and actively sought, involves a degree of loss and anxiety and the gains on one hand are countered by the need to let something go on the other. Suggested changes are often regarded with suspicion, a fortunate occurrence given that change can be either useful or harmful. New situations are necessarily interpreted by people through their own personal familiar schemas, which, although constructed in a social context, require individual adjustment if change is to be embraced. No one can make this change for another (Marris, 1975). It is important that researchers remember that when they develop new structures or, as in the present study, shift the focal point so that the perspective on an existing situation is different, that this viewpoint has been reached after many years of inquiry, reflection and debate on enormous amounts of information. Peter Marris, who has long deliberated on the way people ascribe meaning to their lives, considered the belief that simply delivering information and explanation with the expectation that a new view will be accepted or accommodated was contemptuous with regard for the meaning of lives other than that of the presenter. People must attach personal meaning to events and concepts as change is concerned with the questioning and modification of subjective realities. There must be acceptable reasons for the change. Adopting a new view involves much investment and requires a substantial return (Fullan, 1991).

Individuals within organizations that develop supervision systems must be aware of the effect of any change for them. Communities are groups of individuals who are bound together by their shared knowledge. When the knowledge domain is challenged, individuals will assess the relative costs and benefits of this change for them and for the community. There was evidence that the broadening of the notion of supervision challenged existing knowledge, in particular, the place of formal supervision. The reference group considered that, for some, a conceptualisation of supervision that included informal and situated activity may overshadow or appear to undermine the formal supervision institution.

8.3. Summary

A reference group of psychologists reviewed the framework in relation to its representativeness of psychologist activity and the implications of adopting the alternative conceptualisation of professional supervision. These psychologists concurred with the management committee that the framework reflected the supervision activity that takes place within their organisation. The reference group identified some aspects of the framework that might mediate the process of supervision and its suitability in relation to the goals of supervision. They considered that the alternative conceptualisation encompassed activities that catered for the supervision preferences of a range of individuals and acknowledged the importance of some valued community interactions. The alternative conceptualisation promoted accountability by considering action in contexts where psychologists' work was visible. The reference group also noted factors to consider when adopting this view. Members of a supervising community of practice would need to develop shared understandings of supervision boundaries and place primary emphasis on intentional supervisory activities. Adopting the community of practice conceptualisation may prompt members to address dilemmas that already existed in the community but the process of change would require that new solutions be constructed.

Chapter 9

Reflective Evaluation

In this final chapter I present my reflective evaluation of the research project. The chapter begins with a summary of the research findings and consideration of the extent to which the objectives of the project have been met. In this reflective evaluation I discuss the implications of adopting an alternative conceptualisation of supervision and the significance of the developments from the present study for educational psychology. This discussion is followed by some comments on the research process selected for this particular study and the boundaries of generalisation of the results. The chapter includes also discussion about the ways in which the research could be extended to further these boundaries and to explore specific aspects of supervision within a community of practice.

9.1 The Research Project

9.1.1. The Outcome: An alternative conceptualisation of supervision

This research programme has culminated in the development of an alternative conceptualisation of supervision that contrasts with traditional ways of thinking about supervision. The alternative conceptualisation, developed through systematic analysis of educational psychology theory and current practice, is presented in this thesis as a community of practice framework.

The results of the present study indicate that educational psychologists' supervisory activity, when defined as "all activity undertaken to obtain support, professional development and to maintain accountability", was largely integrated with the participants' everyday practice. Supervision was not restricted to a unitary relationship but involved many covariate relationships with people both within and outside of their community of practice. Within this broad context, supervision involved a range of activities, some formalised and scheduled, others informally situated in the contexts of practice in referral settings. In contrast to the low participation rates typically reported in studies of formalised arrangements for supervision, the present research found that a group of psychologists engaged in supervisory activity at high rates. Indeed, all of the psychologists who took part in the working conversations in this study were able to describe the particular methods they used to pursue the goals of supervision and 90% of them were satisfied with their current arrangements. In effect, there was evidence to suggest that the psychologists were all participating in supervision. Even those whose formal supervisory relationships were less than adequate considered that their overall supervision arrangements were satisfactory.

The synthesis of the psychologists' accounts of supervision, educational psychology theory and reports of field practice revealed some points of similarity and difference between the ways that the psychologists approached their work and their supervision. In both work and supervision, the psychologists developed multiple relationships, analysed situations in relation to the multi-layers of the social ecology and worked to develop supportive contexts for intervention. A point of difference was observed, however, in the extent to which the participants were able to identify the evidence-base of their actions in supervision and field practice. This finding underscores the need for increased understanding of supervision and its role in professional practice in this community of practice. However, the finding that practitioners struggle with the articulation of supervision theory was not confined to this group but applied also to

other educational psychologists and other professional groups in other countries (Nolan et al, 1999; White et al, 1998).

The alternative conceptualisation of supervision is presented in a community of practice framework (See chapter 7). This framework, a multi-dimensional unit of analysis of supervision, illustrates supervision in educational psychology as a contextualised practice, allowing the particular supervision activity of individuals to be viewed in relation to the social systems in which it occurs. The community of practice base was originally selected as a vehicle for the alternative conceptualisation because of the match between its structure and the dimensions of the analysis in the present study. It has helped to illustrate the multiple connections that members of professional communities make to meet the goals of supervision and to explain the links between the theory-in-action of supervision and the everyday practice of educational psychologists. It explains the role of situated learning in the development of essential explicit and tacit understandings and the effects of shifting knowledge on the functioning of the community. This framework captures the dynamic nature of supervision through its capacity to accommodate the changes in practices and methods that would necessarily occur over time as the knowledge base is modified.

9.1.2. The Process: Understanding the supervision situation

9.1.2.a. Ecological Validity

In the present study, supervision was considered to be an integral part of the professional practice of educational psychologists that could not be understood without considering the ecology surrounding the practice. Therefore, it was important that the present research process maximised the ecological validity of the outcomes of the study; that the conclusions drawn in the study were relevant and applicable to the 'real world' of the participants. In designing this project, the nature of the specific research objectives were considered in relation to the values held within the

educational psychology community, the type of data that were required to inform the development of an alternative conceptualisation of supervision and the form of analysis that was most applicable for this particular situation. An ecologically valid research process necessarily involved the active participation of community members and consideration of the broad systems that operated on the practice of supervision. Situational analysis was selected because of the extent to which it met these criteria. It was able to support the management of the information collected without controlling the nature and interpretation of the data.

The standards applied to ensure the rigour of the present study reflected a broad view of research that has been extended in recent decades to accommodate a wider range of questions (Gergen, 2001; Potter, 2002; Pratto, 2002). The present study required methods of inquiry that recognised the various ways that people created meaning for social events. When designing the study it was important that the process did not reflect the presumption that the standards, traditionally applied to hypothesis-driven research, constituted inherent standards that were applicable to all research. Research methods are simply a means to an end, and the worth of tools cannot be assessed in isolation to the contexts in which they are used (Ryan, 2005). Traditional concepts that related primarily to confirmatory hypothesis-driven research, such as precise measurement, quantification and generalisability, would not necessarily have ensured appropriate rigour in the exploration of this social situation. In some respects, these concepts would be irrelevant or obstructive in relation to the objectives of the present study. For example, with regard to quantification, the observation that an event did or did not occur was important, but the value placed on the frequency of occurrence of events was relative to the context of the activity and, in most instances, was irrelevant.

One important aspect of this study was the level of precision required to develop an alternative understanding of supervision. The integral nature of the practice of supervision required that a broad view be taken and that the resulting conceptualisation could be interpreted and related flexibly to the supervision of a

diverse range of community members. However, sufficient precision was also required to discern the patterns of activity involved in supervision. The study, therefore, focused on the presence and range of supervision activities (for example, informal interactions, involvement in team activities) rather than particular interactions within these categories or the frequencies with which each occurred. It was concerned with the way these categories of activity related to one another to form coherent practices.

Although new questions call for new methods of inquiry, research questions, alone, are not sufficient to determine the most applicable research method. Other contextual variables such as the cultural practice of the participant group and the contexts in which the research is conducted, all play a part in determining and constructing the research process. Therefore, standards for research must be set in relation to specific projects. With regard to the present project, guidance was obtained from a range of professional literature about the development of rigour in qualitative research, in addition to the particular knowledge relating to the social and historical context of the community that participated in the study.

The present study was designed to meet generally accepted standards for qualitative research, e.g. Creswell, in relation to the parameters of participant research, the collection and analysis of data and the nature of the involvement of participants (See Creswell, 2003, p. 29). In addition, the study took account of the principles of field practice. In keeping with the criteria for good practice recommended by Peters and Heron (1993), the study was founded on a strong theoretical base, it considered current literature on educational psychology and supervision, it sought understandings that were intended to extend professional knowledge and utilised the sense-making processes of the participants. In other words, the present study involved a range of actions that ensured its ecological validity and its evidence-based quality.

9.1.2.b. Situational Analysis

The situational analysis research method used in this study was adapted from a framework originally developed for professional practice in educational psychology (See chapter 3). Designed to help people create more suitable alternative circumstances through construction of ecological understandings, situational analysis was well suited for pursuing the aims of the project and answering the research questions.

This ecological style of research was capable of supporting participants to see a way forward in supervision that had previously been portrayed as problematic. The application of the situational analysis framework to the present research enabled the participants and myself as the researcher to move beyond describing events in terms of existing understandings to the development of new meanings that presented new possibilities for action. Through examination of influential factors from the broader layers of the ecology, the research produced a picture of supervision, a community of practice understanding of the situation, that was not only positioned to challenge traditional beliefs but also provided the knowledge required to transform supervision processes.

9.2 Implications and Significance of the Research

9.2.1. Adopting an Alternative Conceptualisation of Supervision

Challenging Assumptions
The present research challenged some basic assumptions held in the educational psychology community regarding supervision. These assumptions were; (1) supervision is a formalised single-relationship interaction, and (2) all psychologists must participate in formal supervision (formally arranged and scheduled single-relationship). The findings of the study, as discussed earlier, suggested that

supervision could more usefully be conceptualised as the activity undertaken to meet the goals of supervision. From this point of view, centrality is given to the processes by which psychologists have established means to achieve these goals.

Challenges to the institution of supervision are rare and may be regarded by the profession as out of line with the current demand for accountability and quality assurance of professional services. Increasingly, however, questions are being asked about the appropriateness of traditional models and processes. Colin Feltham (2002), in *Supervision in the Helping Professions*, has questioned the basic assumptions that 'supervision is essential' and 'supervision is obligatory'. While he agrees that those who value formal supervision as a primary means to meet the goals of supervision should be free to retain their position, he argues that the helping professions must also be willing to engage in appropriate research to decide whether or not supervision is essential and to examine its place in professional practice. The present study is an example of the type of research that can be undertaken to understand and evolve professional processes that are in accord with current ecological ways of working.

The Community of Practice as a Unit of Analysis
This study directed the perspective on supervision away from the dyad to the interaction that takes place in a community of practice. This change in focus created an opportunity to think and talk about supervision in a different way and to direct research to a broader context. For example, the participants in the present study readily discussed a broad range of activities and multiple relationships outside of their formal arrangements. The community of practice framework for supervision is not a prescription for supervision but a representation of the structure and interaction of systems of supervision within, and between, communities of practice. It is a vessel for the particular knowledge sets of communities, for members' theories, systems, relationships, and practices. It directs the observer's eye to the dynamic interactive features of supervision, facilitating a contextualised view of the practice.

Dynamic Systems of Supervision

When a community of practice view of supervision is taken, it is difficult to think about supervision as a static activity. The ever-changing nature of the community of practice, responding to challenges to, and transformation of, the domain, implies that supervision practice will also undergo constant revision. As the situations of individuals within the community of practice are unique, the supervision requirements and preferences of each member will be specific and will change as their circumstances change. Indeed, the participants in the present study described the ways in which the particular circumstances of their professional practice influenced the ways in which they participated in supervision. In view of the variation in the supervision arrangements of the participants, it appears unlikely that supervision systems that accommodate the supervisory needs of a diverse community of practice could satisfactorily prescribe practices or operate without ongoing maintenance.

9.2.2. Supervision is the Responsibility of the Whole Community

The participants in the present study described a supervision system that involved reciprocal processes. A community of practice view of supervision suggests that all members contribute to supervision, as recipients or supervisors, and that they are collectively concerned with the attainment of the goals of supervision. Experienced members in a community of practice contribute through their strong familiarity with the domain of knowledge. They provide newcomers with access to, not only the explicit knowledge of the community, but the tacit information they have obtained through their extensive involvement in community activities. Newcomers, on the other hand, contribute through their participation in the work of the community and the new knowledge developed through their interaction with others, or in Lave and Wenger's (1991) terms, through their legitimate peripheral participation. The provision of supervision is, therefore, not the exclusive responsibility of experienced community members. Through their various interactions with colleagues, all contribute to supervisory contexts, although the nature of their supervisory input may

differ. Community members, at all levels of involvement, connect with others inside and outside the community of practice to seek and offer support, to further their professional development and that of others, and to ensure that they and their colleagues maintain the standards set by their profession.

9.2.3. Developing Supervision at a Systems Level

This research programme has contributed in a number of ways to the development of supervision practices within the field of educational psychology in Aotearoa New Zealand. Following are some specific examples of developments that have been undertaken at the systems level as a direct result of this thesis research.

Collaborative Supervision Preparation in a Special Education District.
The research has resulted in further development and implementation of the proposed model of supervision. Following the consultation with the reference group, I worked with an interdisciplinary group of special educators to support their preparation for participation in supervision. This included dialogue regarding the integration of new understandings of supervision with current systems and expectations. The framework was initially shared with the staff as a whole and then, from this group, thirty members selected to attend a three-day preparation course. The framework provided a means to organise the course and to consider the knowledge and practices associated with supervision. The participants of the course considered supervision within their professional community at both the practice level and the systems level. A planning day was also held with the management team and representatives from the training course to discuss the practice of supervision in their community.

Consultation at Policy Level
The MoE:SE national supervision project committee considered the alternative conceptualisation of supervision when developing a policy on supervision in their organisation. Recognition of the full range of supervisory activity and the provision of opportunities to meet the goals of supervision in ways that respond to members'

individual contexts required a climate that would allow new understandings to inform practice. It was not my intention, or that of any committee members, to impose the alternative conceptualisation of supervision as it would presumably conflict with some members' valued assumptions about supervision. Rethinking supervision will require extended exposure to the ideas presented here in order to perceive or experience advantages with these ways of working. The present research already has had an immediate impact on the views and understandings of supervision within the special education service community. This is evident in the following section from the draft policy on supervision.

> Communities of Practice are groups of people from one or more occupational groups with shared interests or passion, who join together to collectively further their knowledge, skills and networks in relation to those interests (Wenger, 2002). Accordingly, GSE staff undertake a variety of activities to promote the overarching supervisory goals of professional development, personal and professional support and promotion of accountability. Some of these activities include: formal supervision, informal supervision, teaming and co-working, peer review of practice, attending professional gatherings and reading professional literature (Annan, 2003). (Ministry of Education: Special Education, Framework for Supervision in Special Education, Draft consultation document, June 2005, p. 4)

Ecological research implies a collaborative approach to every aspect of the process, including the implementation of plans generated by research. Collaborative consultation, as illustrated above, allows people to make choices regarding the usefulness of new knowledge. Knowledge from research informs the process of change rather than imposing change. The active involvement of the researcher also involves dissemination of new knowledge to a broader audience. Invitations to speak at conferences throughout New Zealand have provided me with additional opportunities for dialogue with people who are directly involved in supervision and

who have helped to shape and further refine the written report that documents the research.

Application of the framework for evaluation of and preparation for supervision.
The utility of the community of practice framework for examining supervision systems has recently been demonstrated in recent projects. Two educational psychologists applied the community of practice framework to the evaluation of supervision systems in their workplaces, both resulting in contextualised descriptions of the broad supervision practice of these communities (Dean, 2005; Silverwood, 2005). Other psychologists have developed, for their colleagues, professional development workshops, based on the community of practice framework for supervision. Within these workshops, the psychologists have included opportunities for individuals to examine, using the *connection grid,* their particular supervision contexts (Borland, 2005; Kirby, 2005).

9.3. Boundaries of the Research

Representation of the Educational Psychologist Community
The finding that supervision is a practice that is integrated with community of practice activity is specific to the particular community who contributed information to this study. As all participants in this study worked within the Ministry of Education system, it might be that practices reported would be constrained by understandings of the required ways of working and participation in supervision within that system. For example, the proportion of psychologists in the participant group who undertook formal supervision may have been over-represented as many employees of MoE: SE had been directed by the organisation to take part in supervision. It may be, for example, that psychologists who were not participating in formal supervision might have been reluctant to volunteer, concerned they might jeopardise their professional safety.

Communities outside Educational Psychology

The findings of this study must be treated as specific to the context of the participant group. The practices reported would necessarily have included knowledge particular to that community and to similar communities, e.g. large government agencies. While the national sampling allows the results to be generalised to the wider MoE:SE psychology community with some confidence, the framework does not necessarily represent the actions of psychologists working in other settings or in other countries. The extent to which the findings of the study are applicable to other situations will depend on the degree of similarity between the settings in question and the settings of the research.

While there is no researched link between the findings of the present study and the functioning of other communities, there is, however, a theoretical connection. The domain of any community of practice contains the knowledge of the community. This knowledge, giving rise to principles of practice, guides the construction of methods and strategies applied by community members. The actual practice of any community is, therefore, largely shaped by the knowledge held in its particular domain. Systems of supervision in any community, constructed by the members themselves, will reflect the theoretical perspective of community members (See Argyris & Schön, 1974; Wenger et al, 2002)

The nature of the knowledge held in the educational psychology domain is particularly suited to the practice of supervision. Educational psychologists are primarily concerned with learning, behaviour and social support, and are accustomed to working within the confines of complex codes of ethical practice. Other communities may focus on different aspects of people's experience and may not have considered theories of human development and the ways people make sense of social situations to the same extent as educational psychologists.

9.4. Limitations of the Research

Although every effort was made to minimise the threats to the validity of this study, some constraints inevitably limited the extent to which the research findings were valid and applicable for the wider professional group of educational psychologists. Some of these limitations related to factors associated with the particular context of study. Others reflected the need to confine the scope of the study to delineate its parameters and to render it manageable and meaningful.

Participant Research

I held a degree of 'participant' status due to my past experience working within sectors of the community of practice involved in the study. This position was largely helpful with regard to accessing information and interpreting information collected (See chapter 3). However, any measure of participant status has the potential to pose constraints on the validity of the research being undertaken. It was, therefore, important that I identified my biases, values and personal interest in relation to supervision. With regard to the collection of data from educational psychologists, this was not a difficult task. The multiple contributions of others to the project served to represent many views and participants took opportunities to contribute their own information and to verify this through their personal editing of the data.

Range of Aspects Considered

Although many aspects of supervision might have been investigated, this study was concerned with the development of an alternative conceptualisation of supervision in action. It did not consider the effectiveness of supervision or produce a ready-made package for supervision systems. What it did create was a framework for educational psychologists working in MoE:SE. This framework is based on ecological theory that can be used in the evaluation and development of their own particular supervisory systems and methods.

Proportions of Community Members Participating

The multi-phased nature of this study, and the extensive involvement of individual participants at each stage, limited the number of participants who could contribute. This may have influenced the extent to which the views of the participant group represented the views of educational psychologists at large. However, the group represented approximately a third of the total community and the framework was reviewed by a psychologist reference group.

Parameters of Participant Selection
Participants were salaried psychologists who worked in educational settings where other psychologists were also employed. The psychologists worked in multidisciplinary servicing teams rather than in professionally isolated settings such as private practice. No assumption was made, in this research, that the findings of the study could be generalised to those who work under different conditions.

9.5. Future Research

This research has indicated some directions for future research in professional supervision. These include factors that influence psychologists' selection of supervision activities, investigation of the applicability of the framework for other communities of practice and identification of ways to enhance supervision within the community of practice.

Factors that Influence Psychologists' Selection of Supervision Activities
The findings of this study indicated that certain contextual factors determined the nature of supervision activity for individuals within the community of practice. Contextual factors mentioned by participants included: (1) the location and population of their workplaces; (2) the extent of experience as a practitioner; and, (3) personal interaction styles. Although these factors were noted, the information was used to generate propositions rather than draw any conclusions about contextual determinants. The sampling was designed to gather in-depth information for the purpose of

developing an understanding of supervision practices and ways of working. In order to arrive at specific explanations for psychologists' selection of supervision activities, or to establish relationships between contextual variables and supervision activity, the research would involve a different approach than that applied in the present study. Such a study would require a larger sample of educational psychologists and the assessment of the existence and strength of contextual factors.

As a follow-up to the present research it is intended to examine the contextual factors that are associated with different forms of supervision. This future research, currently being negotiated, will involve collecting responses from psychologists and other education consultants about the specific ways they act to meet each of the three supervision goals. These data will be analysed in relation to information about the factors that the participants in the present study identified as influencing their selection of supervision arrangements.

Representativeness of the Framework for Similar Professional Groups
The extent to which the framework holds for similar and dissimilar communities could form the focus of a worthwhile research project. Such a study could be conducted in a homogenous community or interdisciplinary context. For example, the broader organisational community of the present study included people who represented a number of disciplines but who were united by their concern for the education and welfare of students with special needs, their families and their educational institutions. The supervisory relationships between people from different sub-communities within the broad community would be of particular interest as many reported difficulties with formal supervision have stemmed from the perceived imposition of supervision arrangements that involve potential mismatches of domain knowledge (Harvey & Struzziero, 2000; Hosp & Reschly, 2002; Nolan, 1999).

A Guide for Examining Supervision within the Community of Practice
Future work could be directed at the development of a practical guide for the review of supervision systems and of the supervision arrangements of individuals in relation

to the context of their work. Such a tool would be linked to the three dimensions of the community of practice framework for supervision; community, domain and practice. It would support community members to highlight areas of strength and also to indicate aspects of community operation that may require modification in order to support members to satisfactorily meet supervision requirements.

Cultivating Supportive Communities of Practice
In the future, it will be important to consider how supervision can be enhanced within communities of practice and to operationalise supervision in a way that allows individual members to develop plans that incorporate the variety of events and activities that make up supervision. Such research might identify aspects of community of practice infrastructure that contribute to quality supervision for and by community members. Continued research into ways to grow and improve communities of practice as a whole can potentially support the development of supervision as a community activity as supervision and community of practice operation are so entwined. Correspondingly, enhancing supervision practice for community members has the potential to further the development of the community of practice.

9.6. Conclusion

This research has applied a situational analysis research method to the study of supervision practices and development of an alternative conceptualisation of supervision. The participants in the study described a broad range of activities they undertook in order to meet the goals of supervision. They described supervision, not as a dyadic or formally arranged activity, but as a practice situated within the everyday functioning of the community of practice of the educational psychology group. Supervision involved the development and maintenance of multiple relationships with community members. These relationships reflected the commonality that bound them to the community and the diversity that allowed them

to access and create new knowledge. Supervision included a range of activities, some of them intentional and others spontaneous, integrated with professional practice. All of these interactions were valued for their ability to provide access to the explicit and implicit knowledge of the professional community of practice. Some members explained that, in addition to accessing knowledge from the members in their own diverse community, they sought further knowledge from other professional communities.

The situational analysis examined the reports of the participants of the present study, information from the broader professional community, and previous reports of the theory and practice of this particular community. Together, this analysis of key dimensions provided the basis for the construction of the *community of practice* framework for supervision. The investigation was substantively ecological in form, finding that the theoretical bases of the actions currently taken by the educational psychologists to meet their supervisory goals were closely aligned with the approaches that this community reported it took to professional practice. Supervision, in action, for this community of educational psychologists, was a multi-relationship, situated activity that reflected their ecological orientation to practice.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Invitation to participants

Copy of email sent to participants by Lewis Rivers on 25 September 2002.

Jean Annan from Massey University is carrying out a doctoral research project in Professional Supervision in Educational Psychology. She has written to me asking if some educational psychologists from GSE could participate.

The study involves the creation of a new framework of professional supervision based on contemporary views about professional practice advanced by the educational psychology community. The framework for supervision will also be informed by psychologists' reports of the actions they take to meet the goals of supervision.

Several recent studies have reported low rates of participation and minimal satisfaction with professional supervision in educational psychology (see attached document). The aim of the study is to increase levels of satisfaction and participation through the development of a supervision framework that is consistent with the current professional views of the profession.

At this stage of the study, Jean wants to talk with practicing educational psychologists about the ways they meet the goal of supervision. Some GSE psychologists will be contacted to ask if they wish to participate. Participation will be entirely voluntary.

Participants for the current research phase will be asked to take part in an interview of up to half an hour, either face-to-face or via telephone. Topics of conversation will be sent to participants prior to the interview but there will be no requirement to prepare anything in writing. Although the study has further phases, participants for this part of the study will have no obligation to take part in subsequent sections.

An information sheet is attached.

If you do not want to be contacted by the researcher to request participation, please indicate this on a return email to Lewis Rivers lewis.rivers@minedu.govt.nz

Appendix B

Approval letter from Massey University Human Ethics Committee
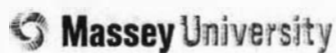
Massey University

Office of the Principal
Massey University
Albany Campus
Private Bag 102 904,
North Shore MSC.
Auckland,
New Zealand
Principal: 64 9 443 9799 ext 9517
Campus Registrar: 64 9 443 9799
ext 9516
Facsimile: 64 9 414 0814

19 April 2002

Jean Annan
C/o Associate-Professor K Ryba
College of Education
Massey University
Albany

Dear Jean

HUMAN ETHICS APPROVAL APPLICATION – MUAHEC 01/004
"Professional Supervision in Educational Psychology "

Thank you for your application. It has been fully considered, and approved by the Massey
University, Albany Campus, Human Ethics Committee.

If you make any significant departure from the Application as approved then you should return
this project to the Human Ethics Committee, Albany Campus, for further consideration and
approval.

Yours sincerely

Associate-Professor Kerry Chamberlain
Chairperson,
Human Ethics Committee
Albany Campus

CC Associate-Professor K Ryba
College of Education

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa
Inception to Infinity: Massey University's commitment to learning as a life-long journey

265

Appendix C

Consent form for participants (Dimension 3)

Massey University

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN

RESEARCH PROJECT: PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION IN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY (DATA COLLECTION PHASE)

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study before information is analysed and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission.
(*The information will be used only for this research and publications arising from this research project*).

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signed: ....

Name: ....

Date: ....

Contact:
Researcher: Jean Annan – 09- 443 7900 ext 9814 or j.annan@massey.ac.nz
Department of Learning and Teaching
College of Education
Albany Campus
Massey University

Supervisors:
Associate Professor Ken Ryba – 09- 443 9700 ext 9606
Associate Professor Pat Nolan – 06 – 356 9099 ext 8264

Appendix D
Consent form for review participants

⚙ Massey University

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN

PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION IN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
Consultation Phase

I have read the Information Sheet for Phase 5 and 6 (consultation phase) and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study before information is analysed and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission.
(*The information will be used only for this research and publications arising from this research project*).

I agree to participate in Phase 5/ Phase 5 and 6 **of this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet** (*Please circle phase for which consent is given*).

Signed: ....

Name: ....

Date: ....

Contact:
Researcher: Jean Annan – 09- 414 0800 ext 9814 or j.annan@massey.ac.nz
Department of Learning and Teaching
College of Education
Albany Campus
Massey University

Supervisors:
Associate Professor Ken Ryba – 09- 443 9700 ext 9606
Associate Professor Pat Nolan – 06 – 356 9099 ext 8264

Appendix E

Information sheet for participants (Dimension 3)

⟲ Massey University

04 December 2001

PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION IN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

RESEARCH PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

(Data Collection Phase - 2)

Researcher: Jean Annan
Supervisors: Associate Professor Ken Ryba and Associate Professor Pat Nolan

You are invited to participate in a study of professional supervision in educational psychology. Please read the following information carefully before making your choice regarding participation. Your consent to participate must be given on the attached consent form prior to data collection.

Purpose of the Research

The research project is intended to firstly investigate educational psychologists' ways of working and the methods used to meet the goals of supervision and, secondly, to develop and field-test a model of supervision within communities of educational psychologists. This project will contribute to the researcher's PhD study.

Background to the Project

The emphasis placed on professional supervision for psychologists by researchers (Allen et al, 2000; Crespi & Fischetti, 1997; Nastasi, 2000; Scott et al, 2000), and locally by the New Zealand Psychological Society and the Psychologists Registration Board suggests that the goals of supervision relate to essential requirements for acceptable performance in the community.

However, while the profession of educational psychology maintains its high regard for the practice of supervision, practitioner reports from the field suggest that rates of participation in supervision are low and that, when supervision is being undertaken, this is not being experienced as satisfactory by participants. Fischetti and Crespi (1999) found that although 91% of school psychologists surveyed in the USA reported they desired supervision, only 10% actually participated or were recipients of supervision. Similarly, Chafoulas et al (2000) found that 5% of 500 respondents reported receiving formal supervision, 54% considered they received informal supervision, and 35% had no available supervision. In New Zealand, psychologists who were asked about the ways in which their fieldwork was supported, made frequent mention of the importance of supervision but also noted difficulties associated with access and participation (Ryba et al, 2001).

Anecdotal reports from practicing educational psychologists indicate that some of these practitioners attempt to meet the goals of supervision through alternative means in the context of their work.

These incidental methods challenge the traditional formal dyadic supervision methods that have been guided by models developed from largely client-centred therapies from the fields of counselling and social work. While information from these closely related helping professions might have made contributions, some approaches are incongruent with current field practice in educational psychology. Educational psychologists no longer work in person-centred ways that locate issues of concern within individuals but work collaboratively with people in their everyday environments to address issues occurring in the interaction between individuals and the many levels of their surrounding ecology (Cooper, 1998; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000).

This study will result in a re-conceptualisation of supervision in educational psychology. A databased model of supervisory practice that is conceptually aligned with the current field practice of educational psychologists will be created and examined in relation to its effectiveness in the field. Such a model is expected to provide educational psychologists with a viable alternative to both the traditional models of supervision that have been created to meet the supervisory needs of other helping professions and the covert activities currently reported to be undertaken.

Project Steps

The project will be carried out in progressive sections. Educational Psychologists will be asked to participate in sections 2, 5 and 6.

1. Documentation of Current Practices in Educational Psychology
2. Examination of the Ways Educational Psychologists meet the goals of supervision
3. Identification of Principles of Practice
4. Preliminary Development of a Model of Supervision
5. Consultation with Field Psychologists regarding the Proposed Model
6. Field testing of the Revised Model

Participant Rights

Participants contacted by the researcher are hereby made aware of the following rights:
- To decline to participate;
- To refuse to answer any particular questions;
- To withdraw from the study before data analysis is completed;
- To ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- To provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- To be given access to a summary of the findings of the study when it is concluded.

Names of psychologists who will be asked to participate have been obtained from the National Office of Group Special Education of the Ministry of Education. The request to participate in this study will be made directly by the researcher. There is no obligation to participate in this study.

Tasks for Participants

Participants will be asked to participate in a one hour interview. Two weeks before the interview, the participants will be sent information about the aspects of practice that will be discussed in interviews. The topics and questions sent to participants are intended to provide the opportunity to consider the issues prior to the interview. No written statements of practice will be required although participants will be welcome to make notes for their own use. The researcher will record information provided by the participant who will be asked to verify this information at the conclusion of the interview.

Appointments for interviews will be made by arrangement with the researcher. Where possible, interviews will be made in a face-to-face situation. However, where this is not possible, telephone interviews may be conducted.

Anonymity and Storage of Data

All information will be kept confidential and no person will be identified in the report of this project unless express permission has been obtained. Information recorded during the project will be kept in locked storage for a period of 5 years following completion of the research and then destroyed.

Use of Information

The information collected will be used to develop and evaluate a model of supervision. It will not be used for any other purpose.

A report of findings from each section of the project will be available to participants contributing directly to the section. The completed report will be available to all participants on completion of the project.

Contact

The researcher can be contacted at:
Albany Campus of Massey University on 09-443 9700 ext 9814 or email j.annan@massey.ac.nz or

Educational Psychology Training Programme
Department of Learning and Teaching
College of Education
Albany Campus
Massey University
Private Bag 102 904
Auckland

Supervisors can be contacted as follows:
Associate Professor Ken Ryba: k.a.ryba@massey.ac.nz or 09-443 9700 ext 9606
Associate Professor Pat Nolan: p.nolan@massey.ac.nz or 06 – 356 9099 ext 8264

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Regional Human Ethics Committee, Albany Campus, Protocol MUAHEC 02/004. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate-Professor Kerry Chamberlain, Chair, Massey University Regional Human Ethics Committee, Albany, telephone 09 443 9799, email K.Chamberlain@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix F

Information sheet for review participants

Massey University

10 August 2003

RESEARCH PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET
(For Phases 5 an 6)

Project: Professional Supervision in Educational Psychology

Researcher: Jean Annan

Supervisors: Associate Professor Ken Ryba
                Associate Professor Pat Nolan

You are invited to participate in **Phases 5 and 6** of a 6-stage study of professional supervision in educational psychology. Please read the following information sheet carefully before making your choice regarding participation. Your consent to participate must be given on the attached consent form prior to data collection. The consent form can be completed electronically and emailed to j.annan@massey.ac.nz or returned to the researcher by post. If sending by email, please ensure that the form is sent from your own email address.

Purpose of the Research

The aim of the research project is to develop a framework for supervision within communities of psychologists working in educational settings. This project will contribute to the researcher's PhD study.

Background to the Project

The emphasis placed on professional supervision for psychologists by researchers (Allen et al, 2000; Crespi & Fischetti, 1997; Nastasi, 2000; Scott et al, 2000), and locally by the New Zealand Psychological Society and the Psychologists Registration Board suggests that personal professional support, professional development and accountability, or in other words, the goals of supervision, are essential requirements for acceptable professional performance.

However, while the profession of educational psychology maintains its high regard for the practice of supervision, practitioner reports from the field suggest that rates of participation in supervision are low and that, when supervision is being undertaken, this is not being

experienced as satisfactory by participants. Fischetti and Crespi (1999) found that although 91% of school psychologists surveyed in the USA reported they desired supervision, only 10% actually participated or were recipients of supervision. Similarly, Chafoulas et al (2000) found that 5% of 500 respondents reported receiving formal supervision, 54% considered they received informal supervision, and 35% had no available supervision. In New Zealand, psychologists who were asked about the ways in which their fieldwork was supported, made frequent mention of the importance of supervision but also noted difficulties associated with access and participation (Ryba et al, 2001).

Anecdotal reports from practicing educational psychologists indicate that some of these practitioners pursue the goals of supervision through alternative means in the context of their work. These incidental methods challenge the traditional formal dyadic supervision methods that have been guided by models developed largely from early client-centred therapies from the fields of counselling and social work. While information from these closely related helping professions might have made contributions, some approaches are incongruent with current field practice in educational psychology. Educational psychologists no longer work in person-centred ways that locate issues of concern within individuals but work collaboratively with people in their everyday environments to address issues occurring in the interaction between individuals and the many levels of their surrounding ecology (Cooper, 1998; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000).

This project involves the re-conceptualisation of supervision in educational psychology. A supervision framework, theoretically aligned with the current field practice of psychologists working in educational settings, has been developed and is to be examined by the profession in relation to its use in the field. The integrated supervision framework is expected to provide educational psychologists with a viable alternative to traditional models of supervision and will accommodate the activities psychologists currently report they undertake in pursuit of the goals of supervision.

Project Steps

The project will be carried out in 6 phases, the first 4 of which have now been completed.

1. Documentation of current practices in educational psychology
2. Examination of the ways educational psychologists pursue the goals of supervision
3. Identification of principles of practice
4. Preliminary development of a framework for supervision
5. Consultation with field psychologists regarding the proposed framework.
6. Development of a means to demonstrate participation in supervision within the proposed framework.

Participant Rights

Participants contacted by the researcher are hereby made aware of the following rights:
- To decline to participate;
- To refuse to answer any particular questions;
- To withdraw from the study before data analysis is completed;
- To ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;

- To provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- To be given access to a summary of the findings of the study when it is concluded.

Tasks for Participants

Participants who volunteer to participate in the study will be registered psychologists working in one geographical area of Group Special Education of the Ministry of Education. The researcher recognises that the psychologist community is not formally structured and that day-to-day work is carried out in interdisciplinary practice teams. To make the study manageable, the participant group has been confined to the supervisory actions taken by psychologists working in educational settings.

The current section of the study will be carried out in two phases. Firstly, psychologists will be asked to attend a seminar, held at the Hamilton Office of GSE, to discuss the proposed supervision framework. Secondly, a reference group of psychologists will be asked to review any modifications made to the framework, and to work with the researcher to develop a means for psychologists to demonstrate their integrated supervisory practice.

Phase 5 – Review of a Framework for Integrated Supervision.

Two Hour Seminar/Workshop – 5 (a)

Participants will be asked to meet with the researcher to participate in a seminar/workshop in which the results of Phase 2 of this research project will be presented. Phase 2 investigated the activities undertaken by GSE psychologists to pursue the supervision goals of professional and personal support, professional development and maintenance of standards. The seminar will also introduce a conceptualisation of supervision as a practice operating within an integrated professional community. Seminar participants will be invited to make comment on the framework for supervision discussed.

Review and modification of the proposed supervision system 5 (b)

A reference group of registered psychologists will be asked to meet with the researcher to review modifications made to the proposed supervision framework. Discussion of the following phase of the study will begin at this meeting.

Phase 6 – Development of a means of demonstrating individual participation in supervision within a community of practice. (6)

The reference group (those who met to review changes) will consider ways that individual psychologists might demonstrate their participation in supervision practice within a community of practice. This aspect of the framework is essential as The New Zealand Psychological Society Code of Ethics (2002) states that supervision arrangements must be made explicit.

This phase of the project will be run continuously with phase 5(b). The reference group will be asked to trial the instrument developed and to make comment regarding changes required.

Anonymity and Storage of Data

No person will be identified in the report of this project unless express permission has been obtained. Information recorded during the project will be kept in locked storage for a period of 5 years following completion of the research and then destroyed.

Use of Information

The information collected in this study will be used for the purposes of the current research only.

A report of findings from each section of the project will be available to participants contributing directly to the section. The completed report will be available to all participants on completion of the project.

References

Allen, J., Ostrom, J., Maples, K.A. & Morrison, J. Q. (2000). *Peer supervision in consultation practicum training: A proposed model.* Paper presented at poster session at the Annual Convention of the National Association of School Psychologists. New Orleans, USA.

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The New Zealand Psychological Society (2002). *Code of ethics for psychologists working in Aotearoa/ New Zealand.* Wellington: New Zealand Psychological Society.

Contact

The researcher can be contacted at:
Albany Campus of Massey University on 09-414 0800 ext 9814 or email j.annan@massey.ac.nz or

Educational Psychology Training Programme
Department of Learning and Teaching
College of Education
Albany Campus
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Private Bag 102 904
Auckland

Supervisors can be contacted as follows:
Associate Professor Ken Ryba: k.a.ryba@massey.ac.nz or 09-443 9700 ext 9606
Associate Professor Pat Nolan: p.nolan@massey.ac.nz or 06 – 356 9099 ext 8264

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Regional Human Ethics Committee, Albany Campus, Protocol MUAHEC 02/004. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate-Professor Kerry Chamberlain, Chair, Massey University Regional Human Ethics Committee, Albany, telephone 09 443 9799, email K.Chamberlain@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix G

Letter of acknowledgement for participants (Dimension 3)

Massey University
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
Te Kupenga o Te Mātauranga

30 July 2003

Dear

Please find enclosed a copy of the report from phase 2 of the research project "Professional Supervision in Educational Psychology".

Thank you for participating in this study. I was most appreciative of the thought that you put into your contributions to the study and the efforts you all made to rearrange busy schedules to make way for interviews. The results obtained have been useful in guiding the development of a community of practice system of supervision that incorporates the various methods described in your discussions.

The last stages of the research project, refinement of the supervision system and development of a means of demonstrating participation in supervision are soon to begin.

Thank you again for your valuable contribution. Please contact me if you wish to discuss the content of the enclosed report.

Yours sincerely

Jean Annan

Appendix H

Letter of acknowledgement for review participants

Massey University
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
Te Kupenga o Te Mātauranga

17 May 2004

xxx
Psychologist

Dear xxx

Thank you for taking part in the review of the community of practice framework for supervision for psychologists working in education. I am appreciative of the enormous efforts made by reference group members who provided such detailed and focused responses with regard to the applicability of the framework. This information has proved very useful in refining the framework and identifying some areas that need to be addressed to enhance supervision within a community of practice.

Please find attached a summary of the collated responses from the group. You will note that all of the data provided by reference group members has been pooled to include the contributions of each member. Comments made by individual reference group members are represented as the views of the collective group. This inclusive method ensured that each member's contributions, regardless of whether opinions were shared or diverse, were incorporated into the group view and that members were not identified.

Once again, thank you for your participation and for providing such valuable insight into aspects of the framework that must be considered in relation to supervision practice.

Regards

Jean Annan

Appendix I

Summary of reference group responses

Massey University
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
Te Kupenga o Te Mātauranga

Professional Supervision in Educational Psychology

Summary of Reference Group Responses

In October and November 2003, five psychologists from the Ministry of Education: Special Education (XXXX) reviewed the community of practice framework for supervision. This framework has been developed by the researcher in response to analysis of supervisory actions taken by a community of psychologists of which the reference group members were part. The review involved attendance at presentations of the framework, group discussion of its applicability and written reports by reference group members. Responses from reference group related to three aspects of supervision within a community of practice: (1) The structure of the framework for supervision, (2) the cultivation of the community of practice into which supervision is integrated, and (3) the development of a means to demonstrate that psychologists were participating in supervision activity.

Community of Practice Framework for Supervision

The responses to the framework did not indicate major changes to its structure. This is not a surprising outcome, as the explanatory theory had been developed upon information that psychologists had provided about their supervisory actions. The framework constituted a reflection of both the explicit activities of current supervision and the implicit systems that psychologists accessed to meet their supervision goals. In developing the framework, deliberate attempts were made to represent the *theories-in-action* of the psychologist community. The supervision framework may have differed from previous overt descriptions of supervision but would have been familiar to those with tacit community knowledge.

Members provided some constructive information regarding factors that might influence the legitimisation of supervision as a range of activities situated within the operation of a community of practice. They identified several elements of the framework that might serve to enhance the practice of supervision as well as some issues that that might usefully be addressed in the development of viable community supervision systems. The reference group considered that communities of practice supported supervision by:

- Catering for a range of individual preferences for supervision
- Offering a wide range of relationships and expertise
- Creating opportunities for members to interact with those who have similar perspectives on practice
- Providing access to specific knowledge that contributes to particular situations.
- Promoting the development of environments conducive to a culture of sharing.

- Accommodating a wide range of supervision activities.
- Acknowledging the value of some spontaneous supervisory mechanisms.
- Offering a range of both situated and remote supervision opportunities.
- Promoting accountability through high visibility of practice and transparent processes.

The reference group considered that supervision within the community of practice would be enhanced by the following.

- An explicit supervision system that operated within the community of practice.
- Clear understandings in relation to ethics, confidentiality, safety, and professional boundaries.
- Integration of supervision systems and other administrative systems.
- Shared and explicit understandings of the processes of contracting, or planning for supervision and accounting for supervision practice.
- Documentation systems that are not as cumbersome as to hinder participation in supervision or restrict the supportive value of incidental and informal interactions.
- Protection of the confidential status of informal interactions with peers.
- Emphasis on intentionality of supervision practices.

The Cultivation of a Community of Practice

Shared understandings

The reference group considered that those participating in a supervising community "need to have shared understandings of what supervision is and means for the community of practice". To aid sound decision-making, participants suggested that work teams have a clear focus and open processes. One participant said, "if people know each other, and know the process, they are more likely to have confidence in sharing their views openly as part of the process". Without shared understandings of the role of the various supervision activities with regard to accountability, reference group members suggested that some community members might view the acknowledgement of integrated supervision practice as threatening. Similarly, members who placed high value on their formal supervision may need assurance of its protection in the acknowledgement of supervision within the community of practice.

One participant recalled a time when she had become aware of the supervisory nature of her situated practice within regular community activity.

> "I was involved in very good professional dyadic supervision, but was unable to meet with my supervisor for a month. I remember saying to her that I didn't think it mattered too much because all of my decisions were going to be made within the context of collaborative teamwork."

However, the participant noted that such activity needed to be supplemented with opportunities to critically reflect on situations in ways that might not always happen unless intentionally arranged. This might be the case, the participant explained, when practitioners wished to stand back from field activity and review the assumptions on which the teams based their decision-making.

Accountability

Participants considered that the transparent processes involved in community of practice supervision assisted psychologists to make them accountable to the profession. The group did, however, draw attention to some issues that may potentially serve as barriers to the legitimisation of supervision as a practice situated within a community of practice. In particular, they noted difficulties associated with the documentation of activities.

The aspect of supervision practice within the community of practice that provoked the most debate was the legitimisation of informal supervision. While, in the main, the reference group considered that the various forms of supervision were complementary, there were concerns that the option of relying heavily on informal means for meeting the goals of supervision may permit unsafe practice to continue unnoticed. They considered that communities of practice may more readily promote *support* rather than the other two goals of supervision, *professional development* and *accountability*.

The reference group stressed the importance of intentionality in professional supervision and suggested that the 'practice' triangle be rearranged to emphasise this point (*See figure 1*). Intentionality is an important issue and one that, at this point in time, is not negotiable for psychologists. The psychologists' code of ethics, endorsed by the registration board, clearly states that supervision arrangements must be made explicit. It is essential, that psychologists develop ways of articulating their integrated supervision plans without compromising the benefits offered through spontaneous interaction.
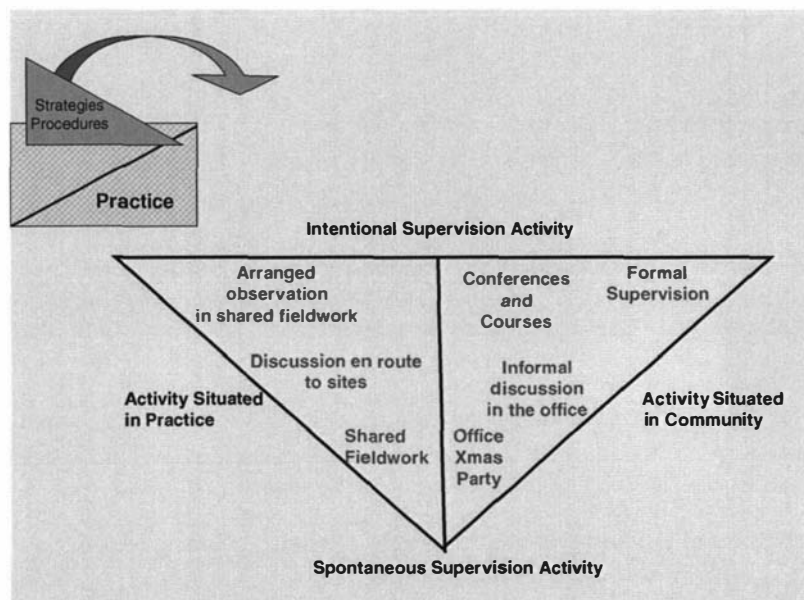

Figure 1. Supervisory activity undertaken within a community of practice (Revised)

Other issues that required consideration in the cultivation of community of practice supervision were confidentiality of client data, and problems arising from team members in different disciplines working to different ethical codes. Participants emphasised the importance of complementing participation in supervision through selection of the various forms and the need to ensure at least another member was familiar with each psychologist's total workload.

Demonstration of Participation

The reference group members put emphasis on the necessity to establish ways of ensuring accountability to the profession and to document supervision practice. The means for demonstrating and documenting supervision activity had to be specified in a supervision policy that was well understood by all members. This process might include the recognition of peer case review procedures as relevant to supervision, and involve open questioning to foster reflection on the fieldwork. Peer review might also usefully consider issues related to what has supported practice - what has been less helpful, and what matters have arisen during the fieldwork.

The specific nature of a psychologists' participation in supervision within the community of practice would need to be pre-determined, possibly in collaboration with peers. Participants suggested that where possible, a running record be kept of important spontaneous supervisory interactions. Running notes, kept in a supervision folder that also contained peer reviews and field observations, were considered most accessible. However, it would be difficult, and not advantageous, to document all spontaneous interactions. Such interactions frequently occur when psychologists are away from files and the means to take notes. In addition, over-documentation of informal interactions might erode the benefits of this activity. In practice, documentation would be unlikely to occur on every occasion.

Level of Satisfaction with Supervision

Satisfaction with supervision might be communicated through the peer review system. This system is already in place in the community and may be an avenue where practitioners can speak freely due to the anonymous nature of the collated data. The peer review was considered by some members as a suitable context to open up dialogue with people working in management positions.

Report by Jean Annan

Appendix J

PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION IN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
Structured Interview Topics and Prompt Questions for Stage 2

Note: The interviewer will ask participants to discuss the topics listed. In most cases prompts (listed below topics) will be used where necessary to guide and support the participants to identify the topic areas and to elaborate in discussion.

1.Current supervision arrangements

Do you participate in supervision?
What are the current arrangements?

2. History of supervision arrangements

Describe your supervisory experience during your professional career – as both a supervisor and supervisee.

3. Supervisory activities

What do you do in supervision sessions?
Frameworks, theoretical orientation
Structure of sessions
Content covered

What other professional activities do you consider are supervisory?

4. Support for everyday work (Supervision goal 1)

How do you address the following situations?
New situations
Conflict/dilemma/not straightforward

5. Supervisory relationships

With whom do you currently engage in supervision?
What has been the nature of the professional relationships between supervisory partners in your

supervisory experience?

6. Satisfaction with supervision

Do you consider your current supervision to be satisfactory? Yes / No
In what ways is it satisfactory/not satisfactory?

7. Purposes served by current supervision

What purposes do you consider supervision serves?

8. Professional development (Supervisory goal 2)

How do you continue your professional development?
What activities are undertaken in order to develop technical skills and knowledge?

9. How do you ensure that your work is proficient? (Supervisory goal 3)

Maintaining good practice
Maintaining ethical practice
Ensuring accountability

10. How do you know that other people's work is sound?

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