Perceptions Through a Prism:

Three accounts of 'good' social work supervision.

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Allyson Davys

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Abstract

This thesis explores the elements of 'good' social work supervision from the perspective of the participants of supervision, analyses a supervision session between one supervision dyad and considers this data against the theories and models presented in the literature.

A qualitative methodology was adopted using in-depth interviews and a focus group to identify the characteristics of good supervision from the perspective of the supervisee. A similar methodology was used to interview the supervisors of these supervisees. The supervisors were asked to discuss the supervision which they provided and the beliefs and theories which guided their practice. The reports of these two groups were supported by the analysis of a recorded supervision session between one of the supervision pairs.

The findings indicated four key elements to good supervision:- the qualities and attitudes brought by the supervisee, the qualities and the attributes brought by the supervisor, the element of choice within the relationship and the nature of the supervision relationship itself.

The role of choice was considered to be of particular significance to the success of supervision, promoting commitment and deepened responsibility from both supervisor and supervisee. It was also noted that all of the supervisors and four of the six supervisees had training in supervision and it is suggested that this training promotes the ability of both of the participants to produce 'good' supervision. Two recommendations are made: that social work managers consider ways to introduce choice of supervisor to all social workers and that supervision training is encouraged for all social workers

The relative merits and roles of internal and external supervision are discussed and, following suggestion from the data, a re-vision of supervision is proposed which moves social work supervision from a single relationship into a framework of different services and relationships.

Preface

This research stems from an abiding respect for social workers who, often in the face of difficult and unpromising situations, strive to make a difference. Unlike the craftsperson, the social worker does not have a range of tools to effect change, but rather uses the self. There is a dual responsibility, one to engage and create a working relationship with the client, the other to remain at a professional distance in order that decision making is clear and in the client's interest. As will be discussed in this research, the social worker's task (the parameters of which have become increasingly ambiguous) requires at times a delicacy of approach and at others a determination in the face of horrific events.

To make a true cut the carpenter considers the grain of the wood and positions the saw accordingly. The carpenter also knows that unless he or she has maintained the saw, kept it cleaned and sharp, the cut will be ragged and splintered. Social work practice requires similar maintenance. Whilst social workers use themselves, rather than a saw to effect change, just like the saw they can become blunt, damaged and rusty. Decision making processes may be clogged with the shavings of the last piece of work and interventions ineffective due to a lack of edge. Supervision, though not the panacea of all ills, is one form of maintenance available to social workers where the needs of the self can be addressed and the social worker resourced in order to survive the abrasion of the work.

As a social work practitioner, educator and supervisor, over the past twenty five and more years I have been curious about the relationship between social workers and supervision. Particularly in my role as an educator, it is more common to hear from supervisees of their dissatisfaction with supervision than to hear their praise. As a profession however social work maintains a belief in the importance of supervision and such is my own belief in the process that I spend much of my working week teaching supervision skills to supervisors. It is from this position that I came to this research framing the question "what is 'good' supervision"? This is a question which can be approached from several perspectives and as supervision is such a private relationship it seemed a good thing to approach it from a positive rather than a negative angle. It also

seemed important, since supervision like any partnership is a relationship, to include two voices in this research.

When thinking about supervision I wondered about the perspective of the supervisee. Why did one supervisee value supervision and another avoid it at any cost? Since dissatisfaction with supervision is most often expressed by the supervisee it seemed useful to start with their story. Supervision research has most often focused on students and as such the results need to be viewed with caution when extrapolating to social workers who receive supervision throughout their career. I was thus interested to hear what the experienced social work practitioner had to say about supervision as opposed to the novice. This brought developmental theory to mind and I wondered if social workers not only experience processes and procedures in different ways according to their level of development but also if their capacity to engage with and reflect upon these processes is dependent on experience and developmental level. To use an analogy with human development, just as the teenager may not be able to express and understand the conflicts experienced at adolescence until he or she is past that stage, is it possible that supervisees of a certain level of experience are also unable to fully experience and critique the supervision that they receive. In other words is it a necessary rite of passage that supervisees are, at some point in their career, unhappy with what they perceive as the constraints and the inadequacies of supervision? As is posed by one of the participants in this research "do we know what is best for us"?

This research gave me the opportunity to consider some of these questions and to pose some others. From it came a reassurance of the worth of supervision and that it does make a difference.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my appreciation to those students and supervisees who have prompted the questions which provoked this research and to all those who have supported, encouraged and inspired me throughout its progress from idea to completion. In particular I thank the six social workers who volunteered for this research and their supervisors who also agreed to participate. Mary Nash and Liz Beddoe I thank for

being 'good' supervisors who demonstrated understanding and patience. Finally I thank my family for their encouragement and support and for allowing me the space to write.

Most specifically I thank and dedicate this research to Owen Bracey who supervised me in my first position as a graduate social worker. Owen, whose own research is referred to in this study, was a man ahead of his time who understood and believed in the value of supervision. Owen also believed in the community of social work and the transfer of skills and knowledge through and between agencies. His encouragement of me to undertake new employment challenges long after I had left the agency where he worked demonstrated this interest and commitment. On hearing that I was engaged in this study he sent me his thesis as background reading. Sadly Owen died before the completion of this work. Owen set a standard as a practitioner and as a supervisor. At the time it was exacting. I would now say it was 'good'. Owen made a difference.

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Figures and Tables

Chapter one – Introduction

For 120 years social workers have grappled with the "complex social and political realities that have textured supervision" (Grauel, 2002). In the past decade new priorities and tensions have been created by social service restructuring where managerial influence and prerogatives have favoured administrative control over professional development and support. At the same time limited resources in all areas of social service and health care provision have created more acute and complex social problems. Social work, in this climate "where the need for good supervision is greater than ever before" (Brown & Bourne, 1996:7), has struggled to maintain its hold on the professional aspects of supervision. It is in this context that the current research sought to determine the shape and form of 'good' supervision for social workers in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Research Objective

The objective for this research is to "identify what social workers in Aotearoa/New Zealand experience as 'good' supervision and to consider this against the professional literature on supervision". This objective will be achieved by:

- an exploration of the experience of 'good' supervision from the perspective of the recipient, the supervisee, and an exploration and identification of the intent of the corresponding provider of supervision, the supervisor
- a description of the process of 'good' supervision through the analysis of an audio-taped record of a supervision session
- a comparison of the two accounts of supervision against the literature.

The research will consider how the supervision experienced by these practitioners at the 'coal face' reflects the tensions between managerial imperatives on the one hand and professional development and support on the other.

Thesis format

The thesis is organised in the following manner.

Chapter two provides an overview of the literature on professional and clinical supervision. Whilst this research is focussed on social work supervision, the literature reviewed includes material from a range of professions in recognition of the

contribution of all to the generic base of supervision knowledge. The chapter begins with a brief description of the historical development of social work supervision internationally and in Aotearoa/New Zealand. A discussion of the functions of supervision follows which leads to a consideration of the context of social work supervision at the turn of the twenty first century. Key themes of supervision are identified and discussed under separate headings. The literature reviewed creates a broad platform for social work supervision with defined boundaries which reflect organisational requirements, professional standards and client need. The individual qualities brought by each party are seen as significant to the negotiation of a useful working contract.

Chapter three considers the research in its socio-political context and in relation to previous studies. The research is defined within the qualitative paradigm and an account is given of the methods and processes used, including a rationale for these choices. The research design and details of the procedures for data collection and analysis are presented and potential, and actual, problems of the research are discussed with details of the action taken to either prevent, or to solve, the difficulty.

Chapter four identifies the theories and concepts brought to the study by the researcher which will shape and effect the choices made during the research. Four beliefs are identified as underpinning the research and are discussed in some detail in the chapter. The beliefs are:

- that learning and development is an on-going process for social workers and supervision is a specific context in which learning can take place
- that reflectivity is an effective learning process
- that to minimise the distortion of perceptual filters, reflection needs to occur in the context of an 'other'
- that the nature of the reflective learning process and the relationship within which it occurs change as a consequence of the supervisee's location on a continuum of professional development.

Chapter five is the first of three chapters which present data gathered from the research participants. This chapter describes the supervisees' experiences of 'good' supervision.

A broad profile of the supervisee group is provided and their responses are ordered into five categories which are discussed and supported by quotes from the participants. The categories are:

- the knowledge base and fields of practice brought to supervision by the supervisor
- the structure of the supervision session
- the processes within the supervision relationship
- the supervisee's role in supervision
- the process of choosing a supervisor.

Chapter six presents the data from the supervisors' group which is presented in a similar fashion to that of the supervisees. The supervisors were asked to discuss and describe their practice of supervision and the beliefs and ideas which supported it. Seven areas of response are identified here and discussed under the following headings: theories and beliefs, the supervision relationship, review, challenge and monitoring, internal and external supervision, the contribution of the supervisee, personal development and supervision and the supervisors' supervision.

Chapter seven is the third chapter of data presentation and describes a supervision session between two of the participants, a supervisor and a supervisee. This is a description of the process and structure of the session and provides material which is illustrative of the accounts of 'good' supervision provided by the separate groups. The overall process of the session is described, followed by an analysis of the supervisor interventions and the supervisee interactions.

Chapter eight is the final chapter of this research. In this chapter the research objectives and methods are reviewed. The research findings are summarised and four key elements of 'good' supervision are identified:

- the qualities and attributes of the supervisee
- the qualities and attributes of the supervisor
- the role of choice
- the nature of the supervision relationship.

The data and findings are considered in context and recommendations are made for social work supervision practice. On the basis of the research data a re-vision of social work supervision is proposed for consideration and as the basis of future research. Social workers' supervision needs, it is suggested, are best met through a variety of arrangements, both within and outside of their work organisations.

'Good' supervision is possible. This research has identified social workers who approach their work with a view to best practice. These social workers have a clear understanding of the role of supervision to assist this practice and have described how their expectations and requirements of supervision have been met. Social work supervision is seen, in this scenario, to be an active and interactive process where there is a true engagement between the parties, the supervisees and the supervisors, to do the business of supervision.

Chapter Two - Literature Review

> Supervision is a process in which one worker enables, guides and facilitates another worker(s) in meeting certain organisational, professional, and personal objectives. These objectives are competency, accountable practice, continuing professional development and education, and personal support (ANZASW, 1998).

Introduction

This chapter considers the literature as it describes the professional and theoretical development of social work supervision practice in the context of the social and economic climate of the past twenty years. A brief historical overview will identify the three most common functions of supervision and trace their relationship to current practice. The chapter will conclude with a description and discussion of the themes, identified in the literature on supervision as pertinent to 'good' supervision practice.

Historically associated with social work, the practice of supervision is relevant to all fields of human services (Rich, 1993) and while this current project addresses social work supervision, the literature reviewed will include contributions from the broad base of counselling, psychology, psychotherapy and nursing since each contribute generically to the knowledge base of supervision. The past ten years has seen a significant upsurge of interest in the area of supervision and the publication of a number of new books which have included amongst others: Feltham (1994), Pritchard (1995), Brown and Bourne (1996), Hughes and Pengelly (1997), O'Donoghue (1998), Bond and Holland (1998), Carroll and Holloway (1999), Barnes (2000), Scaife (2001), McMahon and Patton (2002) and the publication of new editions of other seminal texts: Kadushin (1992), Munson (1993), Hawkins and Shohet (2000) and Morrison (2001).

The research question under consideration here concerns an analysis of 'good' supervision, and this in itself begs the question, is supervision 'good'? There is little agreement as to what constitutes 'good' supervision and indeed Rich (1993) asserts that supervision is not accompanied by any "single definition or theory...by which to describe its meaning, methods, or purpose" nor is there any "coherent and succinct body of knowledge"(Rich, 1993). Similarly there has been little evaluative research into

effectiveness of supervision (Borders, 1989; Rich, 1993). Much of the research which has been carried out has concerned student supervision, where the distinction between training and supervision has not always been made and where self report may reflect vested interests (Bernard & Goodyear, 1998). A second problem with evaluating the effectiveness of supervision is the determination of appropriate evaluative criteria (Bernard & Goodyear, 1998). A selection of instruments designed for supervision research which has been presented by Bernard and Goodyear(1998), mostly involve some form of individual or parallel assessment by the supervisor and/or supervisee, while in the area of nursing it has been suggested that sickness rate, staff satisfaction and patient complaint be used as criteria to determine effectiveness. With regard to the latter however, it has been observed that it is not the effectiveness of supervision but "the organisational culture that ultimately wields influence over such variables" (Jones, 1997). In all, the evaluation of the effectiveness of supervision is perhaps summed up by Hawkins and Shohet (2000) who state that

> Supervision, like helping, is not a straight forward process and is even more complex than working with clients. There is no tangible product and very little evidence whereby we can rigorously assess its effectiveness...Moreover, there may be all sorts of pressures on either [the supervisor or supervisee] or both of them from the profession, organisation or society in which they both work (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000:5).

Despite this lack of evidence there exists throughout the literature an enduring "basic belief that supervision will positively affect professional practice" Rich (1993) as evidenced by the concluding remarks of Kadushin's (1992) text on supervision.

> Consequently, to improve agency effectiveness, greater time and attention need to be devoted to improving current supervisory practice. Many of the complaints about supervision are not the result of problems in supervision as such, but rather of the improper application of supervisory procedures (Kadushin, 1992:513).

A Brief History of Social Work Supervision Internationally

The beginnings of social work supervision are to be found in the early settlement movement and the Charity Organisation Society of the nineteenth century when groups of volunteers gathered around experienced leaders in order to learn. By 1898, following the urgings of Mary Richmond, a school of applied philanthropy was established in New York where teaching methods aimed to provide theory which could be applied to practice "with the help of experienced supervisors" (Westheimer, 1977). Supervision

however, as Westheimer (1977) notes, emphasised adherence to agency policy and the 'appropriate' distribution of resources to those deemed to be in need (Munson, 1993). Early supervision was thus concerned with control and focussed on beginning social workers. The process has been likened to an apprenticeship where the novice worker is placed alongside the 'master' practitioner to learn through observation and instruction (Beddoe, 1999; Munson, 1993). Dorothy Pettes (1967) however makes the interesting observation that "there was not a sufficiently developed craft for the craftsman to say to the apprentice, 'observe what I do and do likewise'" (Pettes, 1967). Indeed Pettes asserts that social work, as a profession, not only had an appropriate body of knowledge but also that the members contributed to that body of knowledge. Hence she concludes "from the earliest days, supervision in social work was seen as a mutual working together of supervisor and supervised" and furthermore "whilst its origins were administrative, it necessarily took on teaching and enabling functions very early" (Pettes, 1967:15).

At the turn of the nineteenth century social work practice had begun to move away from the assessment of the "deserving nature" of the poor and become more interested in assessing the effect of poverty both socially and in relation to health. It was a time when social work, looking to understand the broader picture, "enjoyed a natural connection with sociology" (Munson, 1993). The position of social work supervision is aptly reflected by Mary Richmond in 1917 who stated

> Good supervision must include this consideration of wider aspects...Every caseworker has noticed how a certain juxtaposition of facts often reappears in record after record, and...this recurring juxtaposition indicates a hidden relation of cause and effect (quoted in Munson, 1993:50).

The 1920's however, saw social work lose interest in assessment, and thus the relationship of social work to sociology was weakened Munson (1993). A central factor in this change of direction was the work of Sigmund Freud, whose ideas began to infiltrate practice, and by the 1930's social work was clearly shaped by models of psychosocial casework. Two phases of this model of practice have been identified (Beddoe, 1999) each with a different impact on supervision practice. The first, the 'practical psychosocial casework' model, persisted through the 1930s to the 1950's and maintained the apprentice/learning model of supervision. When speaking of this period Pettes (1967), while acknowledging that organisational structures required an

administrative focus, describes the ascendancy of the educative function driven by the impact of new Freudian and psycho-analytic theories on social work practice. The shift of social work education from agency to university also brought a new focus to the educative function (Tsui, 1997) with an emphasis on field instruction which aimed to develop skill through the integration of "knowledge, philosophy and technique" Munson (1993).

The 1960s and 1970s saw the domination of the 'scientific psychosocial casework' model, the second phase of practice as identified by Beddoe (1999), which brought significant change to the practice of supervision. This model of practice was "in essence, a psycho-social, dynamic interaction between two unequal participants, with the purpose of helping the client's social adjustment through emotional growth" (Gardiner, 1989:5). Through a process of 'concept leakage' (Gardiner, 1989) the assumptions of this approach, when translated into the supervision relationship, placed the supervisor in a position of authority and the supervisee (from student to expert practitioner) on a predestined road of development, the milestones of which were considered as fact, regardless of context or individual interpretation. Difficulties experienced by the supervisee were identified as personal pathology and requiring adjustment. This was an approach which "value(d) the knowledge of the teacher and the discipline, rather than the experience of the learner" (Gardiner, 1989:27)[1].

The traditional model of supervision has also been challenged from a feminist perspective by Chernesky (1986). Chernesky contends, amongst other things, that the basic hierarchical assumptions of traditional supervision create dependency, place the supervisee in a vulnerable position within a power relationship and fail to recognise the individual differences and development of supervisees. "Superior domination through hierarchical patterns of authority is not essential to the achievement of important goals but in fact is restrictive of the growth of the group and its members" Denhardt, R. & Perkins, J. (1976) quoted in (Chernesky, 1986:140).

[1] Concept leakage continues to have relevance in supervision where it is seen that "theoretical orientation towards therapy is related to a supervisor's manifest behaviour, roles and attitudes"(Scaife, 2001:191), and where theoretical models of practice (for example strengths based) are followed by similarly based models of supervision.

The feminist goal for supervision, "the emergence of autonomous, self directing, and self-regulating workers" (Chernesky, 1986) will not be achieved, she argues, by adjusting the existing structure but rather, by designing "alternative forms of organisational structure and patterns of leadership... that do not separate workers and managers and that create ongoing channels for horizontal communication and feedback" (Chernesky, 1986:144).

Supervision (beyond the role of administrative oversight) continued perhaps not surprisingly as the province of the new and uninitiated worker. Trained and experienced social workers resisted the idea of supervision considering it an insult and a suggestion of incompetence (Kane, 2001; Pettes, 1967; Scott & Farrow, 1993; Westheimer, 1977). Kadushin (1992) also attributes this resistance on the part of social workers, to their involvement in social action during the 1960's and 1970's where "sensitivity to the rights of all oppressed groups carried over to the supervisee as an oppressed group"(Kadushin, 1992:14). Mutuality and participation were emphasised over what was deemed to be supervisory control.

In 1977 the British social worker Ilse Westheimer commented that "the concept of staff supervision in its totality, embracing the management, teaching and enabling component, developed slowly in this country and its full application even now is rare" (Westheimer, 1977:15). This idea that supervision occupied a broader territory than the administrative and was of value to all practitioners regardless of experience and training had been voiced twenty five years earlier when in 1952 Lucille Austin stated that the

> mastery of professional practice in social work represents a continuous period of learning and doing. The supervision of students and staff members therefore differs only as the individual is at a different point in his learning, rather than consisting of the application of a different set of principles and techniques (quoted in (Westheimer, 1977:15).

An increased concern for accountability during the 1970's, reflected in task centred models of practice, was the forerunner to major ideological and political changes which affected social service provision during the 1980's and 1990's. The effect on supervision of this interest in accountability was the strengthening of the administrative function, but burnout, most simply described as "physical and emotional exhaustion resulting from occupational stress" (Kadushin, 1992), was also identified during this period and provoked a corresponding increase of support within the supervision process

(Kadushin, 1992). Whether this response was solely for the benefit of the supervisee or was a pragmatic response to address staff retention is unclear.

Thus far this brief history has shown the shifts in focus within the supervision process and the changing emphasis of the management, teaching and enabling components (Westheimer, 1977). These three components, or functions, continue to stand as the foundation of the development of current theory and practice of supervision.

The Development of Social Work Supervision in Aotearoa New Zealand

In Aotearoa New Zealand Maori tradition had its own established forms of welfare prior to the arrival of the European Pakeha, but the notions of charity brought by these immigrants were to dominate subsequent state welfare provision (Nash, 2001b). The subsequent history of social work practice "has been accompanied by an unresolved struggle between the state and the profession for hegemony over [its] definitions" (Nash, 2001b). That this struggle has been reflected in the understanding and practice of social work supervision is inevitable.

In Britain and America social work was early recognised as an occupation, social work education identified as a specialised professional field of learning and social work supervision regarded as a component of best practice (Robb, 1972). In Aotearoa New Zealand professional social work only emerged after world war two. As early as 1925 there were calls for professional training for social workers but it was not until 1950 that the first professional course, the Diploma in Social Science at Victoria University, was available to students (Nash, 2001a). Until this time social workers generally came to the work via other professions (in particular teaching and nursing) (Nash, 2001a) and social work was largely defined by employing bodies. This state of affairs led one commentator at a conference, held by the School of Social Science in 1950, to note that "the generic term 'social worker' meant little to those present" (Nash, 2001b).

The Diploma in Social Science, dominated professional social work training until 1972, but "seldom graduated more than twelve students a year" (Nash, 2001a). Preparation for social work practice therefore continued to be primarily based on apprenticeships, cadetships and short training courses which again favoured idiosyncratic agency-based

definitions of practice. The formation of the professional social work association, New Zealand Association of Social Workers (NZASW)[2] in 1964 and the amalgamation of the Child Welfare Division with the Department of Social Security in 1971, were two events significant to the emergence of social work as a profession (Nash, 2001b). The former led to an affiliation with the International Federation of Social Workers reinforcing links to international developments and standards in social work, whilst the latter created "the category of 'social worker' as a State Services Occupational Classification, thus confirming social work as a recognisable occupation" (Nash, 2001b).

It is not surprising that these beginnings created confusion about the role and practice of social work supervision. In 1966 the first social work supervision training course was held and in the same year the NZASW criteria for the award of the National Certificate specified the completion of supervised practice (Nash, 1998) thus formally recognising the link between demonstrated professional status and supervision.

Supervision however was not an established tradition. Two papers published in the New Zealand Social Worker in 1969 (Austin & Buxton, 1969; Rees, 1969) commented in particular on the educative role for the supervision of social work trainees and new staff. Both articles noted the need for supervisors to be good teachers and regretted that the supervision role frequently competed with the 'heavy administrative and casework loads' which were also carried by the social worker supervisors. In 1972 the publication of a monograph on supervision, compiled by the education and training committee of NZASW, produced a range of perspectives on supervision with a clear emphasis on supervision both as an administrative process and as an educative process primarily for new and beginning social workers. "In addition to being utilised in education for social work, [supervision] is provided for staff in social work agencies, who are either 'newly trained' or 'learning on the job'" (Mason, 1972:16). Mason (1972), who saw supervision as a process which evolved into consultation as the 'student' took responsibility for his or her own learning, drew the distinction between the new 'ego supportive' educative focus on supervision as opposed to previous 'regressive' therapeutic methods.

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[2] This name was altered to Aotearoa/New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) by formal motion at the Annual General Meeting 1999.

Robb (1972), in this same monograph, commented on the high proportion of social workers employed in the public service and the unfortunate correlation made in this hierarchical system between supervision and bureaucratic oversight, promotion and control. By contrast Manson (1972) noted the lack of trained social workers and the absence of supervision in voluntary agencies. The responsibility held by supervisors was perhaps summed up by one author who proposed that "the chief goal" of supervision was "the development of professionalism" (Heads, 1972).

A provocative article published in 1974 challenges this point. Here it is argued that "in New Zealand social work is not a profession, never has been a profession, and in all probability never will be a profession" (Jones, 1974:27)[3]. With regard to supervision Jones believed that the lack of formal training of social workers lead to a master-apprentice relationship, the dominant casework model of practice highlighted the 'helping component' in the supervision relationship whilst the location of social work within statutory agencies introduced a "strong" and "inevitable" administrative component. Jones continues

> All of this militates against professional status for the occupation. Supervision in social work is of indefinite duration, it involves a personal-diffuse relationship with one supervisor; and the administrative component is strong and frequently dominant. These are precisely the characteristics not found in supervision in the established professions (Jones, 1974:31).

Jones argues that the lack of shared formal training prior to entry into social work leads to supervision as a form of control of "a set of relationships and activities". Further the view that social work is not an evidence based science suggests that supervision becomes a "means of alleviating mutual anxieties" when social workers and supervisors have doubts "themselves about the integrity of the knowledge base of their occupation" (Jones, 1974:31).

The importance of prioritising supervisee needs over administrative matters is raised in two other papers published in the early 1970's by MacDonald (1973), writing in relation to the supervision of students in a medical setting and by Te Uira (1973), then employed

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3 Jones considers the alignment of social work against various criteria which characterise a profession and discusses whether, allied as it is with social action and critique, social work is indeed a profession. Most significantly however he questions the independence of a 'profession' where not only is the state the largest employer, but where the state also primarily determines the "standards of training recruitment and performance" (Jones, 1974).

as the District Welfare Officer for the Department of Maori and Island Affairs. Despite these views, in a paper titled 'A Conspiracy of Silence or Supervision in Social Work in New Zealand', Bracey (1978) questions the commitment of social work educators, employers, supervisors, practitioners and students to take responsibility for their professional education and practice. He records that 50% of an "intake of new social workers in their third month were dissatisfied with their agencies. A lack of supervision and support were the dominant plaints" (Bracey, 1978:12). Bracey questions "is it really 'pressure of work' or is this a convenient excuse?"

In a later dissertation Bracey (1981), writing in relation to the probation service, reflects on the lack of consensus as to what constituted supervision. "It is suspected that what is meant by the 'quality of supervision' would lead to as many confused and varying interpretations as the concept 'supervision' (Bracey, 1981:68). Bracey highlights the lack of professional training of new recruits at this time, their lack of identification with the social work profession and in this context the role of supervision to "help socialise employees to the agency" (Bracey, 1981).

Bracey also suggests that the tension between the definition of supervision from the agency's perspective and from a professional standpoint is further complicated by expediency.

> Since 1969 the Justice Department's policy of casework supervision has provided a useful rationale for creating senior positions and a career structure for a growing organisation...Practical expediency has been dominant in the implementation of the policy rather than either a social work ideology or an industrial model of staff supervision and control (Bracey, 1981:21).

The 1970's saw the introduction of a number of new social work courses throughout the country and with this came not only the reinforcement of supervision as an aspect of professional practice, but also the experience, for many practitioners, of providing student supervision. The upsurge in professional training was not uncontested however and critics questioned the cultural bias and the appropriateness of university based courses "for many practitioners desperately in need of training for whom university education was not a possibility" (Nash, 2001a).

The traditional dual pathway into social work thus continued but with more intense debate. The debate also spread to the question of membership of the professional body NZASW. Unlike Australia, for instance, where social work qualification provided the only entry to membership of the professional association (Nash, 1998), many Aotearoa New Zealand social workers continued to base their eligibility for membership of NZASW and their mandate for practice solely on their employment in the role.[4]

In the coming years of economic and social change (discussed later in this chapter), it could be argued that social work supervision in Aotearoa New Zealand, caught in this tension between social work as a professional or as an employment role, was particularly at risk of capture as a tool of administrative control.

Functions of supervision

Alfred Kadushin (1992), author of "the most comprehensive text on supervision"(Payne, 1994) identifies three functions of supervision, the administrative, the educative and the supportive. Morrison (1993) employs similar terms but substitutes managerial for administrative and includes the function of mediation. Essentially the administrative or managerial function of supervision addresses the accountability of the practitioner to the standards, philosophy, policies, ethics and service boundaries of the organisation. The educative function relates to the professional knowledge, skills, ethics and resources available to the supervisee or necessary for his or her continued development. The supportive function recognises the more personal relationship of the supervisee to his or her work and work context.

The fourth function, mediation, which Morrison identifies involves the negotiation of the encounter between organisational authority and professional identity. Davys (2000) has extended this to include not only the tensions between organisational authority and professional identity but also client need Beddoe (2000). Borland (1995) includes a 'communication' function which recognises the role of supervision to provide feedback to the organisation on policy and practice matters and in recognition of the role of

[4] With regard to NZASW membership however, as Nash comments, this was a pragmatic decision as there were insufficient graduates in this country to sustain a viable professional body (Nash, 1998).

assessment and appraisal, which are present in some supervision relationships, Sawdon and Sawdon (1995) include a fifth function 'assessment'. Chernesky (1986) also adds a fourth function, professionalisation, the goal of which is "to help the worker behave in accordance with professional norms as a matter of personal, public and professional conscience" (Chernesky, 1986). Interestingly Scott and Farrow (1993) identify a function of supervision which they fail to name but describe as the dimension "when practitioners reflect on their practice and struggle to understand and conceptualise the complexity of their practice, and in the process, generate new insights and ideas. It is when practice wisdom begins to crystallise into practice theory" (Scott & Farrow, 1993:41).

Payne (1994) identifies only two functions, the managerial and the professional. The professional function in this case is an amalgam of the educative and supportive functions described by Morrison and Kadushin. Rich (1993) appears to be discussing a similar division when he identifies two forms of supervision, the administrative and the clinical. In this scenario the clinical includes, what he terms, educational, support and counselling supervision.

Brashears (1995), who argues that the separation of supervision from social work practice is "a false dichotomy", points out that the educative and managerial functions of supervision operate from a referent point which is different to that of social work practice. Whilst social work is based on ideas of the interdependence of people, education and management focus "on hierarchical, competitive, power-based relationships in which there appears to be relative importance given to individual members, with some perceived as being more important than others" (Brashears, 1995:695).

Adapting Schwartz's (Schwartz & Zalba, 1971) mediation model of group work practice, Brashears suggests that social work staff can be considered as "a mutual aid group" whose purpose is to deliver "effective services to client" (Brashears, 1995). The social worker-supervisor's role is to 'mediate' the 'fit' between this mutual aid group (the supervisees) and the work place. This redefinition shifts the supervision

relationship from a hierarchical and competitive base to one which rests on co-operation. "Supervisors would collaborate with social work staff rather than direct and control them, an approach that fits better with social work practice and that is more comfortable for supervisor-social workers" (Brashears, 1995:697).

Hughes and Pengelly (1997) adopt a variation of the traditional functions. They suggest a triangulation of functions which include *managing the service delivery* (managerial/ administrative), *facilitating the practitioner's professional development* (educative) and finally *focusing on the practitioner's work.* The latter function focuses on "detailed exploration of individual pieces of work" (Hughes & Pengelly, 1997:42) and thus explicitly invites active critique and reflection. What is most significant about the Hughes and Pengelly triangle of functions however, and what separates it from the traditional models, is the omission of the supportive function.

Definitions of support

Within the literature, definitions of support fall into two categories, those which locate the supervisee as the passive recipient of the support and those which define support as an active process which engages the supervisee through an understanding of self to a broader understanding of the work situation. It is interesting to note that both Pettes and Westheimer, writing in the 1960's and 1970's respectively, do not identify a 'supportive function' per se but use the terms 'helping function' and 'enabling function' in a seemingly interchangeable fashion. Closer examination reveals that the supervisee is helped "to carry out his responsibilities and enabl[ed] to use the relationship with his supervisor to further his work" (Pettes, 1967). One can thus see that the antecedents of the current 'supportive function' firmly locate the supervisee as the passive recipient of attention.

Other definitions which reflect this passive role include: "to help the workers feel more at ease with themselves" (Kadushin, 1992), "to provide certain emotional supports for the worker" Bloom and Herman (1958) quoted in (Kadushin, 1992), and "provide a supportive environment that gives practitioners the opportunity to articulate and work through their anger, frustration [etc]" (Munson, 1993).

Hughes and Pengelly (1997) offer another view of support. They liberate the social work practitioner from being the passive recipient of support and return him or her into an active participant in a *supportive* (my italics) supervision process which in turn is keenly focused on the provision of a better service to clients. Support in the supervision context, Hughes and Pengelly assert, is a means not an end.

> If support is treated as an end of supervision, however, there is a danger of a collusive focus on the worker's needs for their own sake, rather than a focus on the worker to promote a better service (Hughes & Pengelly, 1997:48).

Supervision which allows supervisees to explore and discover themselves in the process of their work and validates the knowledge which comes from that exploration, shifts the paradigm from one of conformity and control, to one of reflexivity and critique. In these terms the supportive role within supervision can be described as assisting "the practitioner to accomplish conceptual and ethical objectivity while retaining commitments to his or her own viewpoint as *valid and applicable* (my italics)" (Kondrat, 1992:245).

Although the literature offers accounts of research where practitioners and supervisors have valued and rated support highly as a component of supervision (Kadushin, 1992; Munson, 1993; Worthington & Everett, 1984) there are few practitioner or supervisor definitions. One exception is Young (1994) who records research participants' examples of supportive supervision. The list however suggests a confusion of supervisor role and the supervision process including such items as checking out daily where they are at, helping them when busy, allowing flexible working hours and giving them a day off when they have been working hard (Young, 1994:28).

It is at the interface between support and supervision that discussion arises as to the boundary between supervision and therapy, an issue much debated in the literature on supervision (Burns & Holloway, 1989; Gardiner, 1989; Itzhaky & Itzhaky, 1996; Loughlin, 1992; Pepper, 1996; Rubinstein, 1992; Sumerel & Borders, 1996). Yegdich (1999) warns of what she describes as the current confusion between supervision and therapy in nursing.

> It may be inadequate simply to proclaim that supervision is not therapy, as ultimately, it is the techniques utilized, not the stated goals that determine the form of supervision, or therapy (Yegdich, 1999:1266).

Fox (1989), who describes the supervision relationship as therapeutic rather than therapy, identifies two significant differences between the two processes of therapy and supervision. The first difference concerns personal change, which is the central goal of therapy but occurs as "a by-product of the supervisory process" (Fox, 1989:51). The focus of supervision is on professional not personal identity. The second difference concerns standards of practice and performance criteria. "The supervisor, unlike the clinician, does not suspend critical judgement" (Fox, 1989:52) and supervision operates within the boundaries of performance expectations and standards established by professional and organisational bodies.

Thus far supervision is seen to lie within the territory bounded by organisational requirements, professional knowledge (ethics and standards) and client need. It is agreed that support is a central component of supervision though whether as a function of supervision or a condition of supervision is open to debate. There is also seen to be general agreement that Social Work supervision practice wrestles with the competing demands of these functions and that it is healthy that it does so (Brashears, 1995; Clare, 2001; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997; Morrison, 1993; Sawdon & Sawdon, 1995).

Context of social work supervision at the turn of the twenty first century.

The last decades of the twentieth century have seen significant changes to the provision and management of social services both internationally and in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Ideological changes in government policy have introduced private sector management to the public sector where requirements for measurable outputs, rationalised service, efficiency, effectiveness, performance management and quality assurance have created new priorities and tensions for social service managers (Beddoe and Randal, 1994; Boston, Martin, Pallot, & Walsh, 1996; Kelsey, 1997). The new climate of accountability has also brought increased public focus and critique to the practice of social work agencies, particularly those operating at a threshold of risk such as child protection, mental health and the oversight of criminal offenders (Morrison, 1997; Valentine, 1994).

The effect of these changes on the management structures of welfare and social services agencies has been documented, in Aotearoa/New Zealand as elsewhere, with some authors giving particular attention to the effect on the supervision of social workers. The picture which emerges is one where, of the three generally accepted functions of supervision (managerial, educative and supportive), the managerial function has been emphasised to the detriment or exclusion of the others. In this "efficiency supervisory model" (Cooper, 2001) organisational expectations of supervision have narrowed to a monitoring of prescribed service tasks and measurement of defined outputs and professional and individual dilemmas are resolved by administrative solutions (Beddoe, 1997; Beddoe, 1999; Beddoe & Davys, 1994; Blake-Palmer & Connolly, 1989; Cooper, 2001; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997; Kadushin, 1992; Morrison, 1993; Munson, 1993; Payne, 1994; Tavener, 1989; Young, 1994). Resources of time and training given to supervision have been reduced (Kadushin, 1992b; O'Donoghue, 1999; Young, 1994), and some authors have identified a more profound threat to supervision from managers who, recruited from outside the profession, lack understanding of the purpose and value of supervision and award it little or no priority (Morrison, 1993; Munson, 1993; Payne, 1994).

How do social workers use supervision?

The tension between the managerial and the professional or educative/ supportive functions of supervision is a central theme in the literature on social work supervision of the past decade (Clare, 1988; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997; Kadushin, 1992; O'Donoghue, 1999). The strength of the professional/developmental aspect of supervision has been highlighted along with the ambivalence of the supervisors when addressing the increased managerial function. Supervisors are less willing to accept the authority of the role or focus on managerial issues yet feel pressured to do so. Supervisees place less value and importance on managerial supervision and yet look to their supervisors for supportive critical feedback, for monitoring of their performance and to advocate on their behalf for administrative change (Kadushin, 1992a, 1992b; Payne, 1994). Interestingly one study, (Kadushin, 1992a), found that, whilst supervisors' least preferred function was the implementation of administrative supervision, 72% of supervisor respondents clearly identified with agency policy over client need. Differences have been found between the supervision of new and experienced staff, the latter using supervision to "legitimise

practice and to offer consultation rather than test practice in an objective and systematic way" (Payne, 1994:55). It is the experience of many that supervision time is inadequate or that it does not occur (Kadushin, 1992a, 1992b; O'Donoghue, 1999; Young, 1994).

Self in social work supervision

The literature on social work practice and supervision affirms the importance of the acknowledgement of self and the exploration of the impact of the work which is experienced by practitioners, regardless of maturity or experience. That this material belongs to the supervision relationship and that it in some form comprises an element of support within supervision is also generally accepted (Brown & Bourne, 1996; Crawford, 1997; Kadushin, 1992; Loughlin, 1992; Saakvitne & Pearlman, 1996; Valentine, 1994; Van Kessel & Haan, 1993; Westheimer, 1977).

As asserted earlier, however, this element is often reported as absent from supervision. The literature suggests several reasons for this which include not only the previously outlined priority given to managerial requirements, but also the culture of the organisation which may effect both the acceptability of supervision and the degree to which it is safe to expose one's vulnerability (Hawkins & Shohet, 1989; Morrison, 1993; Valentine, 1994). The practice within social work of combining line management and performance appraisal with the supervision role has also raised debate as to the ability of this relationship to meet all the supervisee's needs (Borland, 1995; Clare, 1988; Read, 1983).

At the individual level Itzhaky (1996) and Butler (1996) identify supervisee resistance to learning and thence to change, whilst others have described the effects, both organisationally and individually, of working in areas of uncertainty and anxiety. Within this context, where professional objectivity and detachment are valued, subjectivity is regarded as a weakness rather than applauded as awareness (Bond & Holland, 1998; Valentine, 1994). Morrison (1993) describes the similar process of "professional accommodation syndrome", and others identify situations where supervisors avoid and block the painful material brought by the supervisee (Munson, 1993; Sawdon & Sawdon, 1995).

The very nature of the personalities in the supervision relationship may also affect the sharing of self. Differences in values and beliefs and a relationship outside of the supervision relationship can constrain the extent to which issues are shared in supervision (Pepper, 1996).

Power and control in supervision

Traditionally hierarchical in nature the supervision relationship confers considerable authority on the supervisor. From this authority is derived various types of power which are exercised through the filter of organisational, professional and personal values, beliefs and norms. (Bond & Holland, 1998; Brown & Bourne, 1996; Cooper, 2001; Jacobs, 1991; Kadushin, 1992; Solas, 1994). Supervisors are frequently uncomfortable with this power and at times their failure to exercise their authority can amount to collusion with the supervisee and result in poor and unsafe practice (Bond & Holland, 1998; Brown & Bourne, 1996; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000). In general supervisors regard their authority as deriving from their professional expertise, however supervisees are more conscious of the supervisor's organisational power (Kadushin, 1992a; Payne, 1994). In a survey of supervisees and supervisors Kadushin (1992) found that neither group considered that referent power (the power generated from the relationship) was a significant factor in a supervisee's compliance with a supervisor's suggestion or advice (Kadushin, 1992a).

More critically Cooper (2001) suggests that the supervisor's exercise of power within what is essentially a 'private and confidential' relationship closed to independent audit, may also result in supervision becoming a vehicle for internalising systems of 'domination and oppression'. "Oppression of both supervisees and clients is achieved because the methods and roles that strengthen oppression are accepted and reinforced without question" (Cooper, 2001:27). Traditional psychosocial approaches to supervision have been seen to encourage conformity and control (Gardiner, 1989), whilst functional models of supervision, which propose support as an end, run the risk of pathologising the supervisee who is seen as personally or professionally vulnerable (Hughes & Pengelly, 1997). In other forums traditional models of supervision have

been critiqued as mono-cultural, imposing European American traditions onto minority cultures (Daniels, D'Andrea, Kim, & Soo, 1999).

In Aotearoa New Zealand "Maori perspectives within non-Maori agency settings continue to be considered as an ethnic or indigenous cultural add-on to the dominant non-Maori discourse" (Bradley, 1999:3) and supervision has been identified as a vehicle of this dominant cultural voice. Supervision continues "to reflect a distinctly Western, Pakeha orientation" (Ohia, undated) where "the development of tangata whenua models of supervision have suffered from the impact of subtle continued colonisation through the process of avoidance and non-encouragement" (Webber-Dreadon, 1999:8).

Contemporary models of supervision

In 1994 Payne suggested that professional social work supervision was under threat, a view also expressed by Aotearoa/New Zealand writers (Beddoe & Davys, 1994; Blake-Palmer & Connolly, 1989; Tavener, 1989; Young, 1994). Three years later Beddoe offered some hope. "After decades of inertia, social workers have participated in a flurry of activity around competency assessment, training for supervision and staff development roles, ongoing professional education, and even the most controversial of issues, professional registration" (Beddoe, 1997:37). In 2000, the editors of the first Aotearoa New Zealand Supervision Conference Proceedings concluded even more confidently that "supervision is in good heart and ... there is a great deal of energy and commitment to excellent practice, research, scholarship and teaching in the field" (Beddoe & Worrall, 2001).

Whilst social workers and the social work profession may have responded to the challenges posed during the last two decades of fiscal and structural change, the conditions of social work practice have nevertheless altered significantly (Beddoe, 1999; Cooper, 2001; Davys, 2001; Davys & Beddoe, 2000; Garrett & Barretta-Herman, 1995). The previous certainty and cohesiveness of social work practice has been dismantled and one consequence of this has been the loss of "any shared understanding of supervision" (Cooper, 2001). Efficiency supervision, focusing on the managerial/administrative functions, has as a consequence dominated in many organisations (Cooper, 2001). Other responses to supervision have emerged however

and include the introduction of external supervision and models of peer supervision (Baldwin, Hawkin, & Patuwai, 2001; Beddoe, 2000; Cooper, 2001; Hawkin & Worrall, 2001; Morrell, 2001; Payne, 1994). It is suggested by Garrett and Barretta-Herman (1995) that, in the face of inadequate individual supervision, social workers must find alternative ways for meeting professional development needs. They propose a "mosaic of strategies accessed in different configurations over time in response to educational, administrative and support needs". These strategies would include individual supervision along with "consultation, peer group consultation, conferences and professional reading" (Garrett & Barretta-Herman, 1995:98).

In Aotearoa New Zealand the imperative for culturally safe supervision, incorporating Maori values and world view, has seen the development of tangata whenua approaches and models of supervision. These models however, as mentioned earlier, struggle to develop in social work organisations dominated by western values, traditions and theory. In this context, Bradley (1999) suggested two policies for implementing culturally appropriate supervision. The first, "binary opposites", favouring Maori working with and alongside Maori, has obvious benefits but places great pressure on the already stretched resources of those Maori able to provide the services required. The second solution, cross-pollination, offers the "best of both worlds to whanau by ... having access to Maori and non-Maori approach methods" (Bradley, 1999:4). Once again however this dual approach risks subordination of Maori values to dominant western culture (Bradley, 1999; Webber-Dreadon, 1999).

Most commonly 'cultural supervision' is provided outside the organisation. Webber-Dreadon (1999) describes a three dimensional approach to supervision along these lines which includes an "organisational supervisor who deals with the administration and organisational tasks, a tangata whenua supervisor who deals with appropriate tangata whenua practice, and a Kuia and/or kaumatua who share their wisdom under their spiritual korowai" (Webber-Dreadon, 1999:8). Central to Webber-Dreadon's model is the three way accountability and the importance of regular meetings between all parties.

Some authors have emphasised the need to look to models of supervision which have the flexibility to respond to the diversity of practice contexts, the professional

centredness to contain the unpredictability of practice content and the structure to respond to change at any level. Within this framework supervision models based on learning and reflexivity have been promoted as offering some of the flexibility needed for practitioners to adjust theory and practice to the ever changing shapes of the modern practice context (Beddoe, 1999; Butler, 1996; Carroll, 2001; Crawford, 1997; Davys & Beddoe, 2000; Fook, 1996; Morrison, 1993; O'Byrne & Rosenberg, 1998).

The view of supervision as a reflective learning process, rather than a process for control and conformity, represents a "significant difference between teaching techniques as opposed to teaching a way of thinking" (McCann, 2000:43). From a post modern stance, this adoption by the supervisor of a reflexive position, redefines his or her role as co-explorer rather than expert. "Since there is no objective reality or truth, the supervisor is seen only as an expert in an exploratory conversational process with the supervisee, in the shaping of the supervisee's narrative" (McCann, 2000:43). The supervisee defines the problem and is responsible for his or her own learning as generated from this co-exploration with the supervisor. This post modern stance however, as McCann (2000) notes, generates tension and dilemma when evaluation and accountability are visited within the supervision relationship.

It is important in this context to note the difference between reflection and critical reflection. The former "may include a disciplined approach to problem solving and self awareness in supervision" whilst the latter "examines the social and cultural processes where everyday practices, traditions, beliefs, assumptions are questioned" (Cooper, 2001:30). Critical reflectivity often carries an imperative for emancipatory action and change (Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998; Kincheloe, 1995).

The extent of the possibility of emancipatory action from reflection in supervision has been challenged by Gilbert (2001), who argues that critical theorists have failed to recognise that organisations and systems themselves can become reflexive. Thus, in his view, reflective practice and supervision are subtle forms of surveillance and discipline masquerading as vehicles of liberation and autonomy. Employing Foucault's concept of governmentality, Gilbert argues that reflective practice and supervision firstly

> make individual practitioners 'visible' and through this visibility subject to modes of surveillance. Second[ly], these practices can be located with a range of techniques of ethical self-formation, which have emerged in the late twentieth century. These techniques take a number of different forms that are characterised by the individual being invited, through speech or writing, to reveal the truth about themselves (Gilbert, 2001:201).

Procedures of Supervision

Central to the practice of supervision is the supervision contract. This has been defined by Morrison (1993:29) as "a means of making explicit the aims of the parties to work towards agreed goals in agreed ways". The contract document is the locus for acknowledging those conditions of supervision which are prescribed by organisational policy and recording those which have been independently negotiated by the supervisor and supervisee.

There is general agreement within the literature that the conditions which need to be specified in the supervision contract include: the aims of supervision, frequency, duration, confidentiality, accountability, interruptions, issues of safety, record keeping, preparation, agenda setting, review and processes for dealing with conflict. The relationship of supervision to performance management, appraisal and counselling may be explicit within the contract as may be the degree of access the supervisee has to the supervisor (Bond & Holland, 1998; Brown & Bourne, 1996; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000; Hewson, 1999; Morrison, 1993; Osborn & Davis, 1996; Payne & Scott, 1982; Pritchard, 1995).

Significantly, the process of negotiating the supervision contract is considered to be as, if not more, important than the content (Bond & Holland, 1998; Brown & Bourne, 1996; Clare, 2001; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997; Jones, 1997; Ladany & Friedlander, 1995; Morrison, 1993; Munson, 1993; Riley, 1995; Rowlings, 1995; Sawdon & Sawdon, 1995). To express and explore the expectations of both the supervisor and the supervisee within the context of organisational requirements and professional standards allows both parties to acknowledge the constraints, the liberties and the possible areas of difficulty of their working alliance. Rowlings (1995) attributes the subsequent quality of the contributions of both supervisor and supervisee to the degree of clarity with which they understand their responsibilities within supervision.

This clarity, she says, is achieved through the process of negotiating a supervision contract. Sawdon and Sawdon (1995) are equally clear when they assert that

> how we personally relate to our supervisees is far more important than mere skills, for all techniques need to be imbedded in a good relationship". The benefits of negotiating a "mutually beneficial working contract or agreement... cannot be overestimated here (Sawdon & Sawdon, 1995:15).

The Supervision Relationship

The supervision relationship is considered by many to be central to good practice (Clough, 1995; Fox, 1989; Ladany, Ellis, & Friedlander, 1999; Rowlings, 1995; Sawdon & Sawdon, 1995; Tsui & Ho, 1997). In 1997 a study by Patton et al explored this connection. They found a significant relationship between the supervisee's perception of the supervision relationship and the client's perception of the therapeutic relationship. They concluded that the supervisees "are taking the knowledge they are gaining in supervision about building and maintaining relationships and applying it to the relationship with their client" (Patton & Kivlighan, 1997:133).

Given that we know in principle the connection between "good supervision and effective practice" Ash (1995) questions why this connection is so readily diminished in practice? She concludes

> I think the answer lies in that aspect of supervision for which it is most difficult to legislate, which exists outside procedural frameworks and which centres on the actual interchange between supervisor and supervisee (Ash, 1995:20).

Good supervision relationships are mutually developed and require effort from both parties. Jones (1997) asserts that both supervisor and supervisee need to "act as guardians of the supervisory relationship". Whilst in many social work contexts the choice of supervisor is limited or non-existent some authors consider it to be a significant factor in determining the success or otherwise of the supervision relationship. "Having a real choice of who to see as a clinical supervisor is essential to building a working alliance" (Bond & Holland, 1998:204). To optimise the supervision process Howard (1997) proposes that the supervisor/supervisee match requires decisions based on gender, culture, sexual orientation, age and physical disability. Brown and Bourne (1996) highlight the manner in which the variables of race and gender impact on the power dynamics of the relationship, Van Soest & Kruzich (1994) discuss the influence of supervisor/supervisee learning styles on supervision, whilst

Clare (2001) considers supervision difference across the continua of specialist/generalist, learning/teaching styles, local/cosmopolitan dimension and professional/anti or non-professional dimension. In a literature review of the effect of individual, cultural and developmental differences within the supervisory relationships (which specifically included difference of race, gender and sexual orientation), Bernard and Goodyear (1992) however concluded that: "the experience with each supervisee is different" and "call[s] forth from the supervisor an openness to discovery in his or her work" (Bernard & Goodyear, 1998:60).

Beddoe (2000) raises the point that most social workers are employed in public organisations within health, social service or justice systems. The clients of these social workers, unlike fee paying consumers of private practitioners, have no choice of their social work practitioner. Isomorphism, the "matching between the form of supervision and the form of practice" (Bond & Holland, 1998), would suggest that there is an appropriate parallel between the limited choices in the supervisor/supervisee relationship and the practitioner/ client relationship. Similarly Douglas (1990), speaking from a care and protection context, highlights the importance for the supervisee to be able to discuss his or her work with an accountable line manager/supervisor. "Authority, responsibility and support need to be with the same managing supervisor in the same way that front line workers have to integrate both a care and control function in their practice" (Douglas, 1990:17).

Supervision, Line Management and Performance Management

The relationship of line management (which includes the responsibility of performance assessment) and supervision is much debated in the literature (Bond & Holland, 1998; Brown & Bourne, 1996; Francis, 2000 unpublished; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997; Johns, 2000; Morrison, 1993; Payne, 1994).

Whilst promoting a choice of supervisor Bond and Holland (1998) recognise the limitations of this within certain organisations but "strongly endorse the inappropriateness of having line managers in this role" and propose a separation of "management supervision and clinical supervision" (Bond & Holland, 1998). This however would appear to be a confusion of two roles rather than a conflict between two

functions of supervision. Management and supervision comprise two different sets of relationships and expectations, and whilst supervision has a management function this is not to be confused with management as a role within the organisational structure.

Johns (2000) considers the pros and cons of the same person holding these two roles. From his experience the advantages of combining line manager with supervisor offer a

> collaborative way of working with (supervisees) to facilitate their development of clinical effectiveness and role fulfilment... As a consequence, our ways of relating within guided reflection spilled out to become new ways of relating within practice itself (Johns, 2000:56).

The disadvantages of this combination, he believes, "are more concerned with attitude and technique rather than role" (Johns, 2000). The most significant risk, he concludes, lies in the confusion by the supervisor of the two roles and the consequent hijacking of the supervision process to meet a management agenda.

Douglas (1990), cited above, supports the conjunction of line manager/supervisor as a means of avoiding the confusion of dual accountability, though he is not explicit about issues of performance appraisal. Morrison (1993) is more clear and suggests that supervisors, because they know the worker well, are well suited to conduct an appraisal but warns that appraisals fail when linked to "salary, discipline, grading or promotion issues" (Morrison, 1993).

It has been suggested that when the supervisor and the manager are the same person the expectations and differences of both roles be clearly articulated and that the process of appraisal be seen to rest clearly within the management role (Frances, 2000 unpublished). Hughes and Pengelly (1997) recommend that

> the respective functions of appraisal, individual performance review and supervision need to be organisationally defined ... as these issues touch also on questions of confidentiality and right of access to information, and are particularly sensitive where performance-related pay has been introduced (Hughes & Pengelly, 1997:35).

Qualities of supervisors

In a survey of social work supervisors and supervisees, Kadushin (1992) reports that the respondents from both groups were in agreement as to the two principal areas of strength demonstrated by supervisors, but rated these in reverse order. Supervisors

considered that their strength lay firstly in "expertise-professional knowledge, skills and experience" followed by "relationship skills". Supervisees reversed this order of priority (Kadushin, 1992b).

Other comprehensive and interesting lists have been compiled documenting the skills and qualities required in 'good ' supervisors (Barretta-Herman, 2001; Loganbill, Hardy, & Delworth, 1982; Wiener, 1995). Hawkins and Shohet (2000) have developed such a list which includes: flexibility, a multi-perspectival view, a working map of the discipline in which they supervise, the ability to work cross culturally, the capacity to manage and contain anxiety, openness to learning, sensitivity to the wider contextual issues, schooled in anti-oppressive practice and finally humour, humility and patience.

Personal qualities however are not sufficient and Hawkins and Shohet (2000) join others in support for the training of supervisors (Bernard, 1979; Blair & Peake, 1995; Bond & Holland, 1998; Brown & Bourne, 1996; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997; Kadushin, 1992; Scaife, 2001; Schindler & Talen, 1996) a requirement well expressed in the statement that

> ...preparation and training for this influential role is essential. There is no automatic way in which a social worker of today can become a supervisor by tomorrow. If social service departments aim for effective supervision, the training programme should include preparation for potential supervisors (Westheimer, 1977:16).

The supervisee

Historically, as has been suggested earlier in this chapter, the supervisee has been portrayed as the passive, naive recipient of the supervision process. The supervisor, holding tight to the reins of professional and organisational accountability (the educative and managerial functions) tempers this with warm regard and understanding of the supervisee's plight and pain (supportive function). Research on supervisees, dominated as it has been by studies of counselling and social work students, has reinforced the supervisee's passive role in this process. Supervisees have been considered in their becoming process rather than as professionals who have arrived. Developmental theories and models of supervision (whilst being useful tools) have also tended to reinforce this position by suggesting linear development from novice to expert

(Butler, 1996), unaware/stagnated to integrated (Loganbill et al., 1982) self-centred to process-in-context centred (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000). The research which has involved supervisees (Holloway & Wampold, 1983; Kadushin, 1992a) has focused on their attitudes and assessment of the supervisor's performance rather than an assessment of their own performance and role in supervision

The supervision relationship however is not one sided and the role, attitude and skills of the supervisee are important in any study of good supervision. Hawkins and Shohet consider 'good' supervisee skills as a prerequisite for 'good' supervisor skills "you cannot expect to give good supervision unless you have first learned how to receive supervision and be a proactive supervisee" (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000:39). In a similar vein Barretta-Herman (2001) contends that "social workers need to fully understand the potentialities for professional growth and development that supervision provides and permit themselves to fully participate in the process" (Barretta-Herman, 2001:7), while Inskipp (1999) promotes specific supervisee training. This training has three aims: to empower supervisees by helping them to be clear about the expectations of supervision, to teach them ways of making themselves and their work more visible and finally to assist supervisees to negotiate the roles and boundaries of supervision (Inskipp, 1999).

Supervisees are considered to have both rights and responsibilities with regard to supervision. The latter include: preparation, follow through of agreed actions, according supervision high priority, being open to challenge, accepting feedback, offering honest feedback to supervisor, allowing honest scrutiny of work and taking responsibility for own learning (Barretta-Herman, 2001; Bond & Holland, 1998; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000; Inskipp, 1999).

Hawkins and Shohet (2000) describe in some detail how supervisees can be proactive in supervision, and include among other things a process for self reflection and a check list for evaluating supervisors. In a lighter vein Carroll (2001) has constructed a "Supervisor Bullshit Detector" and supervisees are adjured to ensure that the batteries of this detector are in good working order so that they can detect and remove themselves from supervision which is not helpful.

The emphasis which emerges here focuses on the supervisee's responsibilities and role within the supervision process. A shift is evident from the traditional role of the supervisee, as the recipient of supervision and subject of the expertise (or otherwise) of the supervisor, to the supervisee as a mutual and active participant in the supervision process. This mutuality lies at the base of co-operative models of supervision practice, such as suggested by Chernesky (1986) and Brashears (1995), and of reflective learning models of supervision (Butler, 1996; Fook, 1996; Johns, 2000).

Summary

Social work supervision occupies a broad territory, its borders defined by organisational contexts and policies, professional codes and knowledge and finally, client need. Within these boundaries supervisory practice is shaped by the quality of the relationship between supervisor and supervisee, which in turn is influenced by the personal qualities, attitudes and skills of both parties and the negotiation of mutually acceptable expectations and the satisfactory resolution of issues of difference and power. This summary is represented in figure 2.1.

Summary from the literature of themes and contexts which effect good supervision

Figure 2.1

Chapter Three - Research Methodology, Methods and Process

> Qualitative inquiry cultivates the most useful of all human capacities – the capacity to learn from others.
> *(from Halcolm's Evaluation Laws quoted in Patton 1990).*

Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology, methods and process of this research. The project is located in the context of social work practice and development, and the research objectives are defined. The research methodology is discussed and a rationale presented for the choice of method. The research design and its development is recorded with discussion of the decisions made and the issues which arose. The research process, including data collection and analysis, is then presented.

Context

The purpose of this research is to identify the elements considered to be pertinent to 'good' social work supervision in Aotearoa/New Zealand. To achieve this the research examines social work supervision from three perspectives: the participants' construction of the experience of receiving and providing 'good' supervision, a description of an actual supervision session and the models contained in the literature on supervision.

The research sits within a context of on-going change to the provision, organisation and management of social services in Aotearoa/New Zealand which has, during the past two decades, created new priorities and tensions for social service managers. When translated into the supervision context, these changes have been seen to strengthen the administrative function of supervision at the expense of the traditional professional (supportive and educative) functions (Beddoe & Davys, 1994; O'Donoghue, 1999).

In this context the present research seeks to explore how, after this period of considerable change, social work practitioners identify and experience 'good' supervision and how this account accords with the literature on supervision. That there is a gap between the ideal represented in professional and official literature on supervision and the reality of supervision, both 'good'' and 'bad', as experienced by practitioners has been noted in the literature (Hughes & Pengelly, 1997). The title of the first supervision conference held in

Aotearoa/New Zealand in July 2000, 'from rhetoric to reality', suggests that Hughes and Pengelly's observations also hold true for Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Previous research which has measured supervisees' satisfaction with supervision (Heppner & Handley, 1981; Holloway & Wampold, 1983; Krause & Allen, 1988; Ladany, Ellis, & Friedlander, 1999; Olk & Friedlander, 1992), has largely focused on the supervision of students, where it is possible that inexperience and concerns about evaluation may have influenced the findings. It has also been noted that few studies "have specifically examined what is perceived as 'good' supervision by supervisees beyond characteristics associated with general dependent measures of satisfaction with supervision on an a priori basis" (Worthen & McNeill, 1996:26). One exception is Sloan (1999), who conducted a study of the clinical supervision of nurses in mental health and produced a list of ten characteristics of 'good' supervisors.

This present investigation focuses on specific and current supervision arrangements which are deemed, by the supervisee, to be 'good'. As such the research aims to ground the account in practice experience rather than in wishes formed from dissatisfaction. Worthen (1996) used a similar strategy when he interviewed students about "a recent good supervision experience". From this a four phase structure for a good supervision experience was proposed. The differences, and possibly the advantages, of the current research are twofold. Firstly an examination of 'good' will be made on the basis of a long term, on-going relationship, rather than a supervision event, and secondly the supervision will be examined from two perspectives, that of the supervisee and the supervisor.

To date much of what has been written and researched about supervision has been theoretical and interpretive rather than a record of what actually happens. This research has supplemented the self report of the participants with a description of an actual supervision session. In this respect the present research has been influenced by the work of Gardiner (1989), who in his research of student supervision, identified two needs for data collection. The first was to gather data from the participants of supervision and the second "to gather data about what actually goes on in supervision sessions, to report them without reinterpretation, and then to look at the issues raised" (Gardiner, 1989).

This research assumes, that there is a key relationship between supervision, 'best practice' and healthy workers (Ash, 1995; Kadushin, 1992; Rich, 1993). By examining these examples of 'good' supervision it is intended that this research will begin to identify the match or mismatch between theory and practice, what works as opposed to what should but does not work. This position allows an opportunity for practice to inform theory as well as an opportunity for practice to be shaped by theory. The research thus employs inductive reasoning as the link between theory and research.

This is applied qualitative research which, being specific to time, place and condition complies with Patton's (1990) aim that applied research "contribute(s) knowledge that will help people understand the nature of a problem so that human beings can more effectively control their environment"(Patton, 1990):153). The research seeks to explore and understand the meaning attributed to actions, behaviours and practices which are deemed, by those engaged in them, to constitute 'good' supervision. Qualitative research methods which "focus on meanings and interpretations" (Liamputtong Rice & Ezzy, 1999:ix) were thus the most suited to the type of research which I have conducted. Further, as Gardiner (1989) notes, the interview process, which includes reflection on the content and focus of the interactive process, is common to both qualitative research and to social work practice. Hence there is congruence between the methods used and the process being researched.

Qualitative Research

The epistemological debate which centres on research methodologies identifies two competing paradigms, logical –positivism and phenomenological enquiry. The former uses quantitative and experimental methods and the latter qualitative and naturalist approaches (Patton, 1990)[1].

Where positivist methods reflect the belief that social sciences, like the physical sciences, can be understood through empirical, measurable data, qualitative methods notice "nuance, setting, interdependencies, complexities, idiosyncrasies and context" (Patton, 1990:51). The belief behind the latter methodology is that there is no objective truth but

[1] Patton(1990), however, eschews methodological allegiance, advocating instead for the pragmatics of choice, thus allowing researchers to pay attention to "methodological appropriateness" rather than "disciplinary prescriptions".

rather a range of perspectives (Patton, 1990). Within phenomenological enquiry the lack of clear rules and guidelines has been seen by some to compromise reliability and validity (Liamputtong Rice & Ezzy, 1999) whilst the relationship between the researcher and the research, it has been claimed, allows few safeguards against researcher and political bias (Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991). Hammersley (1992), cited in Liamputtong Rice and Ezzy (1999), however notes that the reliability of qualitative research stems from the very fact of its representation of the views of those studied, as opposed to those views presented through the perspective of the researcher. Where quantitative, or statistical, methods generally pay little attention to the interpretative process, qualitative research methods "place the interpretative process at the centre of their practice" (Liamputtong Rice & Ezzy, 1999:3).

In quantitative research the researcher assumes a role of objectivity, uses standardised instruments and distances him or herself from the participants. In "qualitative enquiry the researcher is the instrument" (Patton, 1990:14). The opinions, beliefs, experience, interactions and person of the researcher are relevant, not only to the analysis of the data, but to its collection and, according to Patton, the "validity in qualitative methods ... hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of [this] person" (Patton, 1990:14).

Research Objective

To identify what social workers in Aotearoa/New Zealand experience as 'good' supervision and to consider this against the professional literature on supervision.

The objective of this research was achieved in three stages. Firstly the experience of 'good' supervision was explored from the perspective of the recipient, the supervisee. This was followed by an exploration and identification of the intent of the corresponding provider of that supervision, the supervisor. The second stage involved a description of the process of 'good' supervision through the analysis of an audio-taped record of a supervision session and finally these accounts were considered against models of supervision as described in the literature.

The research considers whether the expectations and evaluation of practitioners at the 'coal-face' reflect the dominant management culture as described in the literature or

whether the resurgence of the 'professional' in social work has reclaimed the territory and focus of supervision. As discussed in chapter two, has this created new models of supervision or new configurations for accessing necessary support, challenge and professional development?

Methods

The challenge to the researcher who chooses qualitative methods is to "find the best way of studying how meaning and interpretations are constructed in their particular substantive research area" (Liamputtong Rice & Ezzy, 1999:1).

This research is located within the phenomenological research paradigm, which uses "qualitative and naturalistic approaches to inductively and holistically understand human experience in context specific settings" (Patton, 1990:37). Louis (1982) succinctly defines qualitative methods as "data collection methods that involve nonnumeric data and analysis which does not use statistical methods" (Louis, 1982:271), whilst naturalistic approaches involve natural, as opposed to experimental, research settings.

It is multi-method research and employs three qualitative methods: in-depth interviews, focus groups and direct observation. The research is inductive in that themes and ideas have been "developed from the analysis of research data" (Babbie, 1989:53) and it has descriptive, illuminative and interpretive components. These components required different methods yet are complementary in the research design.
There were two method objectives.

First method objective

The first method objective was to provide an interpretative account of the factors which are considered pertinent to 'good' supervision from the perspective of both the provider and the recipient of that supervision. The methods used to reach this objective were in-depth interviews and focus groups.

In-depth Interviews

"A good interview is like a good conversation" (Liamputtong Rice & Ezzy, 1999). Within this framework the researcher is considered a co-participant in the conversation

and "the relation of the teller to the listener is as important as the content and structure of the tale itself" Brooks 1994 cited in (Liamputtong Rice & Ezzy, 1999:53). What is important is that the focus of the conversation remains on the meaning for the 'researched' rather than the researcher. More time consuming than focus groups, in-depth interviews provide an opportunity for the participants to share subjective understandings and interpretations of their experiences away from the influence of peers and other participants.

Focus Groups

Focus groups, broadly defined as "a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher" (Morgan, 1997:6), occupy the position between individual interviews and participant observation where they "provide access to forms of data that are not obtained easily with either of the other two methods" (Morgan, 1997:8). Whilst the researcher provides the focus, the data comes from the group members, whose relationships with each other "enhance the intensity of interaction and, ultimately, the richness of the data" (Liamputtong Rice & Ezzy, 1999:76). This is not without dilemma for the researcher who may face a

> choice between giving control to the group and possibly hearing less about the topic of interest or taking direct control over the group, and possibly losing the free-flowing discussion that was the original intent of the group interview (Morgan, 1997:11).

A further limitation of groups, as a means of collecting data, "is the extreme orientation which might develop in a group" (Hyrkas & Paunonen-Ilmonen, 2001:499). The susceptibility of individuals to the influence of the group, it is argued, can shift the discussion to either end of the continuum, negative or positive. In this present research the orientation was positive by intent, 'good' supervision was under investigation. Having said this, there was the potential for discussion to become uncritical and self congratulatory, but this was not observed in the interviews and both groups provided a balanced critique of 'good' supervision.

Second method objective

The second method objective was to produce a descriptive analysis of social work supervision in the everyday context of the workplace. Little observational research has

been done in the field of supervision and this research and design have been influenced by Gardiner(1989) who explored the learning experience of supervision from the perspectives of the supervisors and the social work students.

When speaking in relation to educational research, Gardiner (1989) notes that such naturalistic enquiry has two advantages: "it allows whole areas of educational activity to be studied, not partial, quantifiable elements; and teachers and learners can be studied in their ordinary, everyday experiences of teaching and learning" (Gardiner, 1989:30).

This aspect of the research comprises descriptive and illuminative components which are useful to consider together. Illuminative evaluation concerns the need, when there is little direct knowledge of a particular area, to descriptively plot the territory prior to more detailed investigation (Gardiner, 1989). The method by which the data was collected in this instance was by direct observation using audio-tape.

"Direct observation , when added on to other research yielding depth and /or breadth, enhances consistency and validity"(Adler & Adler, 1994:382) although Denzin (1989) cautions that "in-depth understanding, not validity, is sought in any interpretative study"(Denzin, 1989:246). In this research, the use of between-method-triangulation (Denzin, 1989), or multi-methods (Morgan, 1997) in the form of a combination of interviews and focus groups with the supervisor and supervisee was aimed to add depth to the understanding of the data collected from the taped supervision session.

Problems of Observational research

Lack of validity is one of the main criticisms of observational research (Adler & Adler, 1994; Gardiner, 1989) because the analysis of the material relies solely on the interpretation of the observer. Gardiner (1989) suggests two ways in which this problem can be addressed. The first involves checking the accuracy of the material with those from whom it has been collected and checking that any interpretation or selection of the material "confirms or adds to their understanding and experience of what is described" (Gardiner, 1989). The second suggestion involves using a form of triangulation using a "variety of methods and targets for data collection" (Gardiner, 1989:36). In this research both strategies were used. Firstly a triangulation of methods, where 'direct observation'

complemented the focus group and individual interviews, enabled the data to be viewed with the benefit of different perspectives and secondly, the initial thematic analysis of the data from the dyad supervision session was checked for accuracy of meaning by the participants.

The second major criticism of observational research is reliability. This is a criticism of all small scale qualitative research which "yield[s] insights that are more likely to be accurate for the group under study and unverified for extension to larger populations" (Adler & Adler, 1994:381). That this perspective is acknowledged is important. It does not however invalidate the "accuracy" for the group in question and from this patterns and comparisons for other groups may emerge.

Research Design

"Qualitative enquiry designs cannot be completely specified in advance of field work...A qualitative design unfolds as the fieldwork unfolds" (Patton, 1990:61).

Initial participants in this research were recruited through an advertisement with Aotearoa/New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) (appendix one, attachment 1). Volunteers, with three or more years of experience as a social worker who considered their current experience of supervision to be 'good', were invited to a focus group to explore these experiences of supervision. The definition of 'good' for this research was subjective and participants were asked to rate supervision on a five point scale from "excellent – good - all right - not so good - poor".

These social workers were also asked to discuss the research with their supervisors and to alert them to the possibility that they, the supervisors, would be invited to attend a separate focus group to explore the provision of 'good' supervision.

Potential participants were provided with an information sheet and consent form (appendix one, attachment 2 & 3) and a separate information sheet and consent forms (appendix one, attachment 4, 5 & 6) for the supervisor to complete which indicated the supervisor's willingness to be contacted regarding the second phase of the research.

The research proposal specified that between five and eight respondents would be selected, using a maximum variation sampling strategy to reflect a range of characteristics such as age, gender, length of experience, ethnicity (Tangata Whenua/Tauiwi) and practice context. The possibility of the involvement of the participant's supervisor was considered to be a significant criterion for selection.

Following the first focus group with the supervisees, those supervisors who indicated their willingness to be approached were invited to attend a second focus group to discuss the intent, the process and the focus of the supervision they provide.

At the end of both focus groups participants were asked to volunteer, subject to the consent of the other party (supervisor or supervisee), to record on audio tape an actual supervision session. One pair, supervisor and supervisee was selected to participate in this aspect of the research. Additional information and consent forms were provided for this stage of the research (appendix one, attachments 7, 8, 9 &10).

The selection criteria for this dyad aimed to select the supervisee who best reflected the general characteristics of the supervisee group in terms of age, experience, gender and work situation.

Sample size

The realities of time, the resources of a single researcher and the positioning of this research as a masterate thesis limited the breadth of this research. However as Patton (1990) observes

> the validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information-richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than the sample size (Patton, 1990:185).

The research design proposed a sample group of between 5 and 8 participant supervisees and their supervisors, the maximum number thus being sixteen individual participants. The trade off in this research thus favoured depth over breadth. In the event six supervision dyads were represented. An anomaly was created however due to the fact that one participant held both the roles of supervisor and supervisee and one supervisor

had been nominated by two supervisees. The research group thus comprised six supervisees and five supervisors but only ten individuals participated in the research.

Sampling

Sampling in all small scale research poses difficulties of representation and possible exclusion of different groups (Cannon, Higginboltham, & Leung, 1991) and Patton (1990) warns of the importance of articulating reasons for site and case sample selection, including the limitations which may lead to distortion.

The first decision to be made regarding sampling was to identify criteria for inclusion into and exclusion from the sample group. Who should be in this research and who should not be included? Much of the existing research which concerns the quality of supervision has focused on student supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 1998; Gardiner, 1989; Heppner & Handley, 1981; Holloway & Wampold, 1983; Ladany et al., 1999; Worthen & McNeill, 1996). Whilst this has produced some interesting results, the present research aimed to consider the perceptions of practitioners who had moved beyond the assessment concerns of the student and the developmental issues of the professional novice. Interest here focused on the supervision of more experienced practitioners and therefore one of the sampling criteria was that the supervisee have three or more years of experience as a social worker.

The researcher's roles of supervisor and educator in the area of supervision defined one criterion for exclusion from the sample group. In order to avoid distortions of power and influence inherent in both the supervisor – supervisee role and the student-teacher (assessor) role current supervisees and current students were excluded from the research process.

The most critical sampling criterion however was the question which engaged the participants into the research. On a five point scale they rated the supervision that they received to be 'good' or 'excellent'. The validity of this research rests on the integrity of this evaluation. It is a subjective evaluation and required freedom from coercion or expectation. There was a temptation, during the recruitment phase when participants were slow to respond, for supporters of the project to recommend supervisees whose

supervisors carried reputations for being 'good' supervisors. It was therefore important to clarify and reinforce at all times, that the supervisee participants initiated their own participation and were self selected volunteers.

The participation of the supervisors in the research was more problematic. Whilst participation for supervisees was not dependent on the supervisors' participation, it was preferable that both parties were involved. For the researcher the importance of the supervisors to this research was that they represented an essential half of the 'good' supervision equation.

In this research all the supervisors agreed to participate and whilst some commented on their pleasure at having been identified as 'good' supervisors, it was not a part of this study to determine the extent to which their participation was influenced by this evaluation.

Recruitment process

As stated, initial participants in this research were recruited through an advertisement with Aotearoa/New Zealand Association of Social Workers. This advertisement sought between five and eight applicants. Ten supervisees responded to the advertisement and six proceeded with the study. Of the four who did not continue two were ineligible and two failed to follow through the process. Of those who were ineligible, one had not completed sufficient years of practice as a social worker and the other was a current student of the researcher. The third applicant who did not participate, failed to respond to subsequent contact and the fourth was unable to accommodate the necessary meeting times.

As discussed above an important sampling criterion for this research was that participants were self selected volunteers and to this end an advertisement was placed in the monthly newsletter of the Aotearoa/New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZSW) "Social Work Notice Board". Access to the social work community through this newsletter however must be considered in context. In the year 2001 there were, according to figures drawn from the New Zealand census, 10,401 people employed as social workers in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Social Work Notice Board, July 2002)

however in April of that same year there were only 1,516 current members of the professional body ANZASW (Social Work Notice Board, May 2001). Whilst it is beyond the scope of this research to identify the characteristics which mark this group of social workers, it is relevant to note that one of the competency standards for membership to ANZASW requires that the social worker receives regular supervision. It may also be permissible to suggest that members of this group are more likely to be interested in and concerned about the broader professional issues of social work and less governed by agency definitions of practice and, by implication, of supervision. What can be asserted however is that members of this professional body are a minority of social workers in Aotearoa/New Zealand and cannot be considered a representative group, though they may be more likely to reliably recognise 'good' supervision when they experience it.

To access the majority of social workers in Aotearoa/New Zealand in order to invite 'free' participation in this research poses problems. How are 'workers' accessed independently of the 'organisation', manager or supervisor? This research asks for a positive evaluation of an aspect of social work practice, supervision. To locate the advertisement within the organisation invites opportunities for real or perceived pressure towards positive evaluations. At an operational level managers would look towards positive accounts of practice and at a personal and professional level supervisors would wish for their work to be acknowledged and affirmed. Caught in this situation it is possible that supervisees may evaluate the supervision they receive according to a wish to please, a personal liking, a disinclination to displease, or, in the worst case scenario, fear of negative reprisal from supervisor or manager.

A second consideration of sampling in this research is the motivation of the volunteer. What motivates a social worker to volunteer for a research project? At this point one can postulate that participants, when choosing how to spend voluntary time, will choose areas of particular personal interest. This element of self selection based on personal interest may create a sample group which is not representative of social workers. Whilst these considerations are open to debate, what is relevant to this research is the acknowledgement of the limitations and constraints of the sample group and the recognition that any conclusions of the research lie within these boundaries.

The research design proposed maximum variation sampling to select the research group from the volunteers. This is purposeful sampling which "aims at capturing and describing the central themes or principle outcomes that cut across a great deal of participant or program variation"(Patton, 1990:172). It is achieved by selecting the sample on the basis of the greatest diversity of characteristics, though Gardiner (1989) notes the dangers of deviant sampling if the research intent is to draw generalisations from small samples to other situations. The selection criteria proposed for this group specified a range of characteristics such as age, gender, length of experience, ethnicity (Tangata Whenua/Tauiwi) and practice context.

In the first instance however, the research sample was shaped by a homogeneous sampling process, which is characterised by similarity of background and experience amongst the participants (Patton, 1990). Participants were required to fit three key criteria; a minimum length of practice as a social worker, voluntary self-selected participation and an assessment that they were receiving 'good' supervision. Within these, rather broad but nevertheless critical, criteria the maximum variation sampling cited above was to operate. In the event however the sample of this study was determined by the number of 'appropriate' volunteers and there was no opportunity to apply the maximum variation criteria.

Data collection

The design of this research specified three stages of participant involvement. The first and second stage were to involve the use of focus group discussions. Problems of coordinating participants' available time, geographical distance and dual roles within the research however prevented every participant from attending the focus group meetings. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were therefore used to complement the focus group meetings.

In total two focus group meetings were held, one for supervisees and one for supervisors, each were attended by three participants and were approximately 1.5 to 2 hours in duration. Four individual interviews of approximately 1 to 1.5 hours were also conducted, two for supervisees, one for a supervisor and one for a 'dual role' participant.

A key issue which affected design was this 'dual role' participant who held both the supervisee and the supervisor roles. This participant, who initially volunteered as a supervisee, then discovered that she was the supervisor of another volunteer. Neither participant had been aware of the other's interest at the point of initial engagement with the research. Had the volunteer group been sufficiently large, the preferred option would have been to restrict each participant to one role within the research. A more pragmatic solution however was to interview the 'dual role' participant separately from the other participants. It was reasoned that a participant's presence in both groups could compromise the freedom of discussion of each individual group and also affect the independence of the data, as it could not be expected that the 'dual role' participant would not be unaffected by the discussion of either group. This participant was therefore interviewed individually, each role, supervisee and supervisor, being separated and considered independently. This proved to be a successful strategy.

Data collected in the individual interviews were recorded onto audio tape whilst a static video camera, which did not require an operator, was used to record the focus group discussions. The video-tape was chosen for ease of analysis of the content and to enable the researcher to separate out the views of different participants (this is a process which can easily become confused in an audio recording of a group discussion). Consents for these modes of recording were obtained as part of the written consent. The participants were reminded that the focus of the group and the individual interview was on their experiences of 'good' supervision, or in the case of the supervisors, their contributions to 'good' supervision. They were advised that they had the right to withdraw at any time. Whilst agreement for the discussion of the group to be video taped was a criteria for participation, all participants were advised of their right to request that the video recorder be turned off at any time. This was not requested at any time by any participants.

All participants were asked to complete a baseline information sheet which provided general descriptive and non-identifying information about the characteristics of the focus group.

The third stage of the research invited one dyad, a supervisee and his or her supervisor, to record an actual supervision session onto audio tape. In order for this to be as authentic a record as possible (accepting the constraints of the presence of a recording device) the

participants were requested to record an 'actual', as opposed to a rehearsed or role played, supervision session. The importance of disguising the names of individuals or organisations discussed in supervision was emphasised in the briefing information sheet.

Adler (1994) identifies a continuum of positions assumed by researchers within qualitative research which range from hidden "voyeur", to passive observer to active participant. In this research the researcher assumed two positions, that of active participant and that of passive (electronic) observer.

The latter role, though most closely approximating the traditional ideal of the "objective" observer (Adler & Adler, 1994) is not to be confused as such. The passive observer role was achieved through the use of audio recording and there were several reasons for this choice. The first reason was to gain as clearly as is possible a view of the supervision session. Qualitative observation "enjoys the advantage of drawing the observer into the phenomenological complexity of the world, where connections, correlations, and causes can be witnessed as and how they unfold" (Adler & Adler, 1994:378).

The second reason is to study the supervision interaction as unobtrusively as possible. "The close inter-personal nature of social work and supervision suggests that methods used and developed to study them must be sensitive to the subtleties of interactions within individual supervision sessions" (Gardiner, 1989:28). Initially the option of video-taping the supervision session was considered. On reflection however, it was decided that the presence of a camera (and possibly a technician) and the probability that the session would have to be filmed in a venue different to the usual supervision room, would cause too great a disruption to the supervision process. Even so, it is expected, as Gardiner (1989) found in his research, that the presence of the tape recorder and the knowledge of being taped will have some inhibiting effect on the participants. It is important that the research reflects as closely as possible the events of the supervision session and not the impact of the observation.

Organisation and analysis of the data

The data were collected onto audio and video tape and then transcribed verbatim. Some consideration had been given, during the planning stage of the research, to employing a

person to undertake the task of transcribing the raw data. The benefits for the researcher from the extra familiarity which would come from direct 'handling' of the material, and the fact that this was a small sample, were however compelling arguments against this option.

The data were all collected early in the research process and a decision was made by the researcher to attend to each group within the research independently, in order to minimise as much as was possible, any contamination of ideas or themes between the groups. Since the research was premised on the evaluations of the supervisees it was decided to consider their data first, followed by that of the supervisors and finally the data of the supervisee/supervisor dyad were analysed. Thus the tapes from the supervisors were not listened to until the supervisee data had been transcribed, analysed and written up.

Unlike the other tapes, the researcher had not been present during the recording of the dyad tape which was transcribed last. This produced some problems because, unbeknown to the researcher and the participants, the tape had failed to record the final fifteen minutes of the supervision session. The tape had been checked briefly to ensure that it had recorded but not in sufficient detail to identify the missing information. On discovering this omission the researcher, following consultation with her supervisors, contacted the participants who agreed to review the tape and to record the process which they customarily employed to end a supervision session. As the analysis of the dyad tape was concerned with the structure and process of supervision rather than the content, it was reasoned that this was an acceptable resolution to the dilemma of the missing data.

Data were analysed using thematic analysis where important 'messages' or themes are identified as they emerge from the data. These themes then form the categories of the analysis. Theory and fact from the literature are thus ignored at this stage of the analysis and the data are permitted to form their own shape. "Similarities and convergences with the literature" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:37) were identified and discussed at a later stage of the research. "In thematic analysis, frequency is not a major concern as it is in content analysis, but the 'position of the idea in the narrative' is more important" (Liamputtong Rice & Ezzy, 1999). As such there are occasions in this research where datum has been presented which differ from the general opinion and it is this variation which is seen as significant.

The data from each group of participants in this research were considered in turn. The same process of analysis was applied to each group and began with the transcription of the audio and video recordings. These transcriptions were then printed out and were compared to, and corrected for accuracy against, a further listening to the tapes and viewing of the videos. The transcripts for each participant were then printed onto different coloured sheets of paper.

These transcripts were then reread and broad themes were identified and written onto a series of manila folders. It has been noted that "the most important demand made on the validity of phenomenographic research is the correspondence of the original material with the categories of description created" (Hyrkas & Paunonen-Ilmonen, 2001:499), so care was taken to categorise the material within the context in which it was provided. The transcripts were then read once again and were cut up according to the categories identified and were placed in the corresponding folders. New categories and folders were developed for any remaining text which did not fit the original selection of themes.

From here the contents of each folder were examined and a reordering process began. Those folders which held few entries, possibly one or two, were re-examined to determine if the contents would fit within any of the other categories, or whether they should continue to stand alone. Those folders which held many entries were resorted into finer categories. The coloured paper readily identified the range of respondents in any one category.

The analysis of the supervision session between the supervisor/supervisee dyad was conducted in similar manner to the previous two groups of data, but there were some differences. Unlike the previous two groups, it was the process and the structure of the tape which was of primary interest, as opposed to the actual content. The categories for sorting the data were thus organised accordingly. The researcher then returned a written summary of these themes to the supervisor/supervisee dyad for verification of interpretation and for comment. It was believed, along with Hyrkas et al (2002), that "this verified [the] interpretation of the interview[s] and improved the quality of the data for further analysis" (Hyrkas, Appelqvist-Schmidlechner, & Paunonen-Ilmonen, 2002:390).

Analysis of the actual processes within supervision has seldom been undertaken (Gardiner, 1989; Sloan & Watson, 2001). Various reasons for this have included the distortions which occur as a result of the data collection process and the basic reluctance on the part of the participants of supervision to put their relationship under scrutiny (Sloan & Watson, 2001). Self protection, it is noted

> is an understandable reaction against the threat of vulnerability in supervision studies, because besides theory, prior personal and professional experiences are used as a source of understanding in clinical supervision sessions (Hyrkas et al., 2002:394).

Supervision "is a one-to-one relationship and thus a private affair" (Cooper, 2001), as such the researcher recognised the generosity of the two participants who volunteered their work and relationship for review and believed that it was important to present their work as respectfully and accurately as possible.

Problems in analysing qualitative data

The quantity of data generated is possibly the problem most commonly noted in qualitative research along with the associated difficulty of organising this volume of data in a way which is meaningful but which minimises the effects of personal bias and selection.

For Patton (1990) the validity of qualitative research is understood to be a reflection of the credibility and 'objectivity' of the researcher. Whilst it is now generally accepted that no research can be totally objective (Patton, 1990) it is important to be aware of "how one's perspective effects fieldwork, to carefully document all procedures... and to be open in describing the limitations of the perspective presented" (Patton, 1990:482).

Hyrkas et al (2001) discuss the respective merits of one or more people analysing data provided in phenomenological research. The process of categorising material they suggest, in this type of research, will always reflect a particular researcher's view. "If another researcher were to classify the same material deductively, the result would not necessarily correspond to the original material, neither would the validity of the research be improved" (Hyrkas & Paunonen-Ilmonen, 2001:500). In this study the material was analysed by the one researcher and examples have been included in the data presentation to illustrate the type of selection involved.

Not only can the categorisation of research data be problematic, so too can the interpretation which follows. Patton provides a comprehensive definition of the processes involved in this aspect of research.

> interpretation, by definition, involves going beyond the descriptive data. Interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, building linkages, attaching meanings, imposing order, and dealing with rival explanations, disconfirming cases, and data irregularities as part of testing the viability of an interpretation. All of this is expected – and appropriate- as long as the researcher owns the interpretation and makes clear the difference between description and interpretation (Patton, 1990:432).

As identified above, two processes have been employed in this research to contextualise interpretation. Firstly, the data presentation is interspersed with examples to illustrate the interpretations which have been made. Secondly, with respect to the data from the dyad, the initial data organisation was reviewed by the two participants for verification and comment, thus refining the final interpretative process.

Confidentiality

> Questions about confidentiality are magnified in qualitative research because of the position of trust which the researcher aims to develop, and because research on a small scale makes individuals much more easily identifiable (Finch, 1986: 203).

This caution is particularly relevant to small scale research in Aotearoa/New Zealand where populations are small and well known to each other. The description of the research group was thus generalised around broad parameters of age, gender, ethnicity and experience. Care was taken that any direct quotes used do not betray identity.

The focus group meetings and the individual interviews were recorded onto video and audio tape for ease of analysis. These tapes were viewed and used only by the researcher. The recorded supervision session recorded onto audio tape was also edited and used only by the researcher. Whilst the research was being undertaken all tapes, notes, records, data sheets were kept in a secure cabinet with consent forms and codes being stored separately from the raw data.

On completion of the research, in accordance with Massy University policy, video and audio tape recordings will be erased. All other raw data, records or transcripts will be destroyed and computer stored data and records also erased.

As this study recorded "live" supervision it was likely that issues regarding clients, colleagues and possibly the organisation would be raised in supervision. Confidentiality around these issues was of great importance. Two strategies were used here. Firstly the issue was discussed with the participants, prior to the recording of the supervision session, and some agreement reached as to disguising the names of people mentioned in supervision. Secondly, should there be any lapse of disguise in the session it was agreed that the names would be deleted from the transcript and thus eliminated from any written record. In the event this was not required as no names or identifying material were recorded. A summary of the findings of the research was available to all participants on request.

Issues of values, ethics and politics

"Questions of ethics are not technical issues, but can only be considered with reference to the structures of power within which research operates"(Finch, 1986:219). In a similar vein Bryson (1979) argues that all research supports a particular view point or set of values and "all research is thus a political act" (Bryson, 1979).

In the previous section on sampling I have addressed the issue of access to participants and the importance of voluntary participation. The supervision relationship involves power and authority and it is important that this is not used to pressure one party into the research. To this end the research began at the point of assessment by the least powerful of the supervision dyad, the supervisee, who was asked to volunteer if he or she considered, on a subjective rating, that the supervision that he or she received was of a particular standard, "good or excellent". The supervisor was then invited to participate.

Possibly the most significant ethical dilemma of this research for the researcher was the problem of recruitment. As the researcher is an independent provider of supervision and a lecturer in the area of social work supervision it was important that participants in the research were neither current supervisees nor current students. For this reason the home

territory of the researcher was chosen as the locus for the research as it was the area in which the researcher lived but not the area in which she worked. A poor response to this advertisement however led to two subsequent advertisements in "Social Work Notice Board" which broadened the recruitment area to the researcher's work region.

The issues and reflections which arose from this lack of response are more fully discussed in the final chapter and some have previously been raised in the sampling section of this chapter, however it is useful here to summarise the ethical issues confronted at this time. Essentially these issues concerned power and influence.

All relationships comprise some elements of power and the traditional supervision relationship within social work has clear power dynamics. Sources of power may be structural, expert or personal (Brown & Bourne, 1996; Morrison, 1993). The base line for power within the social work supervision relationship is structural power, where supervisors hold power and authority by the very nature of the role and the organisational and professional requirements which accompany that role. The first premise of this research however was voluntary self-selection by the least powerful participant in this supervision relationship, the supervisee.

At a stage when there were insufficient responses to the research alternative entry points into the social work community were considered. Two approaches were identified but neither was appropriate. The first, a personal approach to social workers, was dismissed due to the recognition of the power inherent in the researcher's relationships within the social work community derived from her formal roles of educator and supervisor, both of which contain structural power.

The second approach, to advertise independently within organisations has already been discussed in the recruitment section and, as identified there, the possibility of contamination from the expectations of the organisation and supervisors, coupled with possible pressure to please on the part of the supervisee, also ruled this option out. The problem was resolved by broadening the area of recruitment and further advertising.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the process and methods employed in this study, a rationale for their selection and discussion of the decisions which were necessary along the way. The material here contextualises the data presented in the following chapters which in turn leads to the proposition of a theory of 'good' supervision.

Chapter Four - Theories and Concepts

> The assumption is that the [supervisee] is always in the process of 'becoming' what is required by the ever changing parameters of the learning context (Butler, 1996:265).

Introduction

This research aims to identify the themes, practice and conceptualisations by which the participants of the supervision process, the supervisor and the supervisee, evaluate supervision. It is proposed that the research data will guide the construction of a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) of 'good supervision'. The research thus sits within the heuristic paradigm which

> insists that no knowledge can be neutral since it is always constructed through the lens of the researcher, whose choices in the perception of the problem and the questions asked affect the knowledge that is produced (Papell, 1996:13).

The identification of the theories, concepts and ideas, "sensitising concepts" (Patton, 1990), which will inevitably effect those choices made by the researcher and thus shape and direct the organisation of the research, is an acknowledgement of their influence (Papell, 1996) and allows the findings to be considered in context.

This chapter will discuss those theories and models which are brought to this research as a result of my interest in and experience of supervision throughout the years and which I believe are pertinent to the research process. Four significant and interrelated beliefs underpin this research.

1) That learning and development is an on-going process for social workers and supervision is a specific context in which learning can take place.
2) That reflectivity is an effective learning process.
3) That to minimise the distortion of perceptual filters, reflection needs to occur in the context of an 'other'.
4) That the nature of the reflective learning process and the relationship within which it occurs change as a consequence of the supervisee's location on a continuum of professional development.

It is argued here that supervision is a reflective learning process where actions, knowledge and intuitive practice wisdom can be reviewed, critiqued, challenged, affirmed, changed and the new learning can be acted upon. This construction of supervision draws from the adult learning theorists John Dewey (1933), David Kolb (1984), Derek Gardiner (1989) and Jack Mezirow (1981) and the theory of reflective learning in education of Donald Schon (1983, 1987). Finally in recognition of the cumulative effect of knowledge and experience, the process of supervision is considered in the context of developmental theory.

Supervision as a forum for learning

Social work supervision, as discussed earlier, has been buffeted over time by the competing demands of the profession and the employing agency (Beddoe & Davys, 1994; Gardiner, 1989; Morrison, 1993; Nash, 2001b; Payne, 1994). Through concept leakage (Gardiner, 1989)[1], supervision has been shaped by whichever practice theory has been dominant at the time (Coulshed, 1993), whilst in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the influence of the employing agency on supervision practice has been advantaged by the absence of strong professional identity amongst social workers (Nash, 2001b) and, in recent years, the influence of private sector styles of management within social service settings (Kelsey, 1997; O'Donoghue, 1999).

It is therefore not surprising that current social work practice, challenged as it is by professional and organisational expectations and by problems which "tend not to present as problems at all but as messy, indeterminate situations" (Schon, 1987:4), should attract supervisory models which look beyond the more rigid and prescribed positivist theories and techniques and focus instead on constructivist frameworks which consider the uniqueness of each situation. The fundamentals of 'good' supervision in this context may lie in the ability of the supervisor and the supervisee to learn (Davys, 2001), which may involve uncovering, understanding and developing, what Schon (1987) describes as the core artistry of practice. Indeed Schon's (1987) conditions for learning professional artistry translate well into the supervision context.

> The freedom to learn by doing in a setting relatively low in risk, with access to coaches who initiate students into the 'traditions of the calling' and help them,

[1] Concept leakage is identified by Gardiner (1989) as the direct transfer of concepts, language, goals and assessments from the therapeutic context into the supervision (learning and development) context.

> by the 'right kind of telling', to see on their own behalf and in their own way what they need to see (Schon, 1987:17).

The proposition here is thus that social work supervision is first and foremost a 'learning process', which is driven from the experience of the learner (the supervisee) rather than from the wisdom and knowledge of the supervisor. As Morrison (2001) states "the key to learning and development lies in the ability to engage in, and make use of, the worker's experience" (Morrison, 2001:57).

In this supervision context learning is focused "*on* our reflection-in-action so as to produce a good verbal description of it" (Schon, 1987:31) and so to understand past action and to shape future action.

Reflectivity as a process of learning

It is in this context that reflective practice and reflective models of supervision have emerged as models for practice. Reflection as a learning process is not new and can be traced to Aristotle's "distinction between technical, practical and theoretical forms of reasoning" (Kondrat, 1992). In more recent times "the most influential figure has been that of John Dewey and his use of 'reflective activity in learning' (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985:11). The increased demand for change and versatility of response in the work place has also, in recent times, emphasised the very challenges which Dewey's approach was designed to address (Kolb, 1984).

Dewey (1933), determined that the limits or boundaries to "a complete act of reflective activity" were "a perplexed, troubled, or confused situation at the beginning and a cleared-up, unified, resolved situation at the close" (Dewey, 1998:139). Whilst Dewey's five phases or aspects of reflective thought (Dewey, 1998) present a rational objectivist process which gives minimal attention to the affective aspects of reflection (Boud et al., 1985), the model nevertheless sets the stage for constructivist approaches and interpretations. Two aspects of Dewey's model stand out.

The first is his assertion of the instructive nature of failure. "The person who really thinks learns quite as much from his failures as his successes" (Dewey, 1998:142). From a positivist stance, Dewey views this as an opportunity to inform or revise the

original hypothesis. Problem solving and learning however are thus placed in an expandable frame which encourages engagement and exploration.

The second significant aspect of Dewey's model is the contextualisation of the reasoning process.

> The stretch of links brought to light by reasoning depends, of course, on the store of knowledge that the mind is already in possession of. And this depends not only on the prior experience and special education of the individual who is carrying on the inquiry, but also upon the state of culture and science of the age and place. Reasoning helps to extend knowledge, while at the same time it depends upon what is already known and upon the facilities that exist for communicating knowledge and making it a public, open resource (Dewey, 1998:141).

Thus for Dewey reason and thinking is influenced not only by the personal, but also the social, cultural, and professional and the limits of these in time and place.

Possibly the best known model of adult learning however is Kolb's (1984) "experiential learning model". Here learning is defined as "the process whereby knowledge is created through transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984:38). The model has four stages beginning with a 'concrete experience' in which the learner is 'fully' involved. This experience is observed and reflected upon to establish its impact on the 'learner' from many perspectives, then follows a conceptual analysis of the experience to determine the implications and meaning of this experience in terms of theory and context. Finally a new action plan is formulated on the basis of the assimilation of the reflection and analysis and the cycle is ready to be repeated with new experience or action.

Where Kolb's model lays the basis for experiential learning, reflective practice has been moulded by the seminal work of Donald Schon (1983,1987). Here Schon posits that "knowledge is directly constructed through engagements with problems encountered in the field, and built through successive stages of hypothesising, testing and reflection" (Gould & Harris, 1996:224).

The reflective practitioner examines the effect of events, actions and interactions on the self and the effect of self on those events, actions and interactions. In opposition to positivist traditions expertise is not the application of rules and theory but rather, the uncovering and understanding of the intuitive wisdom which underpins practice (Gould, 1996). Such examination allows practitioners to become confident of, and to trust, their

intuitive response. "At the same time, intuition is one of those 'moments of knowing' which should be open to inquiry to ensure that it is used in a responsible manner" (Moffatt, 1996:53).

Reflection does not uncover the 'ultimate' truth, but rather a subjective truth relative to time, place and person. It allows practitioners to examine dissonance between espous(theory and theory in action, that is, what they intend or say they do as opposed to what they actually do, Argyris and Schon (1974) cited in (Fook, 1996). Positivist theories, located within empirical frameworks often lead to definitions of right or wrong and the assertion of control. Reflectivity, however, requires the practitioner to include a subjective examination of experience which includes engagement with and respect for "the emotional world of self and others" (Papell, 1996). Such views offer contradictions and inconsistencies and thus importantly, reflectivity also offers the possibility of a number of perspectives.

In the context of supervision reflectivity extends the focus beyond the tensions of the functional debate to include issues of control where a desire for clean solutions wrestles with the anxiety and challenge of choice.

> Many practitioners, locked into a view of themselves as technical experts, find nothing in the world of practice to occasion reflection. They have become too skilful at techniques of selective inattention, junk categories, and situational control, techniques which they use to preserve the constancy of their knowledge-in-practice. For them, uncertainty is a threat; its admission a sign of weakness (Schon 1983:69).

It is thus suggested that reflectivity may not be available to all. Neufeldt et al (1996), in their study of the conceptualization of supervisee reflectivity, consider reflectivity to be a component of cognitive capacity. In this study, which was based on interviews with five experts in practitioner development, it was reported that whilst the respondents believed that reflectivity is an important aspect of thinking about practice in the supervision environment, two of the respondents, Donald Schon and Willis Copeland, "indicated that some supervisees might be better equipped than others" (Neufeldt, Karno, & Nelson, 1996:7).

In a similar vein Butler (1996), considers the manner in which the capacity for reflectivity is shaped by an individual practitioner's world view. In his model of

professional development[2] Butler (1996) suggests that some practitioners are unable to advance their reflective ability and may never progress from the first level of novice, where performance is rule-governed.

> Reflection is the process that propels people along the journey from novice to expert. Not everyone makes the whole journey; some people are stationary for many years, perhaps for their whole career, in one of the five stages...This is their belief about the essence of performance (Butler, 1996:279).

It is useful at this point to draw a distinction between reflective learning as discussed above and 'critical' reflection or 'critical' reflectivity. Critical reflectivity has its roots in critical social science where there is a fundamental relationship between reflection and emancipatory action (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998; Kincheloe, 1995). Critical social science

> goes beyond critique to critical praxis; that is, a form of practice in which the 'enlightenment' of actors comes to bear directly in their transformed social action. This requires an integration of theory and practice as reflective and practical moments in the dialectical process of reflection, enlightenment and the political struggle carried out by groups for the purpose of their own emancipation (Carr & Kemmis, 1986:144).

There is thus an understanding of the social and political context of action and thence of the possibility of (or imperative to) change. Though as Humphries (1988) observes "a capacity for critical reflectivity does not exclude that domain of learning which concerns technical competence, but rather informs action in important and significantly, explicit ways" (Humphries, 1988:11).

Much of what a social worker knows comes from his or her core of life wisdom and experience. Kondrat (1992) argues that this knowing, combined with the fact that even more knowledge is constructed " in an on-going, but often implicit, manner in the course of professional practice" requires practitioners, as a matter of urgency to critically reflect upon their work.

> Critical reflexivity involves the practitioner-knower in the process of making explicit the knowledge that is implicit in action so that it becomes available for both critique and enquiry. The effort called for includes, but goes well beyond, the task of outcome evaluation (Kondrat, 1992:250).

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[2] This model of professional development will be discussed later in this chapter.

The role of the "other' in reflectivity

Butler (1996) describes learning both as an on going process, and significantly, as an interactive process. "The conversation that takes place between a human agent and the world through considered action is made up of continually changing voices which introduce new topics, new priorities and new ideas" (Butler, 1996:274).

Avis (1995) however warns that "experience is never innocent". Thus a significant contribution of supervision to this "conversation" between the "human agent" and the "world" is to be found at the interface between perception of experience and reflection. The failure to "interrogate experience" results in a failure to

> examine the discursive production of experience. It fails to explore the way we position ourselves in relation to experience or the investments that tie us to particular positions and identities. Indeed it refuses to acknowledge the political consequences arising from particular constructions of experience. It is lodged in the present and fails to deconstruct experience with a view to teasing out the relations of power embedded in discourse (Avis, 1995:182).

Perception, the filter between reflection and performance (Butler, 1996), is formed and influenced by a person's world view, and, in the nature of homeostasis, acts to reinforce that world view. Thus, discrepancies and events which disturb that world view will be filtered out and only those that reinforce and confirm the position of the practitioner are available for reflection.

> In this way perception is a powerful determining factor on the outcomes of the reflective process. Since beliefs and values within the world view determine what is perceived, they determine indirectly the data that are offered to the process of reflection. This explains why it is so difficult to analyse one's own world view. It is in a loop that acts to keep it undisturbed and unexamined (Butler, 1996:275).

The supervision process, is a means by which a practitioner's work is presented for analysis by both the practitioner and the supervisor and where the practitioner's world view may be identified with the assistance of an "other" and transformational learning may take place. There is of course the danger of collusion if the world views are mutually reinforcing and the possibility of conflict if they are opposed. It has been noted that the struggle to learn is not always identified as satisfying (Ladany, Ellis, & Friedlander, 1999) and that the learning process, particularly if it challenges a person's frame or world view, "is and should be, on some occasions, a disturbing and unsettling

process" (Butler, 1996:275). There is a tendency, he notes, on such occasions to blame the learning process. Within supervision there is a tendency to blame the supervisor.

This tension within the supervision process can be understood as 'contextualisation' of knowledge, a construct which is central to Schon's (1987) *reflective frames* of reference. Here notions of truth and efficacy are not the ultimate truth but are relative to the frame which each individual brings to a given situation. Thus through an exploration of each person's 'frame', understanding can be reached and knowledge shifted from objectivist ("theory of error") to constructionist ("theory of understanding") views of practice. "Frames... are generated during the interaction with persons, events and personal biography. Professional frames may be generated as individual solutions to practical problems or to value dilemmas" (Gould & Harris, 1996:234).

Professional frames are also developed through the dialogue between students and masters of any given profession. The student and the supervisor (coach) may initially be in a state of "frame conflict" (Schon, 1987) where

> confusion and mystery reign, and the meanings held by the coach and student tend to be incongruent. The coach's language refers to things and relations in a particular kind of world – familiar to the coach, strange as yet to the student. Since the student has not experienced that world from the inside and cannot experience it until he learns to construct it, the things and relations of that world are not yet *his* (Schon, 1987:219).

For the student who wishes to 'learn' a profession, this "frame conflict" however exists with the intent and expectation of both parties that it will be resolved. Thus the ensuing dialogue can be seen as "frame reflection", albeit unidirectional (Schon, 1987:219). The use of reflective processes within the learning relationship enable the supervisor (coach) to assist the student (supervisee) to explore his or her context (frame) and boundaries of knowledge and, at the same time, allows the supervisor (coach) to communicate his or her knowledge (frame) either explicitly or through the direction of pertinent questions.

Schon (1987) suggests various scenarios for frame reflection which "make use of inner and outer views of action – action as felt and action as observed" (Schon, 1987:254) and retrospective and prospective views of action - past action and action to come. These

include firstly the practitioner modelling him or herself on the supervisor (coach) and experiencing and understanding specific interventions and/or actions recommended by the supervisor (coach). Secondly the practitioner may be assisted to understand the frame he or she has brought to a given situation by examining how he or she has behaved in practice. This enables the practitioner to observe from the outside what he or he has experienced from the inside.

> Framing of the situation can become *visible* to her as an object for private and public reflection. Her awareness of the way she has already framed a role or problem prepares her for the task of entering into a new way of framing it (Schon, 1987:253).

Thirdly the coach (supervisor) may model a particular intervention or action in order that the practitioner not only "sees" but also "experiences" this particular intervention.

As the student acquires competence in the 'art' of the profession and enters into this world so the dialogue between the coach and student becomes increasingly reciprocal. The "student and coach achieve a congruence of meaning evident in the ease with which they appear to understand each other, finishing each other's sentences, speaking elliptically in ways that mystify the uninitiated" (Schon, 1987:163).

What is relevant to this research is the next level of supervisory (coach) dialogue, which is, the dialogue between supervisors and competent or expert practitioners and where, it has been suggested, there is greater potential for conflict (Olk & Friedlander, 1992). It is possible that individuals within a given profession, particularly those who adhere to different theoretical positions and models, may hold conflicting views. These 'frame conflicts' are, according to Schon (1987), "unresolvable except through frame reflection". In order for dialogue to continue each party must acknowledge and accept the context of each view point, achieving understanding though not necessarily agreement.

Supervisee stage of professional Development

It has been noted earlier that much of the literature concerning social work 'learning' focuses on students, and here theories of adult learning identify 'autonomous practice' as the ultimate goal (Knowles, 1988; Mezirow, 1981; Rogers & McDonald, 1992), with little attention to the learning which may or may not occur beyond this point of arrival

as an autonomous practitioner. I believe however, with Butler (1996) and Hawkins and Shohet (2000), that learning is never completed and that "a person can never know or understand performance for all time and that professional development is a complex journey" (Butler, 1996:274).

This present research specifically targets more experienced practitioners in the belief that the novice or student practitioner has different needs to those who have some years of "experience"[3]. Schon (1987) focuses on "educating" the reflective practitioner, rather than on "maintaining the growth and development" of the reflective practitioner, however his concept of "frame reflection" introduces a vehicle for understanding and extrapolating beyond the novice and student to the supervision of the experienced supervisee. Frame reflection offers the opportunity to understand difference as opposed to insistence on consensus. This is a key consideration for the supervision of experienced practitioners who are not seeking answers, but rather wish to challenge ideas or to develop processes which may or may not be within the supervisor's frame. Having been in Schon' terms 'educated', does the experienced practitioner continue to learn and, if so, in what context can or should this happen? It is the proposition of this research that one locus for learning for the experienced practitioner is the supervision forum and further that this learning is substantially different to the learning of the novice/student.

Models of practitioner development were common, particularly throughout the 1980's (Hawkins & Shohet, 1989; Ivey, 1888; Loganbill, Hardy, & Delworth, 1982) and were largely influenced by the assumptions and theories of developmental psychology. The implication of these models is that supervisors require a range of approaches and skills to attend to each sequential stage as it is achieved by the supervisee (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000; Krause & Allen, 1988). It is further implied that the process remains under the direction and control of the supervisor.

Some authors, including Hawkins and Shohet (2000), present their models with the warning that too rigid an application of the stages may blind the supervisor to the uniqueness of the supervisee, the supervision context and the supervision relationship.

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[3] For the purposes of this research experienced social workers have been identified as those with 3 or more years of practice.

Gardiner (1989) also warns of the prescriptive nature of such models which equates compliance to the norm with success and pathologises those who "differ from... expectations of normal progress" (Gardiner, 1989). Cultural bias and the associated assumptions implicit in developmental models must also be considered for "the information they leave out, such as a person's experience due to race, class, gender or sexual orientation" (Moffatt, 1996:49), as much as for the information which they provide.

Despite these provisos, if the developmental framework is considered as a dynamic, as opposed to a mechanistic structure "which insists on orderly linear progression" (Moffatt, 1996:52), it can provide a useful conceptual framework from which to understand the difference of both relationship and dialogue which occurs between supervisors and students on the one hand and, more particularly, supervisors and competent practitioners on the other.

Gardiner's (1989) research on learning in supervision is relevant here. Considering the learning and teaching interaction between social work students and their supervisors Gardiner identified "three patterns of interaction [which] can be considered as parts of a developmental continuum" (Gardiner, 1989:135). The first, stage one, a "surface-reproductive conception of learning", focuses on the content of the learning. Stage two, involves a search for meaning and focuses on the process of learning, whilst stage three, the ability to apply different learning approaches to different tasks, is described as "meta-learning or learning to learn" (Gardiner, 1989). The model is progressive and Gardiner notes that each level subsumes the last, meaning that those operating at level three have available to them the learning strategies from the previous levels.

What is significant about this research is that the level or pattern of interaction is as relevant to the student as it is to the supervisor. This model thus distinguishes between the development of expertise and practice experience on the one hand and the development of 'concepts of learning and teaching' on the other. There is reinforcement of the idea that competence as a practitioner does not necessarily equate to competence as a supervisor and that the learning interaction within the supervision relationship is influenced by both participants. It also means that this model has relevance for the supervision of all social workers, regardless of experience. A

supervisor, who can interact at stage three, is able to match a supervisee at level one, however a supervisee whose learning pattern is at level three will be frustrated, and (especially if a student) possibly compromised, by a supervisor who is unable to operate at this level.

An implicit connection between 'expert' practice and level three interactions is suggested by Coulshed's (1993) discussion of Gardiner's work where she observes that the attainment of stage three is essential for the continued development of knowledge and for "the capacity for higher reasoning and critical reflectivity to develop" (Coulshed, 1993). Higher reasoning and critical reflectivity are, as discussed later in this chapter, indicators of competent 'expert' practice.

An interesting finding of Gardiner's study was that "only a few students and supervisors" (Gardiner, 1989) demonstrated level three patterns of interaction. Gardiner however suggests learning interactions may be "context-dependent" meaning that the chosen learning strategy or level will reflect the conceptions of the nature of the learning required which are held by the participants in the given situation. It may also be useful to consider here the nature of student supervision. Social work students are traditionally supervised on field placements by 'becoming' supervisors. These supervisors

> can regard themselves as having come full cycle in their careers. They have developed from perhaps unqualified practitioners, to social workers in training and subsequently qualified practitioners, then to the role of teachers to a new generation of aspiring entrants to the profession (Ford & Jones, 1987:2).

Thus many supervisors 'learn' the 'art' of supervision through the supervision of students, coming to the task as competent professional practitioners but inexperienced novice teachers and supervisors (Heid, 1997). This newness may, in itself, be a 'contextual constraint' to operating within the level three patterns.

'Professional competence' which has been variously defined, requires, according to van Kessel and Haan (1993), the integration of two dimensions:

- the professional is able to combine his/her integrated functioning in a general human way as a person (*first dimension*)
- with his/her methodical activity within the framework of professional performance in a specific work situation *(second dimension)* in such a way

> that the resulting integrated whole can be said to operate as a professional person (Van Kessel & Haan, 1993:10).

According to Butler (1996), competence is related to experience and is developed by people who have been working in the same job or area for two or three years and is marked by the ability to both plan and strategise for the long term and to analyse complex problems (Butler, 1996). Competence is however not the ultimate goal according to his model of professional development. This model, which has five stages, begins with the *novice* (rule governed) and progresses through *advanced beginner* (seeking the external answer) to *competent* (personal analysis of each situation) to *proficient* (having the big picture in focus) and finally to *expert* (tacit understanding). The significance of Butler's model for this research is that each "progression is not more of the same at each stage; it is four essential transformations of the basis of practice" (Butler, 1996:280). Thus the supervision experience for the competent practitioner will be different from the supervision experience of the novice/student. For example where the novice requires "rules and procedures to follow so that the performance can be done without experience" (Butler, 1996:277), the competent practitioner's "performance is organised by a plan which is based on conscious, thoughtful, analytic reflection" (Butler, 1996:278). Expert practitioners are expert because "personal knowledge is continually renewed by the uniqueness of some encountered events. Beliefs and assumptions are evaluated against the changing context" (Butler, 1996:279).

The supervision relationship between a supervisor and practitioners in these various stages, it is suggested, will thus alter according to the supervisee's stage of development. Here Mezirow's (1981) work on perspective transformation[4] offers a useful framework. Referring to Habermas' three areas of cognitive interest, the technical, the practical and the emancipatory, Mezirow suggests that each of these areas of interest is "grounded in different aspects of social existence: work, interaction and power" and, according to Mezirow, represent "three distinct but interrelated learning domains" (Mezirow, 1981:4).

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[4] Perspective transformation, in Merizow 's account is synonymous with emancipatory action. It is the process "of becoming critically aware of how and why the structure of psycho-cultural assumptions has come to constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships, reconstructing this structure to permit a more inclusive and discriminating integration of experience and acting upon these new understandings" (Mezirow, 1981:6).

The first learning domain, the technical, concerns a rational instrumental approach which relies on empirical rules and actions concerned with control and manipulation of the environment. "The criteria of effective control of reality direct what is or is not appropriate action. The strategy of choice depends on correctly assessing alternatives" (Mezirow, 1981:4). This domain has elements in common with the rule governed learning of Butler's (1996) novice stage.

The second learning domain, the practical, concerns "interaction" or "communicative action". This domain moves to seek explanation and description and most significantly to seek understanding. "It is not the methods of empirical-analytic sciences which are appropriate to this task but systematic enquiry which seeks the understanding of meaning rather than to establish causality" (Mezirow, 1981:5). Again there are parallels with Butler's (1996) "strongly analytical" stage of competence.

The emancipatory, the third learning domain, moves further yet and "involves an interest in self-knowledge, that is the knowledge of self reflection, including interest in the way one's history and biography has expressed itself in the way one sees oneself, one's roles and social expectations" (Mezirow, 1981:5). It is this domain which leads to the possibility of emancipatory action, but as Mezirow notes, this is not a necessary outcome of self reflection and self knowledge. This learning domain may best be reflected in the learning of the 'expert' practitioner, Butler's (1996) fifth stage.

The characteristics of the supervision relationship between a supervisor and this 'expert' level of practitioner are captured by Mezirow's following description.

> Rather than a simple transfer of identification to a new reference group, a new set of criteria come to govern one's relationships and to present conditions governing commitments as well. Rather than simple identification, the process may be more accurately described as one of *contractual solidarity.* Commitments are made with implicit mutual agreement among equals (in the sense of agency) concerning conditions of the relationship, including periodic review and renegotiation with the option of terminating the relationship. Such insistence on reciprocity and equality often represents positive movement toward greater autonomy and self-determination. A superior perspective is not only one that is a more inclusive or discriminating experience of integrating but also one that is sufficiently permeable to allow access to other perspectives. This makes possible movement to still more inclusive and discriminating perspectives (Mezirow, 1981:9).

The supervision relationship at this level, characterised by choice, autonomy, equality and tolerance for differing perspective, places an emphasis on mutuality. The beginnings of which may be laid in the earlier student/coach interaction.

> The communicative work of the dialogue, with its virtuous learning cycle, depends not only on the ability of coach and student to play their parts but on their willingness to do so. Here feelings as well as understandings are involved, each critically bound up with the other (Schon, 1987:166).

The 'supervisory working alliance', defined by Bordin (1983) as "the agreement on goals and tasks of supervision and an emotional bond between the supervisor and the supervisee" Bordin (1983) quoted in (Ladany 1997: 287), is relevant here, although once again, it is necessary to note the limitations. Bordin's (1983) model, and the research on the 'working alliance' which has followed, is focussed on the supervision of students' work (Efstation, Patton, & Kardash, 1990; Ladany, Brittan-Powell, & Pannu, 1997; Ladany & Friedlander, 1995; Ladany, Hill, Corbett, & Nutt, 1996; Patton & Kivlighan, 1997; Sumerel & Borders, 1996). Here evaluation and compulsory attendance may have an effect on the supervisee's sense of control within the relationship and thence his or her emotional engagement and involvement in negotiating the tasks and goals of supervision (Ladany et al., 1999). As observed by Grundy (1982) cited in (Boud et al., 1985), the nature of the relationship between the participants is significant if critical reflection is to occur. One of the key features of self-reflection is an equal power relationship which allows a genuine freedom of choice which stands outside the influence of teacher (supervisor) and peers.

For the present purposes however, it is useful to acknowledge the idea of the supervisory working alliance and in particular to consider the research of Ladany, Ellis and Friedlander (1999). This study considered whether the relationship between the supervisees' "perceptions of the supervisory alliance are related to changes in their reported self-efficacy expectations and satisfaction with supervision, taking into account trainee experience level" (Ladany et al., 1999:448). The study found that the emotional bond, a component of the supervisory alliance, was significantly related to satisfaction with supervision. This bond was shown to develop positively over time and included a positive evaluation of both the supervisor's qualities and performance and their own behaviour in supervision. Conversely, if the bond was viewed as weakening over time, a negative assessment was made of the supervisor's qualities and performance and of

the supervisee's own behaviour in supervision[5]. Of particular significance here is thus the relationship between the emotional bond and satisfaction with supervision along with the conceptualisation of the working alliance as a dynamic, rather than static, relationship with fluctuations over time.

The above discussion, which identifies the mutuality of the supervision relationship, is not complete without consideration of the development of supervisors. Several models have been proposed (Beddoe, 2001; Blair & Peake, 1995; Brown & Bourne, 1996; Heid, 1997) with the underlying premise that "an awareness of the developmental process of the supervisor, combined with the awareness of the supervisee's developmental process, should promote increasingly effective supervision" (Blair & Peake, 1995:120).

Beddoe (2001) proposes a model for the development of *new* supervisors in Aotearoa/New Zealand, identifying eight critical issues and three phases of learning and development. These phases move the new supervisor from the initial stages of promotion to the role through to "the last phase ... where the supervisor feels that they have integrated both theory and the practice of intervention in supervision into their own 'persona' as a supervisor" (Beddoe, 2001: 75). Heid (1997), whose model "an integrated model of supervisor lifespan development" also includes a list of critical issues, describes these issues as "developmental strands" for supervisors through all levels of supervisory experience, with the focus on the process of development rather than on a point of arrival. "The strands are emphasised, rather than stages or levels, because the author hypothesises that even as supervisors function at the baseline level of an experienced supervisor[6], their continued development along each strand will vary" (Heid, 1997:147).

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[5] In relation to self-efficacy, whilst gains were identified over time, there was no predictive relationship between these gains and changes in the supervisory alliance, and the authors note that this may be accounted for by other factors such as peer and client feedback or specific incidents experienced in the work (Ladany et al., 1999).

[6] An Experienced supervisor is suggested as one who:
1. Maintains a professional identity as a supervisor
2. Demonstrates a generally consistent level of confidence and competence in the role
3. Can function autonomously, but consults when needed and is likely to be enhanced by ongoing group consultation and/or peer supervision
4. May have healthy narcissistic needs met by the admiration, respect and success emanating from supervision, but not to the detriment of the supervisees or clients (continued page 71)

Heid emphasises the need to attend to "the supervisors' contributions to difficulties and impasses in the supervision process" (Heid, 1997:149) and agrees with Blair (1995) that experience in supervising does not necessarily equate with supervisory competence.

It is suggested, in the context of this research, that practitioner development is a journey of learning which can be seen as an outward spiralling continuum marked by the naïve student at one end and moving into uncharted territory beyond the 'master' expert practitioner. If knowledge is always relative and always expanding there is no point of arrival, but rather a random series of points for reference and critique. The journey of learning is not unidirectional and the practitioner and supervisor may move through the spiral in either direction according to the impact of both internal (personal) or external contextual circumstance.

A developmental framework for supervision may thus depend, not so much on the adaptation of approach and skills of the supervisor, but rather on adaptation and changes within the relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have proposed that supervision is a forum for learning and have argued for the conceptualisation of the reflective practice paradigm as the process of learning. Reflectivity has been discussed both as a process of critique and reflection and, in the context of critical social science, as the precursor to emancipatory action and change. The limitations of 'self' reflection have been discussed and the positioning of the 'other', in the form of the supervisor, has been emphasised in order to limit distortions of perception and thence reflection. Finally, the mutuality of the supervision relationship has been reviewed in the context of developmental frameworks. The individual level of expertise and capacity for learning of both the supervisee and the

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5. Maintains a balanced focus on self and other, concentrating on the learning needs of the supervisees most of the time
6. Acknowledges the power differential inherent in the supervisory relationship and uses it as needed for the benefit of supervisees and clients, but not to the detriment of supervisees or clients nor for personal needs for control
7. Understands the supervisor's impact on the counselor and client, and is able to, at least at times, integrate the use of self in the supervisory relationship and he use of the supervisory relationship in the supervision process
8. Realistically identifies competencies and strengths, as well as personal issues and vulnerabilities, possible blindspots, and areas for potential self growth, including prejudices and stereotypes based on gender, race, culture, class, age, and sexual orientation (Heid, 1997:146).

supervisor has been considered and, whilst the reflective process of supervision may remain constant, the focus for the supervisee and the quality of the relationship have been seen to alter as the supervisee moves from novice to expert and beyond and at each stage attends to a different level of him or her self.

Chapter Five – The Supervisees' Perspective

> To me it is invaluable – it is everything – I would not consider not having a good supervisor. If I didn't have one I would find one. It is so important to me supervision and I love it. And I think it is what keeps me in the job – it keeps my stress level at a good level – keeps me learning, keeps me competent, keeps me accountable – I love it. And so all these things are really valuable to me. And I like to be able to do a job well. And if I am going to do it well and have to make sure – and the way to really check out is my supervision – very important (Research Participant, 2001).

The Participants

The supervisee participants for this research were recruited by way of an advertisement which was placed in the monthly newsletter of the Aotearoa/New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW). As discussed in the previous chapter, this advertisement was placed on three occasions and a total of ten individuals volunteered. From this group two participants were disqualified, one because of her close involvement with the work of the researcher and one because she did not meet the requirement that participants have at least three years employment as a social worker. The two other volunteers, for various reasons, were unable to follow through with the research process.

Six supervisees therefore participated in this research. All participants were asked to complete a non-identifying statistical sheet (appendix one, attachment 11) and the summary of this information is represented in figure 5.1. This was an experienced group of social workers whose years of employment ranged from ten to thirty years and who were aged, apart from the youngest who was in her mid thirties, from 52 to 59 years. Ethnically the group described itself variously as Pakeha, Caucasian, European and New Zealand and all were women. Five of the six participants held a social work qualification and four of these noted they had had training in supervision. There was an equal balance of employees from government and non-government organisations.

All participants received supervision from someone who worked outside of their organisation, though three participants said that they also received supervision from

within the organisation. Similarly all of the participants had chosen their supervisor and none of these supervisors held any managerial responsibility for their work, though one supervisor had some input into the annual performance appraisal. All of the supervision relationships were based on a contract and five of the arrangements had been in place for two years or less. The sixth supervision arrangement had been active for five years, with a one year gap during this time. Apart from one supervisee who had only had one previous supervisor, all the participants had had more than four previous supervision arrangements. The most common frequency for supervision was monthly. Two participants received fortnightly supervision and one attended supervision on a three weekly basis.

Data were obtained for this research through open-ended interviews, either on an individual or group basis, where participants were asked to articulate the reasons why they had rated their current supervision as 'good'. On analysis the responses fell into five categories:

- the knowledge base and fields of practice brought to supervision by the supervisor
- the structure of the supervision session
- the processes within the supervision relationship
- the supervisee's role in supervision
- the process of choosing a supervisor.

Knowledge base and fields of practice - Supervisor Qualities

The knowledge base, skills and the ability of the supervisor to enhance the learning of the supervisee were important for all the supervisees. As will be discussed later, these factors were also determinants for the choice of the particular supervisor chosen by each of these supervisees. Throughout the interviews there was discussion as to whether the supervisor should share the same professional base and /or experience in their field of practice.

For one participant the importance of having a social worker as a supervisor rested not so much on the shared knowledge base but on a belief in the competence of social workers as supervisors.

> *Needs to be a social worker because I know that social workers do supervision best – part of our profession and has been for a long time and if I am supervised by a social worker ten to one I'll get a good supervisor. Damn good chance that social work and good supervision go together.*

For another supervisee the important issue was the supervisor's ability to fully understand, at a personal and experiential level, the work and the difficulty of the work of the supervisee. The majority of supervisees however were more concerned that the supervisor was able and willing to understand the work context sufficiently to assist the supervisee and did not insist that they shared the same work context. Indeed the fact that the supervisor did not share the same work context as the supervisee was often considered an advantage as it allowed the supervisee to have the benefit of an outside perspective.

> *I don't think the same background is as important as the ability to understand what is being asked. If the person has the right training and is prepared to do that supervision in the right way – doesn't matter. Sometimes (having the same background) is a disadvantage because opinions are already formed.*
>
> *Field of practice is not an issue and in fact can have advantage – if supervisor comes from different field of practice – can see things differently.*

Significantly the supervisees placed importance on the knowledge base and skills of the supervisor and required the supervisor to be able to either surpass their own knowledge or at least add to or complement it.

> *I know she is dependable – can always top whatever I know – makes me feel safe. I know I can draw off her knowledge – I will never reach her level.*
>
> *I want someone with knowledge about [that] who can add to what I know and where we can have a conversation about those things.*

Knowledge and ability as a supervisor, as one participant observed however, was not necessarily a corollary of years of experience.

> *I have confidence in my supervisor - a lot- because she is a woman of a lot of experience – very clear thinker. Good access to resources – when I bring up a question – able to put her hand on resources. Well read – well educated. Long experience is not necessarily an indicator of a good supervisor.*

Finally, the supervisees identified specific skills or techniques which the supervisors used to enhance the supervisees' understanding and learning. This list included the ability to ask pertinent questions, to draw out information, use role play, present different perspectives, explain theory, use facilitation skills and the ability to promote higher order analysis.

> *... sharpens my thinking and one of the things I really like is the chance to have some intellectual input – like taking things to a higher level – more intellectual stimulation. Higher level is this analysis and looking at general principles and theories and new learning.*

Supervisees thus identified both the importance of practice knowledge and expertise and competence as a supervisor. Whilst requiring supervisors to be proficient and knowledgeable, the supervisees were alert to the need for supervisors to interact at Gardiner's (1989) level three and actively sought the level of analysis, critique and learning which followed this type of interaction.

The structure of the supervision session

The second theme which emerged from the data was the structure of supervision. Supervisees wanted structure and boundaries around their supervision sessions. It was important that they got value for time and money. The sessions needed to be purposeful, focussed on the issues to hand and it was important that there were clear boundaries around both personal and professional agendas and the supervisor's contribution to the session. The supervisor was seen to have a role to maintain the focus and to direct the learning in supervision, but not to impose her own solutions or process. Supervisees also valued the reliability of the supervision sessions which were unlikely to be postponed or cancelled.

> *I like a bit of structure – I [like to] feel at the end of the session I've got through everything I have taken.*

> *Doesn't muck around with small talk – no wasting time.*

> *Now using more structured process to look at issues in detail. Using structured questions. I have feeling structure to session is very helpful.*

She is good at identifying whether this is work or a personal issue – keeps boundaries very clear.

There was thus an order to supervision which offered the supervisees a degree of certainty that their needs would be met within a known structure and there was clarity about the distinction between therapy and supervision. Such clarity, it is suggested by Yegdich (1999), is critical. "To correct the imbalance: talking about patients and one's therapeutic work, in preference to oneself and one's personal issues, is the cornerstone of supervision" (Yegdich, 1999:1272).

Clear expectations and clarity about the purpose and the process of supervision, it has been argued, lead to the foundations of a 'good' supervision relationship (Morrison, 2001; Rowlings, 1995; Sawdon & Sawdon, 1995).

Processes within the supervision relationship

Whilst the structure and framework of the supervision session, combined with the qualities of the supervisor may have established a base for 'good' supervision, it was the processes within the supervision relationship which were most appreciated by the supervisees in this research. These processes which can be further divided into five sub categories, were also interwoven with other themes, in particular choice and participation. The element of choice, which will be considered in a section by itself later in this chapter, shaped much of the conversations about supervision and led to a strong sense of ownership by the supervisees. These were not people who were being 'passively' supervised, these were professional social workers who were *participants in a supervision process* where they were able to be themselves and value their range of responses, both emotional and intellectual.

The five sub categories which were identified, and are reported here in no particular order were: mutuality, challenge, safety for self and client, respect and positive regard, and trust and intimacy.

Mutuality

Underpinning much of the discussion of good supervision from the perspective of the supervisee was the sense of mutuality in the relationship. Whilst the supervisees were 'recipients' of supervision they conveyed a strong sense of ownership and equal

participation in the process. There was agreement to debate issues and to contribute to an evaluation of the actual supervision session.

> *...real partnership...not a hierarchical structure. My supervisor is very much a facilitator facilitating a process.*

> *I need to be able to challenge them if I think they are not supervising me well- two way thing. Or if I might have done it a different way...Two way process – more comfortable if I can challenge – we can talk things through.*

> *I like the structure – what is different is the way we end the session – how we talk about how we each thought about it – assess how well each of us presented – is there anything we could have done better – I really like that.*

> *I show her the respect she shows me. Don't create fusses – feedback to her things that are helpful.*

This was not however to ignore the power within the relationship. The supervisees accepted and understood power as negotiated within the supervision framework and also understood it to be accompanied by certain obligations on the part of the supervisor. It was accepted that supervision was conducted within professional and organisational constraints and that this created a degree of control over the process.

> *I think it would be dangerous if the supervisor didn't think they had power...supervisor does have power I would expect supervisor to be mindful of the boundaries more than me.*

Power, characterised by positional power, was derived from the role or position of supervisor, however expert power, derived from knowledge and skills was also shared by the supervisee, and in the context of mutuality allowed for debate and disagreement.

> *The power lies with the supervisor – not a huge issue for me because I have been around for a long time and don't have lack of confidence in saying what I want to say. For a person in the job for a short time the supervisor would have to be very careful... could become destructive very quickly.*

The sense of mutuality, the acknowledgement of power and the responsibility which accompanies power, laid the basis for challenge.

Challenge

For all participants of this research 'challenge' was a highly valued component of supervision. Challenge in these accounts was always positive, though not necessarily comfortable, and took several forms. For one it involved the acknowledgement of strengths and provided motivation to move forward.

> *My current supervision lit the flame for me. I was a bit comfortable, prepared to sit in the chair – comfortable. She challenges me to think about things like 'you have a lot to offer' 'Are you getting job satisfaction?' These challenges encouraged and acknowledged that you are worthwhile.*

For another, challenge was viewed as a process which guarded against this complacency or comfort.

> *...not just a challenge that I might not be going down the right path- also when you have been in practice for a long time you can get complacent from time to time. Think we have sussed it out and we really haven't and it is times like those when I think 'crikey all those years I never thought about that – that is interesting'.*

To be challenged however was a sensitive event for the supervisees and the need for care, support, trust and mutuality were emphasised as being critical if this process was to be successful.

> *If I am wrong they will tell me – but not in a way which is crushing. I am a sensitive person – it is important to feel safe – trust- be respected and treated gently.*
>
> *I need to validate and feel good about myself in supervision – I also need to be challenged...I wont accept challenge so easily if I am not validated.*
>
> *I believe support comes from that positive regard. Also absolutely trust her to challenge me on things I need challenge on – but always in a caring way.*

For the majority of the participants the rationale for seeking challenge was to maintain safe practice and for professional growth.

> *I want regular time with someone I relate well to who I trust that I have a good relationship with, but someone who will challenge me in a supportive way to look at my practice, deepen my analysis and keep on growing.*

Possibly the most interesting aspect of challenge was the attitude of the supervisees, their openness to challenge and debate and their expectation that it would and should occur.

> *[Challenge is exciting and motivating because of] who I am – I feel passionate about work...learn something new each week – constantly looking for new doors to open and I go to supervision with that attitude.*

> *I like to be disagreed with, not dismissed. Talk it through – really good thing to do.*

> *I know when I go to supervision that I will be talking to someone who will give me constructive feedback and who does that very well.*

Supervisees also saw challenge as contributing to a climate of safety for them and their clients and thus as a vehicle to safe practice.

Safety for self and client

Safety for self and clients was also a theme which was woven throughout the supervisees' discussion of 'good' supervision. Some of the supervisees derived a sense of security from the knowledge that there was another person who was vigilant on their behalf to ensure the safety of clients.

> *I trust my supervisor would do something if she thought I was being unsafe.*

> *I trust if I was doing something unsafe she would break confidentiality and do something. Trust her about anything – knowing that I am safe and my clients are safe.*

> *For me it is about safe practice – keeping safe practice ... keeping me honest and making sure I am practising social work principles and being prepared to be challenged.*

Interestingly there was, for some supervisees, a suggestion that the supervisor's role in monitoring safety created both a sense and a place of safety for the supervisee.

Need to leave supervision in a place where you have worked with an issue – worked towards a place you can go and feel safe.

...good at monitoring your own self care – puts a boundary around it- but can see if you are doing too much- good at assessing – her assessment of where I am to go.

I had a crisis this year. My supervisor listened to me and assessed where I was at – telling me when she would see me next – I knew she was looking after me – knew I was fragile ... she told me how we were going to work through – it was great I wasn't able to think straight...I give her credit for coping the way I did.

These comments suggest that supervisees place great importance on the ability of the supervisor to safeguard the supervisee in the course of her practice and brings to mind the metaphors identified by Ash (1995). This list, produced by a group of "highly experienced practitioners and trainees" (Ash, 1995), not too dissimilar to the current group, represented the expectations of this group of a supervisor. The list included the following:

- "a warm wall – to give me support and firmness to bounce off ideas
- a deep well from which I can draw strength and wisdom
- a helicopter to winch me out of danger
- a pilot to make sure I steer the right course through difficult waters
- a harbour master to ensure that I have safe haven in times of storm and stress" (Ash, 1995:20).

Whilst Ash speaks of these as the ideal it would appear that to some extent they were achieved for the current group of supervisees.

Respect and positive regard

The basis of good supervision for these participants was the nature of their relationship with the supervisor and the foundations of this relationship were respect and positive regard from which developed trust and a basis for honesty and challenge. Supervisors were accorded respect and were valued for their skills and knowledge, and there was a requirement that this respect and valuing was reciprocated. Supervisees wished for interest and warmth within the relationship, they wanted to have their strengths celebrated and above all to be listened to, heard and valued for who they were.

Respectfulness for who I am and whatever I bring. And respectfulness for what I know and what I don't know.

One of the things working in area where social work has not got a high profile and not valued – important to have somewhere to go where it is respected and valued and to keep my confidence up to keep me going in the face of all that invisibility.

Warm positive regard all characteristics of good supervision.

Respect and positive regard for the supervisees not only affirmed them as practitioners and as individuals, it also provided a safe place from which to be challenged. The experience of safe challenge encourages trust and thus deepens the cycle of intimacy.

Trust and Intimacy

A significant aspect of these conversations with supervisees was the degree of intimacy they had established with their supervisors. Based on the trust and mutual regard within the supervision relationship the supervisee understood supervision to be a place where emotion and feeling could be shared freely. There was an understanding that the level of relationship could shift, when appropriate, to a deeper level of support, but this was always within boundaries and within a framework which moved beyond the personal needs and looked towards resolution.

I have very intimate conversations with this person.

Potential for a degree of intimacy when appropriate –moved back to normal supervisory relationship now.

Ability to listen to allow me to move into my comfort zone – feel confident enough and can disclose the things – not necessarily work related - which affect what's happening to me at work .

There was an acknowledgement that supervision was not necessarily intended to make the supervisee feel 'better', but there was an expectation that discussion would lead towards a shift or movement forward.

I don't know about feeling good – 'cos I can go in feeling shit and leave feeling shit – but at some level I need to make a shift or move.

There was confidence in the supervisor's ability to meet the supervisee at whichever level was appropriate at the time. The supervision session was seen as a place of safety, nurture and 'holding' for the supervisee. A process for the containment of the feelings which may affect the supervisee in her work.

Good because I feel comfortable in a room with a person I am working with. I can have a range of emotions. That person can meet me at any of those levels and really validate how I am feeling and find a way out of that.

You have to give your concerns over to her to respond to – that's the point of supervision... she can be very valuable to me.

Being met is when the other person understands what is happening for you – that whatever passes – the other person is there and holding you through the process. Through gesture, action, words, place – lets you know they are there – not always tangible.

Sometimes in supervision I cry the whole time and can't stop and that's fine.

For me it's the comfort zone that I feel if I'm exposing personal things a) I feel confident it will be respected and b) that I can burst into tears and it's ok because the person can openly say that 'it's ok and I understand I've been there – done that'.

Supervisees role

As an extension of the idea of mutuality, supervisees were clear and articulate about the role that they play in making supervision a success. As illustrated above, some of the contributions of supervisees stem from their attitude of trust and openness, but there is also a practical aspect to this which involves preparation, prioritising, contributing to and participation in the session and follow up.

...depends on how you are prepared to be in supervision session – but I treat supervision very seriously – I am always very well prepared – never had a session where I have not known what I am going to discuss.

I go with things written down – know the time we check it at the start, then work and prioritise – often I take more things than I need – never short.

When it is good is when I go always prepared and I itemise what I take –so we talk about at the beginning what we will go through first.

It has to be a two way process. If you don't give anything over they can't respond. I don't think of myself as what do I give- I almost think that I am on the take. When she is giving me constructive criticism I am gobbling it up.

It makes sense to me that if I know more about what I want from supervision and make a commitment to it and want to engage with it – going to make a difference to the other person.

Huge I think I play a huge role - I am the role, supervision is me – that's what it is about.

It has to be dynamic otherwise it is boring-if I come in dynamically then we have a really good dynamic session.

The supervisee's position within these supervision arrangements was not however a matter of chance. The supervisees had invested time and effort into the process of choosing a supervisor.

Choice

The discussion hereto reflects the supervisees' experience of 'good' supervision. Possibly the most basic common feature of this group of supervisees was that they all were engaged in a supervision arrangement which was external to their organisation, and most significantly, they had personally chosen this supervisor. Choice it has been noted is a key component in the establishment of trust (Hupcey, Penrod, Morse, & Mitcham, 2001)[1], and as identified by these supervisees, trust is an integral factor within the supervision relationship. Hupcey et al's (2001) exploration of the concept of trust identified antecedents to trust which included "prior knowledge and /or experience of the other". Amongst the attributes of trust they noted "choice or willingness to take some risk and an expectation that the trusted individual will behave in a certain way" (Hupcey et al., 2001:290). Trust, they observe, ceases to exist when "there is a perception of no choice" (Hupcey et al., 2001).

Lack of choice, as discovered by Sloan (1999), is one reason why internal supervision is not as valued a process by the supervisees. Supervisees however do have a choice about how they handle this and one supervisee's solution was to be clear about her requirements of supervision and her responsibility for her own behaviour.

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[1] Hupcey et al explored the conceptualisation of trust within the literature of four disciplines; nursing, medicine, psychology and sociology. Based on this exploration they proposed the following definition: "Trust emerges from the identification of a need that cannot be met without the assistance of another and some assessment of the risk involved in relying on the other to meet this need. Trust is a willing dependency on another's actions, but is limited to the area of need and is subject to overt and covert testing. The outcome of trust is an evaluation of the congruence between expectations of the trusted person and actions" (Hupcey et al., 2001:290).

> *This is supervision which I have with a person of no choice...I think we have to make the best of what we have and try and make the best relationship. Has happened to some extent because I have been very clear about what I want from the relationship and how I am going to behave. How the person behaves is up to them.*

The criteria for choosing a supervisor fell into three categories, the knowledge and skills of the supervisor, prior knowledge of the person and inter-personal factors.

Knowledge and skills of supervisor

The potential supervisor's knowledge base and qualifications were important as was his or her ability to articulate their theoretical and skill base.

> *Always choose people who know more – picking their brains.*

> *If supervisor can't tell me how they work that is not ok for me – I need them to tell me how it works. Tell me they know how they work.*

> *I am careful about who I chose. Have to know who that person is. Do a lot of homework – they have to be qualified – a qualified SW they have to have considerable experience in providing supervision.*

It was also important that the knowledge and practice base was in accord with the supervisee. It was not sufficient to like the supervisor.

> *One of the supervisors I went to was nice – then she started talking about crystals and that was not what I needed – she was nice and I liked her but she wasn't – we weren't going to meet. Our minds were not going to meet.*

Choice of supervisor was a serious concern, a matching of both personal qualities and specific practice knowledge and expertise. These were not "blind dates" but were based on prior knowing and reputation.

Prior relationship

For many, a prior relationship with the supervisor, (which included colleague, client, fellow student), influenced the choice. It was important for these supervisees to 'know' the supervisor and to have some confidence in their relationship with them.

> *Known her for many years through work. Built a mutual like for one another's professionalism. Good working relationship.*

> *I've had two stints with this supervisor. Went back for second lot. Rather than go to a whole lot of people it was simpler when I knew there was a good one. I knew her, she knew me. I knew she would know what she might be letting herself in for.*

One supervisee who did not know her prospective supervisor, researched the field and canvassed other opinions before making her choice.

> *Also I do scouting around about how other people have found them as a supervisor – so I do a lot of homework.*

Prior knowledge of the supervisor allowed for an assessment of interpersonal qualities deemed to be important to the supervisee.

Supervisor inter-personal qualities

Supervisees were looking for inter-personal qualities such as interest, challenge, curiosity and shared values. First impressions were significant and it was important for there to be some sharing of beliefs and ideas.

> *Meeting of minds, has to be.*

> *On supervisor's part to begin with there has to be curiosity about where you are at.*

> *New challenge – was this person challenging – get to a point where I needed to be challenged on some things. Got to a place where I was a bit complacent, I needed to be challenged/ motivated – I needed somebody who was prepared to do that – deciding factor.*

Comfort zones around dress and physical difference were also considered to be important for one participant.

> *I would have found it difficult if someone turned up with speech pattern or dress which would have affected my comfort zone – I'm not opposed to people who are different – but the way they are different – on the same wave length.*

Possibly the most interesting observation however came from one of the supervisees who wondered at the personal needs which are served by choice.

> *Maybe we don't choose the right supervisor- maybe we choose the ones we think will be the easiest- the ones where we will hear what we want to hear and make us feel good – maybe we will never know- maybe we don't choose the people who are best for us –*

because it is easier to choose people who are friends who make us feel good about ourselves. Validate us.

Within the framework of choice, supervisees were also clear that supervision arrangements are not permanent and that various factors including familiarity, complacency and change of role and focus for the supervisee may prompt the need to move on to another supervisor. One supervisee, who was still very satisfied with the supervision she was receiving had, never the less, identified her next supervisor.

I know who my next supervisor will be. I have been with [current supervisor] for two years now, this is the third. I know I have to start looking. I am preparing myself for this.

After a couple of years good to move on to someone else – can become comfortable – also working with other people with different insights.

External or internal supervision

All participants in this study received external supervision, that is supervision from supervisors who worked outside of the organisation. Some discussion arose concerning the merits of this type of supervision as opposed to supervision from within the organisation, internal supervision. Participants valued the 'outside' perspective brought by these external supervisors and their ability to address sensitive issues in supervision which could not be raised within the organisation. The difference in work context also avoided the supervisor from being unduly influenced by her own perspective at the cost of hearing and appreciating the supervisee's unique experience.

Somethings I would not talk to an internal supervisor about because they are part of the organisation.

Safe place (external) –to bring work issues – fact remains can't be so honest with internal supervisor as with external.

External supervision offers more opportunity to think outside the square.- otherwise can be inward looking.

How I am in that structure is more important to my supervision than my supervisor's idea of the structure ... more important to hear my experience rather than someone else's experience that she has heard of and already made sense of– rather the supervisor heard it from me.

The preference for external supervision however was not unanimous and some participants expressed reservations about supervision being distanced from the work place.

> *Supervisor needs to know the dynamics, meet the management and the hierarchical system. For me- very structured environment with various expectations – if you don't know structure- difficult for me to talk something through.*
>
> *If supervisor worked for the organisation it would be fine. I wouldn't be comfortable if supervision was not closely linked with the organisation.*
>
> *I have mixed feelings. I have had quite a number of experiences. Outside [supervision] which was useless and 7 years internal [supervision]. Now have an outside supervisor – get on extremely well with her and appreciate her knowledge – sometimes don't know – not sure if it works that well. They don't know the little idiosyncratic things about the organisation. Don't know the culture of the organisation –organisations can be hideous places – hard to describe.*

Whilst all of the participants received external supervision, half of the sample also received internal supervision, and drew a clear distinction between the two processes. Internal supervision they saw as discussion about specific 'clinical' issues or as administrative and concerned with updating managers.

> *Specific clinical issues – more useful to take them to internal supervision.*
>
> *I meet with the manager to up date him and keep him informed.*
>
> *Internal supervision different – more administrative – don't take that to external supervision.*

Additionally one supervisee had the benefit of peer group supervision suggesting a range of processes contributing to her ongoing growth and support, an idea which has been identified by other authors (Cooper, 2001; Garrett & Barretta-Herman, 1995; Hirst, 2001).

Summary

A basic requirement for participation in this research was experience as a practising social worker. The rationale behind this was the wish to explore the supervision beliefs, experiences and attitudes of supervisees who had moved beyond the stage of student and novice. The volunteers who participated in this sample shared a range of experience from ten to thirty years and thus well exceeded the baseline requirement of three years of experience.

Whilst it is not within the scope of this research to assess the developmental stage of the supervisees, if, as according to (Butler, 1996), professionals reach expert competence after three years of practice, it could be suggested that this was a highly competent group of social workers. Indeed, in terms of theories of practitioner development, the characteristics of Hawkins and Shohet's (2000) developmental level four are evident from the responses to this study. "Personal autonomy, insightful awareness, personal security, stable motivation and awareness of the need to confront his or her own personal and professional problems" (Stolenberg & Delworth 1987 quoted in Hawkins & Shohet, 2000:63).

The overriding theme which emerged from this data analysis was the manner in which the supervisees considered supervision to be a process to further their own professional development and to ensure safe practice. Supervision was a professional tool which the supervisees used to develop their skills, enhance their knowledge, check and broaden their perspectives and to deepen their analysis. Whilst there was reference to the social work profession and to social work principles, and an acknowledgement of organisational requirements, the motivation for supervision sprang primarily from the wishes of the supervisees to be 'good' practitioners. Thus there was a strong commitment to self and to clients which stood alongside, but independent of, the requirements of profession and organisation. The supervisees recognised the limitations of their individual perspectives and welcomed, and at times relied upon, the challenge of the supervisor to keep them and their clients 'safe'. This wish for challenge is seen by Inskipp (1993) to be associated with a supervisee's developmental stage, the more experienced the supervisee the more they valued challenge. In this research the supervisees' approach to challenge may be summed up by Scaife (2001).

> The meaning of challenge here is taken as an invitation or undertaking to test one's capabilities to the full ...The purpose of challenge is to generate new perspectives at a cognitive level and to create options for action. The challenge is to the current way of seeing or doing things (Scaife, 2001:218).

A second theme which emerged from the data was the strong sense of support, warmth and caring in the descriptions provided of the supervision relationship. This was not a "sentimental blurring' of the personal and professional"(Yegdich, 1999), as the supervisees were clear about the relationship between support and emotional containment for themselves and the ability to provide safe practice and to work in the interest and context of the client.

Also significant to this study is the role of the supervisee in supervision. All of the supervisees had chosen their supervisor on very personal criteria, one supervisee describing this process as being *"like making a friend. You know if you will share something or not"*. On closer analysis the criteria for choosing a supervisor was seen to include firstly, the ability for warmth and positive regard and secondly, a level of competence and knowledge which was both relevant to and respected by the supervisee. The required supervisor characteristics identified by these supervisees is reminiscent of the list of supervisor variables suggested by Loganbill, Hardy and Delworth (1982)[2], which suggests that these qualities continue to have resonance for contemporary supervisees.

All supervisees had a sense of ownership in the supervision process.

> *For me now – its mine –I chose that supervisor.*
>
> *My choice of people – I know I will get my needs met. – If I didn't I wouldn't stay.*

---

[2] Loganbill, Hardy, & Delworth, (1982:28) include the following in their list of supervisor variables:
Genuiness
Potency – the ability to be effective with others and capacity for personal growth
Optimism – faith in others and belief in the change process
Courage – to confront, take risks, share themselves and explore difficult areas
Sense of time as a gift – ability to value the moment
Sense of humour
Capacity for intimacy – able to connect with others at a deep level, yet remain separate
Openness to fantasy and imagery
Respect and consideration for others.

These supervisees were in control of the process. By negotiation they acquiesced to the supervisor's positional power and welcomed the accountability and safety that this ensured. Expert power was accorded to the supervisor on the basis of her knowledge and skills, and indeed this was a clear criterion for selection, but there was an expectation that appropriate recognition of expertise would be reciprocated. In the context of Schon's (1987) reflective frames of reference the supervisees required a baseline for shared frames in terms of professional qualifications, training and proven expertise, other than this difference was not only tolerated, it was welcomed.

> *External supervision tends to bring forward new ideas. Good to have supervisor outside.*

The new ideas, though welcomed by the supervisee, were considered as an offering for consideration and reflection rather than as a prescription for practice. Thus frame reflection and dialogue was mutual and aimed towards understanding, not conflict (Schon, 1987). Supervisees required the freedom to debate and at times to disagree, and to do so in the context of mutual understanding and respect.

Supervision was also seen as a renegotiable arrangement. It was dependent on time and circumstance and understood to be of finite duration.

> *I think it has been a very good match. I have been very satisfied- but this may terminate and I may make other arrangements.*

In all, the supervision arrangements described by the supervisees echo Mezirow's (1981) description of the characteristics of the third emancipatory learning domain which, although quoted in a earlier chapter, are worthy of repetition.

> Rather than a simple transfer of identification to a new reference group, a new set of criteria come to govern one's relationships and to present conditions governing commitments as well. Rather than simple identification, the process may be more accurately described as one of contractual solidarity. Commitments are made with implicit mutual agreement among equals (in the sense of agency) concerning conditions of the relationship, including periodic review and re-negotiation with the option of terminating the relationship. Such insistence on reciprocity and equality often represents positive movement toward greater autonomy and self-determination. A superior perspective is not only one that is a more inclusive or discriminating experience of integrating but also one that is sufficiently permeable to allow access to other perspectives. This makes possible movement to still more inclusive and discriminating perspectives (Mezirow, 1981:9).

In this research supervisees did not discuss the actions which followed their reflection and whether they could be considered as emancipatory. What was clear however was the independence of action and self determination of the supervisees, both of which were held in the context of a contractual relationship with a 'particular' other, and which took cognisance of the boundaries and restrictions of organisational and professional practice.

The supervisees in this research saw themselves as active, willing and relevant participants in the supervision process. If the basic conditions were met, (mutual regard, respect and trust), they were open to challenge, indeed required challenge, were willing to explore themselves at times of both vulnerability and celebration, and confident to express a range of emotions. There was an awareness of the boundaries between personal and professional work, and supervision was clearly positioned to promote safe practice and professional development.

In summary these supervisees knew what they wanted from supervision and from their supervisor. Supervision was for them a key resource for their professional practice. It was a place of refuge, a place of challenge and a place of nurture and celebration and a place of learning.

Profile of Supervisees

Practice experience	30 years	20 years	15 years	14 years	12 years	10 years
Type of agency	Non-govt.	Non-govt.	Govt.	Govt.	Non-govt.	Govt.
Length of current supervision relationship	18 months	2 years	5 years (one year gap)	2 years	10 months	18 months
Internal and/or external supervision	External	External & Internal	External	External & Internal	External & Internal	External
Frequency of supervision	monthly	fortnightly	fortnightly	monthly	monthly	3 weekly
Supervision contract	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	Yes
Supervision Training	no	yes	yes	yes	no	Yes
Choice of supervisor	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	Yes
Does sup'or management. Responsibility	No	No	No	No	No	No
Does sup'or have appraisal. Responsibility	Has input	No	No	No	No	No
Number of Previous supervisors	4+	4+	4+	4+	1	4+
Ethnicity	Caucasian	Pakeha	Pakeha	European	New Zealand	Pakeha
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female

Age range:	35 to 59 years
Qualifications:	Social work qualification (5)

Table 5.1

Chapter Six – Supervisor perspective

> If you don't really care, if you are not interested in people if you don't have a sense of humour, if you don't have a strong sense of professional boundaries, values, ethics that carry through to your personal life most of the time... then don't do it. Not everyone can be trained to be a supervisor. You can put it on, have it all and can quote Tony Morrison, but if you don't have that heart and that interest and a real liking for people – forget it (Research participant, 2001).

The supervisor participants

This research project began with the interviews of supervisees who had rated the supervision that they were currently receiving as "good" or "very good". The supervisors of these initial participants were then invited to participate in this research. The supervisors were asked to identify 'what it was that guided their practice as supervisors, what ideas or beliefs underpinned their supervision practice'? This chapter presents the comments of those supervisors.

All of the supervisors who were invited agreed to participate. One supervisor was nominated by two different supervisees so that whilst there were six supervisees interviewed, the supervisor group was only five in number. The supervisors were asked to complete a non-identifying statistical sheet (appendix one, attachment 12) and the summary of this is represented in figure 6.1. As with the supervisee group, this was an experienced group of practitioners whose years of practice in their various fields ranged from 39 to 14 years. Three of the supervisors held qualifications in social work and two had psychology degrees, one of the latter also being qualified as a psychodramatist. The supervisors were all women whose ages were evenly spread over the twenty years between 41 and 61, and they identified themselves as either Pakeha/ New Zealand, Pakeha/Australian or European.

Although not all of the supervisors held a formal qualification in supervision, they had all attended some form of supervision training. Their years of supervisory experience ranged from twelve to two years. In direct relationship to the supervisee group, these supervisors were all providing external supervision to those supervisees who had personally chosen them as supervisors.

Data were gathered from the supervisors in the same manner as was used with the supervisees, through open-ended individual or group interviews. In this instance the supervisors however were not asked to identify 'good' supervision but rather they were asked to discuss what theories, ideas and beliefs shaped and guided the supervision that they were currently providing. The discussion concerned the supervisors' general supervision practice, which included but went beyond the supervision of the original supervisee who had invited the supervisor's attendance.

From the data collected seven areas of response were identified:

- theories and beliefs
- the supervision relationship
- review, challenge and monitoring
- internal and external supervision
- the contribution of the supervisee
- personal development and supervision.
- the supervisor's supervision.

Theories and beliefs

Each supervisor interviewed in this research grounded her supervision practice on a particular selection of theories and models which were underpinned by a personal philosophy of supervision. The supervision was thus purposeful and the supervisors were able to identify and discuss the constituent parts.

Personal beliefs

The philosophies identified by the supervisors directed, shaped and lent a confidence to the supervision practice that they provided. At times this included a general principle of living and behaving and at other times a clear professional standard or understanding of the role and task required. This knowledge came from both experience of supervision and from specific training.

> *A strong belief for me, I need to be in supervision as I am in life. Take on a professional persona but needs to be congruent. If it is not there it won't work, people will know. I strongly believe that. It is not just something you put on when you go into a room, it has*

> *to be congruent ... The training I have had has been enormously helpful. Gave me a lot of skill development and a theoretical base.*

The supervision provided by these supervisors was thoughtful, considered and rested on some form of theoretical base.

Theoretical framework

The supervisors were able to readily identify and refer to theory, specific models of supervision or the influence of various authors, which, if not directing their supervision practice, certainly influenced it and gave meaning to both their actions and those of the supervisee.

> *The key model I use is Tony Morrison's adult learning... and ensuring that when I work with people we move around the learning cycle, also the triangle – Hughes and Pengelly.*

> *One thing I found helpful was Daphne Hewson's triangle, because of the nine parts. It is visually clear. I use it at the beginning of a session to brainstorm areas. All very clear, then look at where the issues are and at the end go back and see where we have wandered. Eyes light up, clear segments where they can concentrate. Helpful to supervisee and to me, useful language.*

These references place supervision firstly in the context of a learning process and secondly delineate boundaries and content. Tony Morrison (1993, 2001) depicts the supervision process as incorporating four stages of a learning cycle and his model identifies ways in which the supervisor can assist when the learning becomes stuck or blocked.

Two other models are identified, firstly that of Hughes and Pengelly (1997) which refers to the functions and boundaries of supervision and secondly that of Daphne Hewson (2002)[1] who addresses the content of supervision. Hughes and Pengelly (1997) identify a triangle of functions of supervision which include managing service delivery, facilitating professional development and focusing on the practitioner's work. Each of these functions contain aspects of accountability and locate some of the tensions and conflicts of supervision at the intersections of the triangle. As such the model describes

[1] This references Hewson's most recent publication which provides a comprehensive account of the model discussed by the supervisors.

useful guidelines for areas of focus in supervision and establishes clear functional boundaries.

Daphne Hewson's (2002) model, coincidentally also a triangle, provides a detailed template which identifies "areas that often need to be addressed in supervision" (Hewson, 2002). The three sides of the triangle represent the client, the counsellor (supervisee) and the relationship and each are divided into four facets producing twelve areas in total. The model thus displays the opportunities for different areas to be considered in supervision and is seen by its author to provide "the person seeking supervision with the space to find their own voice"(Hewson, 2002).

As mentioned by the supervisors these models were also considered useful in the introduction and induction of new supervisees to supervision.

Structure and purpose

The initial structure of supervision was generally established through the process of contracting. Although not all of the supervisors developed written contracts with their supervisees, they agreed with those who have written of this process, (Bond & Holland, 1998; Brown & Bourne, 1996; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000; Morrison, 2001) to mention but a few, that contracting was an important process for reaching agreement, clarification and understanding of the expectations and boundaries of all concerned. The particular need to establish expectations, boundaries and lines of accountability with regard to employing agencies was also addressed, with issues such as confidentiality, information sharing, access to information and feedback being highlighted. In this regard and in other areas as will be mentioned later, the supervisors displayed an awareness of and a concern for many of the factors which have been identified as problematic for external supervision (Cooper, 2001).

> *Back to the beginning, contracting I guess. For me that sets up the relationship not only with supervisee but also usually the agency. And within contracting we talk about our expectations and our understanding of supervision, the structure of it. Start the conversation really and have an understanding before we begin.*

The task of noticing and responding to the unique development of each supervision arrangement within its own context, patterns and history was also noted as important by

the supervisors. By identifying the patterns and working towards a depth of process the supervisors aimed for supervision which was meaningful and not superficial.

> *Providing focus to any session, I see that as my role. Just doesn't go anywhere, has focus and pattern to it.*

> *The supervision I do is not focussed particularly except on what comes out of the initial ten minutes of discussion. What perhaps I rely on in terms of perhaps making supervision work is really listening, tuning in and trying to hear where this person is at compared to where they were last time.*

> *I think of the first half hour as free flowing...Second half, I am surprised how I become, not directive, but I become more clear there is something we have to work on and I keep going in that direction, otherwise it is easy to brush across the surface.*

On occasion the structure was purposefully avoided.

> *Generally I would agree – but also I am playing with the idea of not having a focus at times and have found that that has been very helpful and effective in my own supervision...So I am more open when people come to supervision and say 'I actually haven't got anything to talk about today'.*

Structure and purpose was thus evident in the frameworks employed by the supervisors. Amongst the group there was variation as to what comprised this structure but all were conscious of some format.

Boundaries of information sharing

The supervisors had defined expectations of the information that they wished to have, or have access to, either during the initial contracting process or in the course of the ongoing work which they did together with the supervisee. For some this included a concern for the supervisee's safety and safety for practice and for others a wish to explore areas of practice which at times were hidden from the supervisor.

> *... there are certain things I expect to know. And some is about what drugs are you taking and your health status.*

> *For example someone who never brought a case, brought other stuff, so I asked her to bring a case, to see what that was like. I didn't have a handle on what she did.*

> *I ask myself 'what would I not bring to supervision? Why is that? Should it be the very thing that I do bring'? I address that with the supervisees. 'What have we never talked about? Why would that be too hard to say? What is your fear about that? Give me an example'.*

One supervisor also identified her concern about what boundaries the supervisees employed regarding the personal views which they shared with clients.

> *I find it a useful thing to know something about what are peoples' beliefs about the right to tell other people, including their spiritual beliefs, non spiritual beliefs where do they draw those boundaries?*

The supervisors indicated an understanding of the constraints around information sharing and sought, by various means, to draw this information into the supervision arena where it could be considered and learnt from.

Responding to individual needs

The identification of the individual needs of each supervisee was a guiding factor for the supervision provided by the supervisors. An understanding of these needs allowed the supervisor to temper the supervision delivered accordingly. There was also a relationship between this adjustment of supervision and an understanding of the level of development of the supervisee both as a practitioner and as a supervisee.

> *About looking at the supervisees as learners or practitioners, their role and where they are at and my role changes. Sometimes I might be more directive or more educative rather than facilitative of their own reflection.*

This accommodation in supervision has been described in earlier research by Worthington (1984) in a study which investigated "supervisee perceptions of different supervisor behaviour as counsellors gain experience" (Worthington & Everett, 1984). Whilst it was the general view of the supervisors in this present research that the supervisees, who were also participant in the research, were well beyond a beginning level of operating both as a practitioner and as a supervisee, there was some discussion of the needs of supervisees at other levels. The supervisors were conscious that they undertook the task to coach and train 'new' supervisees into the role and that they recognised a different range of behaviours, attributes and needs amongst these 'beginning' supervisees.

> *I find her [Daphne Hewson's] notion of the supervision triangle very useful as a template I can use. I have laminated it and I find*

> *that with new supervisees we can sit down and say this very thing 'what do you think supervision is'? 'What do I think it is'? 'These are some of my expectations'.*
>
> *I find that often the beginning supervisee, will go for the grand analysis and interpretative analysis, which is based on who knows what or it doesn't get to grips with the issue or they haven't asked the questions they needed to ask.*

There was also some discussion and wondering about the effect of culture and gender difference in supervision. These discussions which raised more questions than they answered nevertheless demonstrated the ongoing process of thought, concern and self monitoring which characterised the supervisors' practice.

> *I realised the majority [of people who come to me for supervision] were women and pakeha.... the few who come to me who are Maori or Pacific Island, I'm not sure their supervision is as good, which is interesting, more of a barrier, when I think about it. I feel like they are not bringing their authentic selves to supervision. It is more playing a role of the supervisee and I tend to become the supervisor and I have to work at making the connection.*
>
> *Probably naturally feel that values cross gender lines – if people have same values – doesn't matter so much about male/female side of things. But I do think that there is a different element when the supervisee is a man. I am not a man, so I have a heightened awareness. A heightened awareness to pick up where I might not be on the same wave length, may also be disability or race and so on. More awareness I might need to be even more focussed.*

Hawkins and Shohet (2000) identify these considerations as being part of the development of senior supervision practitioners who reflect on "what is emerging in their supervision practice and explore new emergent themes" (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000). They also identify self enquiry as a key factor in 'dialoguing across difference'.

> If we see our task as merely to understand the other's perspective then no real meeting has happened. We are ourselves absent. In a supervisory relationship this means not only a willingness to encourage and explore difference in the supervisee-client relationship, but also an openness to ourselves and our relationship with our supervisee (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000:89).

Skills, techniques and interventions

Key skills, interventions and techniques were highlighted in the interviews as examples of the ways in which the supervisors facilitated the supervision they provided. Here

there was reference to simplicity, and effective listening emerged as a central theme which in turn was seen to assist the supervisee to maintain ownership of the solutions.

> *...unconditional positive regard and my absolute belief in active listening and if that is done properly then people come up with their own solutions. So the need not to offer solutions unless there is a real request for that new information. The idea of really listening to someone and allowing them to reveal themselves as a supervisee and as a worker.*

> *...the growing evidence that nonverbal symbolism is a very potent thing. So with supervisees we may well draw on the white board, use symbolic objects- or as simple as laying out the system.*

> *I think over the years I have come to appreciate more and more the value of getting into the specifics ... 'lets have a look at what happened'. No judgements, no preconditions, no summaries. - and of course there is selection and deletion. And I find that an enormous amount comes out if I am not trying to be too clever and not being too smart. There is some skill but very, very simple.*

The responsibility of supervisees to always provide the answer however was not considered absolute and provoked a range of thoughts and memories.

> *When I actually proffer something really particular around a suggestion, I try not to get in that situation, but that [has] made supervision really worthwhile for the supervisee, 'I've got something'. And I almost wish I hadn't made the suggestion or that I'd helped them to come up with it in a different way. But there is a sense that supervision is not really useful unless they get something really concrete.*

> *When I had my first supervision as a social worker my supervisor was a bit like a stone wall, she really wouldn't give me the answers at all. I can see the point of it in a way, but it was not helpful at all because then I stopped asking the questions. If people stop asking questions then something is being withdrawn, held back because 'this person is not going to help me', so the whole thing gets stuck.*

> *I am all for people not being spoon fed but I do think that there is a place for a bit of mentoring and giving of new information or 'have you thought about? And to me that is about whether the person is engaged or not.*

There was awareness and respect for the independent choice of the supervisee to engage with the techniques or processes employed by the supervisor in the supervision session.

> *Don't use this routinely and again it is the power stuff. How much do I impose my theoretical view? I offer it as an opportunity but I won't push it.*

The supervisors were thus clear about the interventions and skills which they utilised and which were available to them in the supervision context. There was an emphasis on attending to and listening to the supervisee whose interests remained central at all times.

Authority of the role

The supervisors were aware of the authority of the role and the times when they may need to take control of the process to identify and or challenge behaviour, or place their own items on the supervision agenda. This required an understanding of the limits or boundaries of the relationship and how this would be negotiated.

The literature on supervision suggests that supervisors are cautious and uncomfortable about the structural power they hold (Bond & Holland, 1998; Brown & Bourne, 1996; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000). The supervisors interviewed however appeared at ease with this aspect of the role. They described explicit parameters around the supervision relationship and how these would be negotiated with all concerned. This is a theme which will be further discussed with regard to safety issues in supervision.

> *Who sets the agenda in a supervision session? I think that is an interesting one too. I tend to ask the supervisees what is on their agenda and often work with that, but occasionally there are things on my agenda too which I think are important....That is when I would be setting the agenda – when a theme persistently occurs, or is not addressed at all.*
>
> *If we come to a point of completely different point of view, then maybe together we could go to someone else. It is a partnership but not a partnership with equals.*
>
> *Authoritorial (sic) – some sort of point where you say this is my recommendation and if you don't follow it then I won't be able to supervise you.*

The ease with which the supervisors addressed their authority within the supervision relationship was in many respects a reflection of the clarity with which they viewed and negotiated the boundaries of the supervision arrangement.

Roles and Boundaries

Roles and boundaries were a central theme for the supervisors and as one supervisor observed:

> *There was one heap of stuff which continually comes through that needs to be thought through almost anything and that is roles and boundaries.*

This theme, borne out by the comments of the other supervisors, wove through many of the issues discussed and was applied to both the supervisor and the supervisee, to the relationship they shared and to the work context.

Whilst, as discussed earlier, the supervisors were attentive to the individual needs of and feedback from the supervisees, there were limits to the extent of this accommodation. The supervisors also saw themselves as having freedom of choice within the supervision relationship and endorsed the legitimacy of withdrawing in certain circumstances where they considered that their personal and or professional integrity may be compromised. One supervisor had developed a clear understanding of the limits to her willingness to accommodate certain practice and thus her willingness to enter into to a supervision arrangement with certain people. Similarly another supervisor established clear boundaries around safe practice.

> *While I am really conscious of their expectations and the organisation, I am really conscious of what I bring, my knowledge. And there have been times when I have refused to take people on for supervision because of the way they want to work.*

> *...if I believed that the supervisee showed unethical, unsafe practice which they are not attending to. Again this is my child protection framework. I will not become a colluder to unsafe practice when I know about it.*

A dilemma was raised by one supervisor regarding the role, and the authority, of the supervisor to address a supervisee's addictive behaviour.

> *What comes into my head is this area of undealt with addictions. But to get people to own them and name them and where are the boundaries is not so easy. Alcohol use or major addictive substance use I haven't had to deal with to the extent of stopping supervision, but I have discussed it with people in supervision. "Do you feel safe enough to tell me how much you do drink?" It has only happened a couple of times and people were able to say "yes they do see it as a problem and are addressing it", so it seems under control and being dealt with.*

One supervisor noted that roles and boundaries were a core issue of supervision which reoccurred regardless of the supervisee's length of practice. From her own experience she saw that, as a practitioner became more experienced, role and boundary issues did not disappear but rather the practitioner developed a heightened awareness of their complexity. This observation reflects the different concerns and focus acquired at different developmental levels by practitioners. For the beginning practitioner the issues are simpler and focus more on "rules and procedures" (Butler, 1996). As the practitioner develops a broader view and perspective this requires evaluation against every "changing context" (Butler, 1996).

> *A lot of things collapse down to roles and boundaries. Roles around client work, other people, or even roles and boundaries for self. A lot of the discussion I find ends up in some version of that because I believe that most people have the skills in there somewhere to do what it is they have to do in the job. But it is the roles and boundaries that get screwed up quite often. Social workers deal with so much every day, that the ability to reflect on roles and boundaries is diminished.*

Roles and boundaries were discussed here from two perspectives. For the supervisors there was a clear limit to the behaviour that they were prepared to accept or support in their role as supervisor. In the scenarios presented the strategy discussed by the supervisors was to either not engage in the supervision or to withdraw from the contract. Other than the circumstance quoted above where the supervisor would not collude with unsafe practice, the supervisors were not specific about what behaviour would warrant official notification and how they would action this.

The second perspective presented here was that most, if not all, issues brought to supervision by the supervisees concern boundaries and roles. There was a belief that supervisees, by and large, had the required skills to attend to their work but that they became entangled in role and boundary issues, and it was these issues which were an obstacle to practice.

The supervision relationship

The importance of the supervision relationship and the mutuality of this relationship were identified by all of the supervisors, however it was also acknowledged that though

mutual, this was not an equal partnership. The supervisors held different responsibilities, one of which was to maintain the functional boundaries and growing edge of this interaction. In order to achieve this the supervisors needed to convey within the relationship their regard and their interest .

> *Listening really cues me into the person. In the middle of a busy day with lots of encounters it is important to cue into this person in this hour.*
>
> *To me support is a quality - warmth and interest in people if you are interested in people and curious you are half way there. Curiosity, without being prying or prurient and people respond so well, they feel that quality, feel the interest.*

For the supervisors, supervision was also a place where supervisees could receive more than routine discussion and problem solving. There was a higher function or outcome of supervision which attended to the 'whole person' or the 'being' of that person. Supervision could be a place of revitalisation, motivation and inspiration for the supervisee. There are times when this may just 'happen' and there are other times when it is a conscious intervention.

> *Spiritual for me is about the transcendental, about awe and mystery and where the words just fall away and you are left with certain sort of experience and to me there are moments in supervision that are magical – if that is what spiritual means - then yes.*
>
> *Sometimes I have thought 'this is the moment to be inspirational'. If I can say something with passion and say ' this is something I know you can do'. All I am doing is making this person walk away with renewed faith in themselves not through intellectualisation but through a sense of ' I'm fired up and I can do it, I've been to supervision and I can do it'. I have caught myself thinking 'this is the moment when I need to say something of the motivational, inspirational kind rather than the analytical'.*

There was possibly an echo here of Michael Carroll's (2001) question:

> ... is it possible that adopting a supervisory attitude, viewing supervision as a reflective process that allows participants to think deeply and vulnerably about life and values, work and career, relationships and connections might make an immense difference to how participants live (Carroll, 2001)?

There was also an understanding that there are two parties involved in this interaction.

> *Supervision is dynamic and there is energy and there is a life force. It goes back to a belief I have that when people are miserable and upset and depressed and don't like the relationship- 'where is the flame?' Because if there is a flame and there is energy then it can be increased. If there isn't anything there is cold ashes and you are in difficulty.*

The relationship, seen as a vehicle for support, growth and change also had the potential to become too comfortable.

> *No learning is taking place if the supervisee is comfortable. The person is not being challenged.*

> *I do think that supervision becomes comfortable.*

> *It is easy to delude oneself, not really getting down to the root of whatever. Enjoying the interaction for an hour and the chance to be heard but not doing the work. Maintaining the status quo with out developing.*

Whether the same perception of the relationship was held by both supervisors and supervisees was a question which provoked discussion amongst the supervisors. The group considered whether the supervisor's decision that the relationship lacked challenge was a necessary correlate of the supervisee experiencing the relationship as being too comfortable.

> *How are we as supervisors to know whether there is a comfort level we have that matches supervisees. Maybe we are comfortable because we aren't being challenged, just doing supervision.*

The supervisors identified instances where their assessment of the session or of the relationship differed from that of the supervisee. The supervisor had not felt that the session had gone well, or even that they had been less than helpful, but the supervisee had expressed the opinion that the session had been very worthwhile.

> *There are times when I have had individual sessions when I have thought 'Mmm'... and they have said ' thank you that was very helpful, that was great'.*

There were also times when they had been surprised by the supervisee's perception of them and/or the relationship as challenging. On these occasions the supervisors believed the session lacked challenge and/or that the supervision relationship had run its course and that it was time to move on.

The supervisors agreed that the ability for self reflection on the part of the supervisee contributed to the experience of 'good' supervision and at times provided the challenge and the insight. At these moments the supervisor's input appeared minimal, yet it was thought by the supervisors that possibly their presence and the relationship they had established contributed to the conditions which promoted this self reflection.

> *My query sometimes is 'am I being challenging enough'? – 'is it too comfortable?' and I don't feel at times that I am doing anything to be challenging and wonder if the opportunity for self reflection is challenging enough. And they go away and hear what they have said, session after session, and say 'I've got to do something about this'. By letting the person articulate and reflect she gets the insight.*

> *The best supervision is where the supervisor doesn't say a word, also good supervision really happens {when there] is that self reflection.*

> *I am sure engagement and connection are important whatever the relationship, so it has got to come from some reflection which means revealing one's self too, so it makes a much more dynamic interaction.*

It is useful here to consider the role of perception within the reflective process. Butler (1996) suggests that the distortions created by the perceptual filter[2], may well lead to the reinforcement of old beliefs, rather than to new insights. It is suggested here that the presence of an 'other', the supervisor in this instance, may help to counter this homeostasis and so encourage new ideas and possibilities.

The following comment identifies the supervision relationship as a place of safety and security for the supervisee and a place where any issue may be brought, not necessarily to be dealt with in supervision, but to be 'sorted'.

> *The sense of a trusted elder I want somebody who is ahead of me on the path- I want to be that for other people, not in terms of the authority, it is the rescue role. And rescue is sometimes about holding the supervisee in a fragile place and seeing if you can keep track... Within that, it is almost a parental role – 'it is alright, yes supervisors are human too' or 'Here is your old stuff coming up' or a hundred versions of that. The containment, which is a lot about trust, that I feel I can go and take whatever I can to my supervisor.*

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[2] The perceptual filter acts to block out material which would challenge or contradict a person's world view (Butler, 1996).

> *And I hope my supervisees, know [they] can bring whatever [they] need to bring, There are no gates which say 'no you are not allowed to talk about that here'. 'Yes bring it here and then we can do some sifting – does it belong here'? 'Does it belong over there'? 'Shall we review it'?*

This statement not only demonstrates processes which are parallel between different layers of supervision, the supervisor wishing to create for the supervisee the conditions of supervision which have been significant for her, but it again conjures up the metaphors of supervision described by Ash (1995). In particular "a helicopter to winch me out of danger" and "a harbour master to ensure I have safe haven in times of storm and stress" (Ash, 1995:20).

Review, challenge and monitoring

The importance of review and feedback within the supervision relationship was a theme which was common to all supervisors and reflects the idea that "feedback is received and given because in feedback we learn and grow" (Carroll, 2001). Not only was the process of review considered important, but the way in which this occurred was also identified as critical. At times the process and the response were challenging and difficult for the supervisor. For one supervisor, review was seen as respect for the supervisee and an acknowledgement of and management of the authority within the relationship.

> *Something about authority, acknowledging the authority of the relationship. I know about myself but I don't work well if I am going to be shamed by a supervisor or a trainer, it pushes me back into heaps of horrible old stuff. So I try not to move in shaming ways with my supervisees, and I invite them to give me feedback if they feel something like that. And over the years they have, usually over ways that I had no idea, like my tone of voice sounds like their mother, we have had to deal with it and it is not always comfortable and it is when I don't like being a supervisor.*

Review was considered as a way of revitalising the relationship.

> *A number of times I have changed and reviewed ways of doing supervision due to the feedback. Maybe part of good supervision is that it is changing as needs change.*

> *If it is not happening then it is my job to bring it up and say ' lets review it' ... if I can evoke some enthusiasm and energy then we can go forward.*

> *I am willing to say 'this is not working or meeting your needs, what are we going to do about it'? So to me it is a process that takes a lot of energy and a lot of discipline. But if it goes in the right way it can be really energising.*

There was also the question of self review and evaluation which some supervisors had developed to give them some bearings on the quality of the supervision they provided. This review was not only considered important when things did not go so well, it was also important as a means to monitor the supervisor's own enthusiasm and involvement which otherwise might highjack the session.

> *When supervision is going really well and I am getting excited – a voice in my head also says 'ok lets just make sure it is not just your excitement, getting carried away', because I do get very energised by ideas. Just check out that things are okay with the other person. I am constantly monitoring myself to see that I am not getting carried away by an idea without seeing where the supervisee is in all this.*

Reference to the review of supervision in the broader context of supervision, the agency and the profession was also made.

> *...started my study about supervision after a year of providing private supervision and I wanted to know 'How do I evaluate supervision'?...Am I meeting the needs of the supervisees and the organisation who pays for it. My own work and what I think and how I am doing it from my knowledge base. I take into account the profession and how does it see supervision? I am conscious of their policy.*

Review and feedback thus served a range of purposes for the supervisors. These included an acknowledgement of the supervisee's needs within the relationship, a means of revitalising and refocusing the relationship, of providing the supervisor feedback for her own growth and learning and a critique of the supervision against the mandate from the organisation and profession.

Internal and external supervision

Whilst in the context of this research the participating supervisors were providing external supervision they were in general agreement that both types of supervision were necessary. A clear distinction was made between internal and external supervision, and the advantages and disadvantages of both were identified. Indeed supervision per se

was seen as only one component within a range of options available to practitioners, all of which contributed to their professional safety, wellbeing and development.

External supervision:

Some of the discussion about external supervision centred on the contractual arrangements with the employing agency. This included the understanding of the agency about supervision, the processes available for communication, confidentiality and feedback and the actual content of the supervision. As has been identified elsewhere, (Cooper, 2001; Morrell, 2001), the supervisors were aware of some of the limitations of external supervision. One acknowledged the lack of ability to assume line responsibility for clinical practice, whilst another commented on her experience as an external supervisor to practitioners in organisations where management have little knowledge or understanding of supervision. In this instance she identified the educative role which developed for her to inform the organisation about supervision.

> *I normally have a contract with the organisation –often there are two contracts to be signed - relatively recent development I think it is a good thing. Good thing also have input into the performance appraisal ... brief report on issues covered and the fact that people are coming on regular basis and some comment of how I saw them as a supervisee.*
>
> *Not only address code of ethics but also code of ethics of the agency, which are sometimes different. What does the agency think is the contract? When I am working with their supervisee the material is confidential. I don't report to the agency without the permission of the supervisee.*

External supervision was considered to offer greater opportunity for supervisees to talk about the "*fullness of [their] conceptual work in a way [they] couldn't do in the work place*". The freedom for the supervisees to choose their external supervisor however raised some questions about comfort and challenge and it was acknowledged that there were considerable disadvantages about not being able to observe the supervisee in the context of his or her work.

> *Ups and downs about that [choosing supervisor] ...Do the people who come to me and like me, is it because we develop a cosy support system? ...The down side is not to be challenged at the raw edge or if it got near [the raw edge] the supervisee may move and I would never know. Whereas in line supervision you have to go on*

> *doing the job and it would probably come up or whatever. Line supervisors' up side [is that they] get to see their supervisees in action in all sorts of ways.*

For the supervisor, external supervision however was seen to offer an interesting range of situations and contexts to work with and freedom from the assumptions which come from knowing the work context too well.

> *I think it is quite helpful not to have knowledge of their specific areas of work as external supervisor. Whole lot of assumptions you and they don't make, naïve enquiry. And they don't have expectation that you are going to tell them what to do.*

Internal supervision

By comparison there were concerns about the ability for honesty within internal supervision.

> *Goes back to on line supervision - when the job is in jeopardy are there inherent blocks? Are you going to tell your on line boss – I doubt it. If it is a very good relationship you may. You may not even be able to tell a person like me that you see away from base.*

Apart from the constraints of the relationship the primary distinction between external and internal supervision was the content. Internal supervision was seen to be closely linked to case management where there was an acknowledgement by the supervisors of the shared responsibility for client outcome. There was similarly a sense that in internal supervision the agenda setting was a shared process rather than the prerogative of the supervisee.

> *Internal supervision you have certain things that have to be achieved, really need to be very sure of safety, sure that progress is being made, expectations of output.*

The supervisors were clear about the difference between the two forms of supervision and one was explicit in her modelling of this.

> *Because I work mainly with managers, team leaders or supervisors and often new ones, I get clear about the difference I see between internal supervision and external supervision and how I would be different as an external supervisor, so that they are clear about those differences. That I am not modelling something I don't want to.*

Although the supervisors were, in the context of this study, providing external supervision there was an awareness and an appreciation of the difference and the relationship between each aspect of supervision.

Need for both internal and external supervision

There was support from the supervisors for the idea that, because internal and external supervision attended to very different aspects of practice at different levels, it was beneficial for practitioners to have access to both.

> *Both are important. What I would want to ensure is that it is important that in-line supervision does happen. Not just getting external supervision...I actually feel it is really dangerous if all clinical supervision was external.*

In response to a question as to whether internal supervision, if it was allocated more time, could also incorporate the features and focus of external supervision, one supervisor was clear that this was not possible. It was the reflection which occurred as a consequence of the location of supervision away from the agency, as much as the process of the supervision, which made the difference.

> *No I think [they] need to go outside, there is a limit to what they can get inside. [They] can take (themselves) away and look back in on the world they have to exist in for their livelihood and take themselves away and have more freedom to reflect on selves and their lives and the meaning of this work to them...Quite different.*

The benefits of internal and external supervision were not for the supervisee alone, and the supervisors identified different satisfaction in both types of supervision. Internal supervision was task focused and external supervision offered more creativity.

For internal supervision.

> *Satisfaction of working things out. How the supervisee can make more progress, light shines and all that satisfaction from getting to grips with the case yourself, satisfaction of a more specific focussed nature and identifying patterns or whatever.*

For external supervision.

> *With external supervision I enjoy being able to follow the thread and be on a journey more with the supervisee and I can flick my own mind much more into anything. ... I don't have this luxury with internal supervision.*

One concern which was raised was the quality and availability of external supervision as a resource for social workers and other practitioners. There was an identified lack of knowledge about who was available and what it was that was being offered. External supervision as an independent practice base had no codes of ethics nor practice standards.

> *Part of the stopping of supervision [for some of my supervisees] - some of my dilemma is around who else is providing external supervision. Who else is available what are the options out there, need a list of appropriate people to refer to.*

As an extension of the idea that supervisees needed both internal and external supervision, there was discussion which placed supervision in a larger context where there were a range of options whose purpose was to provide for the complex needs of the practitioner in the current work environment. These options included peer supervision, cultural supervision, EAP (employee assistance programme), critical incident debriefing and counselling.

> *Needs to be both internal and external supervision and then there is EAP and there is counselling for staff and that's not counting cultural supervision. It is important to get clear which all these things are and what they can render to growth. It is hard to shift staff to get clear but it is my experience that most people come to see that.*

> *Living, working, ensuring balance they need to have each available to them and sometimes take all at once or two or three of them.*

Garrett and Barretta-Herman (1995) identified a similar list of options in their model for professional development. In response to the decline in the availability of 'traditional' supervision, Garrett and Barretta-Herman proposed a 'mosaic of strategies' to address professional development. In this model practitioners are encouraged to develop their own strategies which will include individual supervision along with such activities as education and training, peer supervision, consultation and professional reading.

Concern was expressed in this present study that complementary options may not be available, their functions may not be adequately understood by the supervisee or that the supervisees themselves were reluctant to avail themselves of these opportunities.

> *Ok we are supposed to get debriefing , but if you work in private practice this doesn't happen. [In other situations] who gets*

debriefed? Do they use it? Is it adequate? Is it used as it should be? No. No. No.

Where are they in their life stages, where are they heading to and are they getting burnt out? Do they know what vicarious trauma is and would they recognise it, and do they use debriefing? If you only see me once a month what do you do the rest of the time? Where do you get support?

Sometimes clients [in therapy] bring supervision issues because they are not getting adequate supervision at work. I can't just say 'don't talk about the work stuff, because there is nobody at work to respond to and deal with this stuff'.

The contribution of the supervisee

The supervisors recognised that the contribution of the supervisees to supervision was significant. This contribution included the supervisees' approach and attitude to supervision, their preparation and planning for supervision, their willingness to give honest feedback and being trusting enough to challenge the supervisors authority from time to time. In short this amounted to the supervisees' willingness to take responsibility for ensuring they got the supervision that they wanted.

When they are clear about what supervision is for and have that ability to do that self reflection is how they contribute.

Hugely I think– openness and willingness to whatever is coming through supervision is a key to that. And really wanting to get clear and process what is going on- that stands out.

I really appreciate honest feedback to myself, feels like things are happening that are good, so things are moving. Feels like taking some responsibility for what they want to get from supervision.

Not only did this contribution involve the supervisees' attitude and approach to supervision and their openness and willingness to participate, but also concerned the material brought to supervision and the challenge or interest it excited in the supervisor.

Flair, I really enjoy detecting someone has got kernels of talent recognised or otherwise. [My] ears light up in a way that enters into the relationship and comes across to them that I am picking up some things that can be kindled. That for me is what I find attractive with certain supervision relationships. Frees up my neural pathways too.

In a similar way supervisors could identify unsatisfactory supervision relationships.

> *Someone who was difficult. I think it was about stuckness, wanting to confirm her world view, really unsatisfying – she said I was providing good supervision.*

The supervisors, by identifying the supervisees' contribution to the supervision arrangement further demonstrated the mutuality, the depth and at times the interdependence, of the supervision relationship.

Personal development and supervision

The line between personal development, supervision and counselling (or therapy) which has been much debated within the literature on supervision (Gardiner, 1989; Itzhaky & Itzhaky, 1996; Yegdich, 1999) was discussed by the supervisors in this research with general agreement. It was noted that external supervision at times allowed a greater flexibility of boundaries.

Within the context of supervision it was considered important for practitioners to recognise the advantages and limitations that their personal stories brought to their work. Further, supervision was considered an appropriate place to identify personal issues in the belief that practitioners are unable to focus on their work if they were preoccupied with these personal concerns. What was also undisputed was that supervision was the place for the initial sorting of these issues and there was an understanding of the difference between the contract for counselling and the contract for supervision. At times it was therefore appropriate for the supervisee to be referred to a counsellor, therapist or other appropriate person. It was also important that the supervisee was a willing and knowing partner in all these processes.

> *I am aware that some people think that what is happening in the personal life has no part of supervision – that is not where I am coming from...but nor do I think that supervision is therapy ... it seems to be a different contract from therapy session, but borders for me are fairly fluid around that in that I think that if someone comes to supervision and their relationship is breaking up or they have had deep trauma, they need to be able to mention it and they need to be able to decide, in a session, do we focus on this to provide maybe enough containment for you to keep on with the job and to plan who to go to about this and work with, maybe a therapist, maybe time out, so to negotiate this always in the context of work. That sort of guideline.*

One supervisor identified another aspect of the counselling/therapy/supervision debate and questioned whether the supervisor should know if and when a supervisee was in therapy and have some information about that process.

> *It brings up another huge dilemma for me. The relationship, not just between supervision and therapy, but if someone is in therapy, should the supervisor know what is happening? I think all the ethics and care and confidentiality say "no" that's private domain. But I think that there are some areas, and addiction is one of them, or major dissociation and trauma, where if you don't know, everybody is at risk. I haven't answered that one but after all the years it is as much a dilemma as when I started.*

Within the supervision process the personal was thus considered important and was respected. The supervisee was considered in the fullness of his or her life which was considered relevant to the professional work. The boundaries were however defined and at times supervision was clearly only a place for containment until the broader issues were attended to.

The supervisor's supervision

Possibly one of the most unexpected processes which was observed in this research was the relationship of the supervisors to their own supervisors. Although it was not expressly asked in the interviews whether the supervisors were receiving supervision, all of the supervisors at some time in the interview mentioned both current and past supervision experiences. From this, the role of modelling in supervision relationships was illustrated, supporting the notion that good supervision is dependent on the supervisor's experience of supervision and ability to be a supervisee (Barretta-Herman, 2001; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000). Supervisors commented on processes and experiences in their own supervision which they had valued, some of which they hoped that their current supervisees would experience.

> *I want my supervisees to feel like I do when I go to supervision – safe enough to bring full self – safety is very important to me.*

> *...feel some sense of not being the all wise distant authority who knows everything, because I am not, that would be just be playing games if I think that. But I think that there are moments , which I have certainly valued with my supervisor, when they have shared 'yes I know what you feel', 'I've had this too', 'I've felt like you feel', 'I think that this is something that happens to us', or 'Yes I*

> *have had to struggle with this sort of client or that sort of client'. Just being real.*

The supervisors also identified other supervision practices which they had experienced, which had ultimately shaped or influenced their current supervision practice. There was reference to specific behaviours which they had not found helpful in the past.

> *I have had experience of supervisors taking up time with their issues or their own ideas. So it is something I constantly monitor.*

> *[I know] what I want to do – which is different from some of the supervisors I've had in the past I have an idea in my mind of how I want to be a supervisor.*

Finally supervisors identified times when they used their own supervision for specific problems in their supervision practice.

> *I notice how themes come, each week or each couple of weeks, for some reason there will have a theme...I have explored this with my supervisor, whether this is my thing, and I am really clear it is not.*

> *Being willing to have them give me feedback, I have to, I don't like it, – hate it – but I will go and work with my supervisor about it.*

There was mention of the characteristics required in the person who the supervisors chose or sought to provide their own supervision. For a couple it involved seeking someone who brought a new and different perspective and different skills and experience.

> *Someone...with totally a different background from me...no psychology, social work background but whole lot of skills, outlook and directness which I welcome. Particular collection of things which bear no relationship to what I do. I am quite clear that is what I'd like, I want to get away from psychology, idiosyncratic learning, interesting paths before and get to a place that I admire and can articulate the learning – not just someone who is just ahead.*

> *My supervisor is not a social worker and I didn't understand what she was asking me for a good six months, after four years I understood. I've decided I've become a clone, didn't want to be a clone and [I am] ready to move on.*

These latter statements have particular relevance to social workers as they challenge the expectation of the ANZASW policy on supervision (ANZASW, 1998) which specifies

that ANZASW members are required to be supervised by practitioners who are also members of that association.

Summary

The supervisors who participated in this research presented as a group of competent and professional practitioners and supervisors who were articulate and authoritative about the theoretical base of their supervision practice and the professional and ethical boundaries which defined it. They were located personally and theoretically in an understanding of what it meant to be a supervisor.

> *First I start from a place of knowing what good supervision is and what makes up good supervision from my own experience as a supervisee. As a supervisor I know what I am trying to do.*

All of the supervisors had attended training on supervision which had in turn influenced their supervision practice. One supervisor itemised the particular impact of training for her.

> *The effect of training on my supervision has given a more structured approach, a philosophical basis, intellectual resources, more thought around contracting, structure of the sessions, conduct of the sessions, records...Development of thinking around issues in supervision – where does this fit in? I find myself going back to stuff to see where does this fit? Regular and formal review.*

Not withstanding this formal training there was an appreciation of the importance of basic skills such as good listening and positive regard. As one supervisor emphasised it was important "*not to be too damn smart*".

The supervisors' discussion about supervision was thoughtful, informed and energised. There was clarity about the responsibilities of the supervisor and the authority contained within the role. The supervisors conveyed a fundamental respect for the supervisees and an appreciation of their needs and their contributions.

Significantly, all supervisors at some point mentioned their own supervision and the effect that this had upon their current practice. A parallel process was thus suggested where each layer of supervision supports, motivates and influences the next. The corollary of this is that when practitioners are supported from all levels there is a spin off for the client who is the ultimate recipient of this process. The experiences support the ideas of Hawkins and Shohet (2000) who assert that "the best learning on how to

supervise emerges from actual supervision" (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000:188). They identify that the benefits for the supervisor are both the modelling of supervision and the "solid inner experience of how beneficial supervision can be in one's professional life" (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000). The second step to developing good supervision, having "supervision from more than one supervisor" (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000), was also described by the supervisors in this research.

> *I have had a wide variety of supervisors, and in the last six years I have deliberately chosen supervisors who are quite different to me to extend my thinking and my being really.*

Although all of the supervisors were providing external supervision to the supervisees who had also participated in the research, there was considerable discussion around the differences and merits of internal and external supervision. The discussion suggested that the two forms of supervision were not interchangeable and that both were equally as important, attending as they did to different aspects of the supervisees' self and practice. It was also suggested by one supervisor, who provided both types of supervision, that the internal and external supervision demanded different skills and focus both of which provided a different type of satisfaction to the supervisor.

Possibly the most significant feature which emerged from the interviews was the energy and commitment with which the supervisors approached the supervision process and attended to the supervisee. For some this reflected a strong professional commitment which directed them towards a high quality of delivery. For others the discussion rose to another plane and the supervision relationship was described as being at times, or having the potential to be magical, inspirational and motivational, a place where the supervisee's 'flame' could be kept alight.

There was a belief that supervision was a learning process which had to be tailored to the individual needs and stages of the supervisees. In an encompassing manner the supervisors conveyed, at all times, respect and concern for the well-being of the supervisee. They were aware of the broader responsibilities at the boundaries of their supervision practice but within this they were attentive and focused on the supervisee's learning, safety and growth. Significant supervisor roles were identified which included: authoritative limit setter, parental advisor, rescuing arm, attentive listener, flair detector, energy restorer, safety tester and many more. There was an awareness of

the impact of the supervisor themselves and the possibility that their behaviour could be shaming, or intrusive or too clever or could hijack the supervisee' time.

Finally the supervisors positioned themselves as learners within the process "we welcome life-giving feedback from other that helps us grow and learn" (Carroll, 2001). They understood the importance of feedback and as such demonstrated the flexibility and their breadth of understanding in their role.

Profile of Supervisors

Practice experience	39 years	21 years	18 years	16 years	14 years
Supervision training	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Supervision experience	12 years	6 years	2 years	8-10 years	5 years
Providing internal or external supervision	External	External	External	External	External
Supervision contract	oral	yes	yes	Of sorts	yes
Did supervisee have choice	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Ethnicity	Pakeha/ Australian	Pakeha/ New Zealand	Pakeha/ New Zealand	European	European
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female

Age range:	61 to 41 years
Qualifications:	Social work qualification (3) Psychology Degree (2)

Table 6.1

Chapter Seven – Supervision Process: the Dyad

> I liked the way that you gave me plenty of opportunity to talk about my topic - and listening - and that when you did have input it was really valuable. Kind of triggered off another idea and helped to expand discussion and helped me to explore the whole process. Very useful thank you (Supervisee dyad session, 2001).

The objective of this research was to explore 'good' supervision. To achieve this, interviews took place to explore the views of those experiencing 'good' supervision (the supervisees) and the ideas and frameworks of those delivering that 'good' supervision (the supervisors). To complete this enquiry into 'good' supervision, one of the supervision dyads agreed to record an actual supervision session. The process and structure of that session are identified and discussed in this chapter.

As has been noted earlier, much of the previous study in the area of supervision has been descriptive or interpretative and little investigation has been made of the actual processes within the supervision session itself (Gardiner 1989). The importance of this form of investigation is identified by Sloan and Watson (2001) who argue that the "systematic observation of interactions during clinical supervision is fundamental to an investigation that proposes to uncover aspects of the supervisory process" (Sloan & Watson, 2001:665).

Sloan and Watson (2001) describe a pilot study which they undertook as a preliminary to a larger qualitative project which was concerned with individual supervision in mental health nursing. Using the analogy of a play, they are critical that much evaluation of supervision has been made on the basis of the script and the applause rather than the actual performance. Their paper, in which they describe the analysis of a tape recorded supervision session between a supervisor and his nurse supervisee, offers "an alternative, but equally legitimate perspective on the phenomenon of clinical supervision as it has been adopted in clinical practice" (Sloan & Watson, 2001:671).

This work has significance for the present study, and to borrow Sloane and Watson's metaphor, the addition in this research of an analysis of the processes within an actual

supervision session completes the critique. The 'script' has been presented in the literature review, the 'applause' has been heard from the supervisees, the 'directors' comments' have been given by the supervisors and finally, the performance itself will be described.

It is important to note the limitations inherent in the presentation of only one supervision session from only one of the six supervisee/supervisor dyads. The context of this current research did not allow for a larger sample and the data presented here stands as an example of one possibility and one perspective of 'good' supervision, which adds to and illuminates the discussions of the supervisees and the supervisors. Data from the dyad session were organised according to three criteria, the overall process of the supervision session, supervisor interventions and supervisee interactions.

Process of the supervision session

The supervision session had energy, focus and a structure which included a beginning, middle and end. In general the tone and pace of the session was considered and reflective but at times moved through different moods. There were occasions when the supervisee and/or the supervisor became animated and spoke with strong conviction, there was humour and laughter and there were silences.

Whilst there was no definite moment when the first phase moved to the second, there were subtle changes within the interaction in each phase. For instance the supervisee was the primary contributor to the conversation during the beginning phase, where she described the situation and outlined a dilemma. The supervisor at this time had little input of any duration, but was active with frequent minimal encouragers. As the session moved into the middle phase the supervisor's interventions were more frequent and more interactive. The end phase[1] however was clearly identified and announced by the supervisor who initiated a process of review and evaluation which summarised and concluded the session.

[1] The final section of the original supervision session was not recorded due to technical reasons and, as discussed in chapter 3, the supervisor and supervisee agreed to review the tape and to record the process which they typically employed to end a supervision session.

Beginning

The session began with a negotiation of the time available for the session. The supervisee then proceeded, without prompt, to identify and clarify the issue which she had brought to supervision.

Supervisee: *I haven't brought a particular case, although I am going to make reference to a particular family about an issue which is a general issue, especially with young families...I want to use this one particular family as an example of some things.*

The session continued with the supervisee describing the issue and building understanding with examples from the 'particular' family. This initial narrative, or 'telling' by the supervisee, directed and refined the focus to the point where a more specific purpose for the session could be articulated.

Supervisee: *What I am working around. I see it often and it is sort of developing strategies to work alongside families at a really early stage.*

Further discussion and clarification from both the supervisor and the supervisee was required before this purpose was confirmed. The supervisor summed up.

Supervisor: *So what you are looking for is to spend some time now to look at some ideas of how you now might inject some things as you go along?*

The agreement for the focus of the session marked the commencement of the second, or middle phase, of the session.

Middle

The supervisee continued to take a proactive role and suggested brainstorming as a possible means by which to identify new strategies. The process of refining the focus of the session continued however as the supervisee expanded on the story of the 'particular' family. She began to consider exceptions and observed that there were other families, who had similar situations, but who dealt with the situation in different ways.

The supervisor's role began to change as she became more active, though not directive, and involved in this discussion. Her comments focused and deepened the reflection of

the supervisee, offering the opportunity for a clearer focus and analysis. She suggested a new starting place.

Supervisor: *So you have observed some families who have taken a different approach and what sorts of things have you noticed? Would that be a good place to start? Brainstorming the things that we know help with the process of 'letting go'?*

The supervisee then listed the values and attitudes held by this other family which had resulted in a different approach to the situation concerned. As the session progressed the supervisor's contributions increased and the discussion became more interactive. The supervisor sought clarification, summarised and emphasised certain aspects of the supervisee's story, focusing on specific comments and prompting the supervisee to consider another level of analysis.

The supervisor located herself within the issue and discovered the links between the supervisee's story and her own experience and shared these and other ideas about resources with the supervisee. She, on occasion, assumed control of the focus of the discussion and invited the supervisee to reflect on her emotional connection and response to the family.

The discussion in the session, having considered the alternative question of how families deal with situations differently, returned to the original question of identifying new strategies for the supervisee to employ with the family under discussion.

A new list was begun and was created primarily from the ideas presented by the supervisee. The supervisor demonstrated support and affirmation through an acknowledgement of the importance of the issue and of the role held by the supervisee. The supervisor also applied her broad perspective of the overall content and process of the session to integrate the parts of the session. She made connections between the two threads of the session, the original list of those things which made one family different from another and the strategies available to the supervisee and presented this for the supervisee's consideration.

Supervisor: *In your strategy do you think there is a place ...with families to point out some of the things you have just described?*

This prompted a similar integrated reflection on the part of the supervisee who then considered these two aspects together with reference to her own philosophy and values and in terms of client choice. She also placed this in an historical context and identified what she could do differently in the future.

Ending

The (reconstructed) end phase of this supervision session was clearly announced and followed a structured process of review and feedback to and from both parties. The supervisor began by inviting the supervisee to recollect what it was that she had wanted to get from supervision and enquiring whether this had been achieved.

Where do you see you are at the moment on that?

The supervisee reviewed her learning, noting in particular the understandings she had made, the strategies which had been identified and the possibility of some future training which would be beneficial to her. She noted that she could include the latter in her training budget. The supervisee confirmed the worth of the session,

For me it has been a very valuable exercise to do.

The supervisor then considered the supervision issue in the broader context of supervision. Was the issue concluded, were there other aspects to be considered and would it be useful to revisit the issue at another time? The supervisee felt that the issue had been dealt with in sufficient depth and in the process of expressing this made a new connection between the issue presented and a guiding principle of her work. The process of review thus deepened and reinforced the learning for the supervisee.

The supervisor and supervisee then followed a feedback process, "*our usual process*", which invited each participant to reflect on her participation in the session and to offer feedback to the other. The supervisee started by commenting on her own contribution to the session. She affirmed her learning, the importance of the issue and the on-going nature of the process. The supervisor commented on the value of the issue, the process the supervisee used to explore the issue and she affirmed the supervisee's thoughtful reflections and the manner in which she used that in supervision.

You have a good ability to reflect and continually do that and you have demonstrated that in supervision. And I see you continually

thinking about what you are doing and what you maybe could do differently.

Both the supervisor and the supervisee then considered if there was anything which the supervisee could have done differently. Neither were able to identify anything in this area. It was then the supervisor's turn. The supervisor named the things she felt that she did well and this was affirmed and expanded upon by the supervisee. The supervisor also identified some interventions which she thought may have been problematic and checked these out with the supervisee.

The supervision session thus concluded with a structured process which demonstrated the mutuality of this supervision and confirmed it as a partnership. Both participants were accountable for the value of the session and opportunity was available for any dissatisfaction to be aired. The supervision relationship was maintained on an on-going basis where the process of feedback was established as a regular and anticipated opportunity.

Supervisor interventions

The supervisor's interventions were observed and organised into six categories.

- Negotiation of the boundaries and process.
- Active listening: being present.
- Highlighting and tracking themes.
- Sharpening the focus.
- Support, affirmation and promoting personal reflection.
- Self disclosure and information giving.

Negotiation of boundaries and process

Throughout the supervision session the supervisor demonstrated an understanding and an awareness of boundary and process decisions. The manner in which they were raised was inclusive and considerate of the supervisee's wishes.

What are your time constraints? I have until 10.30?

So your outcome - you would like from discussing this?

Would that be a good place to start?

Should I rub this out and look at strategies?

Shall we do our usual quick feedback?

The supervisee identified brainstorming as her preferred method of identifying the various strategies available to her. The supervisor organised this process and did so with frequent consultation with the supervisee and careful attention to the supervisee's meaning and choice of words.

Active listening: being present

During the first twenty minutes of the supervision session, the direction and the conversation was dominated by the supervisee. The supervisor's interest was evident however through frequent use of minimal encouragers "yep, yes, yeah, right, Mmn, absolutely". These were not the grunts of inattention but were delivered with energy which reflected that of the supervisee. Whilst the audio recording did not provide visual information, the tape conveyed a strong sense of 'presence' on the part of the supervisor.

The attention and the listening of the supervisor was also displayed through checking for understanding. "*What you are saying is...* ",and a series of brief comments, which highlighted and brought together themes identified by the supervisee, with the effect of bringing them to the forefront.

...that's separating again.

So we can look at what resources may be useful in the strategy as well.

You were wanting to look at starting to raise the issue earlier on in your relationship.

So what you are saying is that because you are aware that this commonly is an issue.

Attention to the bigger process allowed the supervisor to provide a succinct summary at the end of the session. This drew together the decisions and learning from the supervision session and located them within the supervisee's practice and the principles which guide it.

So you have reminded yourself about your approach that you have of community development...of facilitating that connection between people with common situations and how that may help to address the issue you have brought to supervision. You have also seen

> *some professional development for yourself and then generally being conscious of bringing that into your practice and finding ways of putting this into practice.*

The intervention was at once affirming and informative. Attention was drawn to the supervisee's preferred mode of practice and, by naming it, this was placed within a conceptual framework. The connections between supervision and practice were highlighted and the supervisee was reminded of the challenge to put new ideas and strategies into action.

Sharpening the focus

This category of interventions had an element of checking for understanding but went further to suggest an alternative, or deeper, understanding of the supervisee's analysis. In this supervision session these interventions, at times, facilitated the identification of the specifics within the supervisee's narrative and so provided an opportunity to focus on key moments. In Heron's, (1990) terms this could be seen as a form of catalytic intervention which promotes self discovery, learning and problem solving.

> *What sorts of things have you noticed?*
>
> *Do you mean they almost...continually doing a promotion job?... continually talking about their hopes and dreams and expectations and they are quite positive. And so that you get a clear message that this is how you need to view the child as well?*
>
> *So it is not so much their disability which stops them taking part but maybe the way they have been dealt with.*
>
> *So you are identifying that this may be a key critical influence.*

Through question or comment the supervisor directed the supervisee's attention to aspects of her own reflection, assisting her to notice these aspects and to thus at times affirm that which she knew and at other times to explore that which was new.

Support, affirmation and promoting personal reflection

Support and affirmation were conveyed throughout the session by attentive listening and specific comment.

> *I get a sense that you feel you did a lot and worked a lot but the opportunities weren't taken up. That was maybe frustrating for you.*

You are a key person...You want to affirm and support stuff that allows the separation and letting go to happen.

I think it was good...keep on doing what you do.

The supervisor offered the supervisee opportunities to deepen her reflection on her personal relationship with this issue and to consider the emotional connections with her work.

So how are you actually feeling about that? This is a family who has left. How are you feeling about your involvement?

You saw potential for him.

Are you feeling okay about that then in terms of your involvement? How you feel? Obviously you are thinking what else could you have done, but apart from that are you able to let go?

By drawing attention to the supervisee's position in relation to the issue the supervisor was able to highlight the connections between the ideas and the practice and to provide opportunities for this to become explicit and thus noticed and valued by the supervisee.

Self disclosure and information giving

On several occasions the supervisor found connections between her own personal, not professional, experience. At times this contributed to the energy in the session as the supervisor shared, not only these connections, but also the different insights they brought.

This is ringing bells for me...I am conscious of how difficult it was for me not to be protective.

I recognise that as well.

There was discipline in this however and the supervisor, having shared her experience, idea or insight, refocused onto the supervisee, her input seldom being more than a few short exchanges.

Little information was given in this session but one occasion was a direct consequence of the supervisor recalling a programme she had used herself and sharing this information with the supervisee.

The supervisor's interventions within this session were thus potent but not intrusive. The supervisee's right to choose and to share in the supervision was implicit throughout the exchanges. Ideas were not imposed but were presented to the supervisee for consideration and the supervisor was active to seek feedback and comment on her role within the process.

Supervisee interactions

The supervisee's role in this session was central. She proposed the agenda, set the focus and demonstrated a competency at self reflection which allowed her to consider the issue from a variety of perspectives. As has been discussed above however this was not without particular and pertinent contribution from the supervisor. The ease with which the supervisor's comments dovetailed into the supervisee's reflections suggests two things. The first is the appropriateness of the supervisor's timing and comment and the second is the readiness and willingness of the supervisee to receive these comments. The supervisee's attitude is possibly summed up by her comment:

> *For I think me it is just about developing strategies so that I can work in this particular area in a different way. Maybe I can't do much better than what I am doing, maybe that's what I will actually come to terms with in the end. I don't know, but I always like to explore and I think supervision is a good place...Maybe there is some training out there I don't know about.*

In this section the supervisee's interaction will be considered under three headings:

- preparation
- self reflection
- openness to challenge and new ideas.

Preparation

This supervisee arrived at the session prepared with a general idea of what she wanted to discuss in the session. She began with no prompt, other than a checking of time frames by the supervisor, it is possible that the presence of the tape reorder may have created haste on this occasion.

During the session the supervisee was self motivating and maintained her own energy and focus. She provided the momentum for the unfolding story and discussion and on

at least one occasion proposed the means by which they should work, *"brainstorm some things"*.

Self reflection

Throughout the session the supervisee demonstrated a capacity to reflect. Initially she presented the general context for supervision and as she located herself in the narrative she was able to consider and move through different aspects with, at this point, minimal input from the supervisor.

Later in the session the supervisee, through the process of her own reflection and the supervisor's comments, considered broader contextual issues of the organisation and society and did this in both an historical and a future oriented view. She developed the rationale and identified the potential conflicts for the strategies she wished to develop and positioned herself in the context of her role, organisation and colleagues. Within this she accepted, with apparent ease, the supervisor's observations and comments and incorporated them into her own reflections thereby adding to the depth of these reflections.

On occasion the reflection triggered the supervisee's passion and beliefs about the work she did.

> *I feel very strongly about child development. I feel quite strong about the absolute importance of appropriate parenting from birth.*

The supervisee's reflection was not compartmentalised throughout the session. At the very end, when reviewing the session, the supervisee made the important connection between 'the issue' and the practice principles which underpinned her work. This insight sharpened the clarity of her learning from the session and again connected the her to her passion and commitment to her work.

Openness to challenge and new ideas

The supervisor's experience in the supervisee's area of practice appeared to be significant to the supervisee and contributed to the creation of a context for sharing and exploration.

> *...and you, working in the...sector as well in the past, you will know what I am talking about.*
>
> *And the fact that you have worked in the sector as well, it is a good opportunity to explore possibilities of some other ways, of working around some of these things.*

From the quotation earlier in this section it is seen that the supervisee provided her own context for opening up learning and new ideas.

> *I always like to explore these things in supervision, it is a good place.*

She declared, on several occasions, her willingness and indeed her wish to consider alternative ideas and ways of working. The supervisee's comments, following an intervention by the supervisor, often showed a deepened reflection, rather than an 'aha' experience. On occasion the comments focussed on her past work and how that could have been done differently.

> *That's perhaps something I haven't emphasised too much.*
>
> *I think I need to observe that more in a family.*

The supervisee conveyed a sense of ease and comfort with the final process of review and evaluation at the end of the session and used this opportunity not only for critique of the session but also of her performance and that of her supervisor,

> *I wanted to go on and on ...and it was probably quite good...I didn't feel you were cutting me off in the wrong place.*

This supervisee was an active participant in the supervision process. She developed the agenda for supervision, engaged enthusiastically with the discussion, demonstrated an advanced competency at reflection and contributed purposefully to the process of evaluation of the session.

Summary

This supervision session could be considered as falling into three phases and the ease of transition between each phase suggested that this was a familiar, negotiated format with which both parties were comfortable. The inclusion of a brief, but comprehensive, review process at the end of the session may have added to this as it ensured that any dissatisfactions could be addressed on the spot and not allowed to 'fester' until a formal review.

The supervisee conveyed a strong sense of autonomy within the session. She presented herself and her work with a confidence and an honesty which suggested that there was implicit trust and regard between the two participants. The supervisor displayed a range of skills and interventions in the session where she consulted and negotiated the process with the supervisee. Above all she created a strong sense of 'presence' and an interest and connection with the supervisee, and the supervisee's experience, which was both affirming and validating.

Chapter Eight – Conclusion : the elements of 'good' supervision

> It is not the influence of supervision per se that makes a difference; what is necessary is good supervision (Morrison, 2001).
>
> There is a widely held view that the primary purpose of any research is to promote the development and improvement of social work practice (Powell, 2002).

This chapter reviews the research objectives and methodology. It provides a summary of the findings and identifies four key elements of 'good' supervision. The research data is considered in context and recommendations made for supervision practice. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

Review of research objectives and methodology

The aim of this research was to identify the elements of 'good' supervision. Six pairs of social work supervisees and supervisors shared their experiences and descriptions of supervision in order to identify the characteristics, for them, of 'good' supervision. This was qualitative research and the reports of the participant groups were supplemented by a description of a recorded supervision session between one supervision pair.

There were two sampling criteria for participation in the research: first the participants were required to be currently in receipt of 'good' supervision[1], and second they were required to have had at least three years of experience as a practising social worker. This criteria produced a supervisee group which comprised six very experienced people, all women, whose social work experience ranged from ten to thirty years. The supervision discussed by these supervisees and identified as 'good', was as it happened, supervision which took place outside their organisations. This research thus examines the external supervision of experienced social workers.

The research has two key features. First, it is a study of supervision from the

[1] This was a subjective rating based on a five point scale 'excellent – good – alright - not so good – poor'. Those social workers who rated their supervision either 'good' or 'excellent' were asked to volunteer for the research.

perspectives of both of the participants, supervisee and supervisor. Research into supervision has typically been approached from the supervisee's perspective (Hyrkas, Appelqvist-Schmidlechner, & Paunonen-Ilmonen, 2002) and has seldom included an account of an actual supervision session (Borders, 1989; Gardiner, 1989; Sloan, 1999). In this research the supervisees' accounts are enhanced by the reflections of the supervisors and both are illustrated by the analysis of a supervision session.

The second feature of the research is a consideration of 'good' supervision as opposed to a consideration of 'satisfaction' with supervision. Focussing this research on supervision which is experienced as 'good' provides a description of what 'is', rather than a wish list of what 'might be'.

The research has considered social work supervision at a time when there has been an observed and recorded increase in the influence of management on supervision (Beddoe, 1999; Cooper, 2001; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997; Morrison, 2001). In 1994 Payne identified three possible scenarios for social work supervision as a result of the impact of 'managerialism'. The first saw a division between the administrative and the professional[2] functions of supervision. The second envisaged a reconciliation of the managerial and professional functions. The third, predicted a rejection of the professional function of supervision. Underlying my research was the wish to discover where, in the opinion of the supervisees, 'good' supervision was to be found.

A summary of 'good' supervision

The elements of 'good' supervision are compiled here from three sets of data, that collected from each of the participant groups and that from the supervision dyad. Data comparison showed consistency and complementarity between the verbal accounts of 'good' supervision, which were in turn congruent with the description of the dyad supervision session. When reviewed against the literature on supervision, the research data was well matched by supervision theory and models. A summary of these findings is presented in table 8.1.

[2] Payne (1994) employs the term 'professional' supervision which encompasses both the educative and the supportive functions of supervision.

A SUMMARY OF 'GOOD' SUPERVISION

Table 8.1

	SUPERVISEE	SUPERVISOR	DYAD	LITERATURE
Purpose of supervision	To further own professional development	Growth, learning, creating more options for the supervisee	Place to explore work and to develop strategies	To consider the practitioner's work in the context of organisational requirements, professional knowledge and ethics, and client need (Hughes & Pengelly, 1997; Kadushin, 1992).
	To ensure safety of self and client	Safety part of a more complex equation	Client rights, codes of practice, incidents of historical disempowerment identified	Associated with accountability to organisation, profession and client. Parameters negotiated at contracting (Morrison, 2001).
Supervisor's own: • **Knowledge**	To extend, complement or surpass that of the supervisee	To provide a competent base for supervision – does not have to match knowledge of supervisee	Supervisor's shared knowledge in area identified as important for exploring the issue	Supervisors require expertise and a professional practice base (Hughes & Pengelly, 1997).
• **Skills**	variety of skills required	A variety of skills described	Active listening and reflection of content and feeling, summarising, clarification, catalytic skills. Respect and consultation	Comprehensive list of skills and attributes (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000; Loganbill, Hardy, & Delworth, 1982).
• **Training in Supervision**	Competence to extend and facilitate the supervisee's learning in supervision	All supervisors had training which provided specific skills, frameworks and perspectives	Not explicit in session	Essential (Bond & Holland, 1998; Brown & Bourne, 1996; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997).
• **Supervision**		Significant to practice Valued role model	Not explicit	Good supervision dependent on own experience (Barretta-Herman, 2001; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000).
Qualities of each participant	Of supervisor: respect, ability to listen, willingness to be challenged, mutual regard. Four supervisees had supervision training	Of supervisee: ability for self reflection, honesty, openness. Willingness to take responsibility to get the supervision they require.	Displayed by supervisee: self reflection, openness to ideas and suggestion, willingness to receive and give feedback. Displayed by supervisor: Respect, attention, ability to be 'present', interest, curiosity.	Supervision training, openness and ability to give and receive supervision. Proactive about needs, rights and responsibilities. Commitment to supervision relationship (Barretta-Herman, 2001; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000; Inskipp, 1999).

A SUMMARY OF 'GOOD' SUPERVISION ***continued*** Table 8. 1

	SUPERVISEE	SUPERVISOR	DYAD	LITERATURE
Choice	To select the supervisor	To accept or refuse the request to provide supervision	Relationship chosen	On-going debate: (Bond & Holland, 1998) (Douglas, 1990).
Structure	Supervision focussed, purposeful and meaningful. Contracted	Supervision focussed, purposeful and meaningful. Contracted	Contract implicit. Structure: beginning, middle and end. Comprehensive review of session	Contract central to the provision of good supervision (Morrison, 2001). Different models provide different structures.
Supervision Relationship	Mutual respect and regard from supervisor. Trust	Openness and honesty of supervisee Mutuality	Respect, mutuality, consultation and negotiation demonstrated	Central to effective supervision Mutually developed (Ash, 1995; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000; Jones, 1997).
Control and authority	Supervisee has control of purpose and content Supervisor authority legitimate at the boundaries	Supervisor control of boundaries. Supervisor authority negotiated at the boundaries, relevant to issues of safety	Supervisee in control of agenda-process negotiated but led by supervisee	Supervisees recognise and value structural power. Abrogation of this by supervisors can lead to unsafe practice (Kadushin, 1992a; Payne, 1994).
Challenge of supervisee	Required, but in a supportive environment	No growth without challenge Not to be confused with the comfort of the supervisor	Implicit	Supervision is a place where practice can be challenged in a safe environment (Inskipp & Proctor, 1993).
Personal expression and Development	Able to present 'full self' in supervision. Supervisor must be capable of intimacy and containment	Supervision a sorting place for the 'full self', willingness of supervisee to share	Not comprehensively demonstrated	Debate as to where the therapy – supervision line should be drawn. Relevance of the personal to supervision (Fox, 1989; Gardiner, 1989; Yegdich, 1999).
Supervisee's Role	Significant, choses supervisor. Supervisee openness and willingness to engage. Ownership of solutions	Significant to the success Supervisee honesty, willingness to participate and contribute	Supervision process led by supervisee, solutions and strategies identified by supervisee, assisted by supervisor comment and question	Supervisee is a full and active participant (Barretta-Herman, 2001; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000) Supervisee training (Inskipp, 1999).
Review and feedback	Supervisor must be open to challenge and able to respond to feedback	Supervisor proactive - vigilant, monitoring and ensuring they are able to respond and change	Regular two way exchange – part of the negotiated process of supervision	A feature of good supervision – regular honest two way review and feedback (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000).

That this scrutiny of theory and practice does not reveal the gap suggested by Hughes and Pengelly (1997) between the ideal and the reality of supervision practice is cause for both celebration and concern. It is reassuring that 'good' supervision is recognised and practised and can be matched to espoused theory. There is some concern however that the form of supervision identified here as 'good' (external supervision) is available to only a minority of social work practitioners. The most common delivery of supervision is that which is delivered internally (Brown & Bourne, 1996; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997). While it is not possible, on the basis of this research, to state that it is only with external supervision that a high quality of supervision is available, the element choice, described later in this chapter, featured as a strong component of 'good' supervision. Choice of supervisor is usually available to supervisees who are supervised from outside of their organisation and not available to those supervised from within.

The four elements of 'good' supervision

Four key elements are regarded from the data to characterise 'good' supervision: the attributes and qualities of the supervisee, the attributes and qualities of the supervisor, the opportunity to exercise choice and the nature of the supervision relationship. There were no great surprises here, but it was not anticipated that the role of choice would feature so prominently. Each of these four elements will be discussed in turn.

Qualities and attributes brought by the supervisee

The supervisee's role has long been considered to contribute to successful outcomes in supervision. "The supervision alliance is a facilitative relationship which requires active and intentional participation by both parties"(Inskipp, 1999:186), and supervisees are encouraged in the literature to be proactive and ensure that they receive supervision which meets their needs (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000). Clearly the supervisees in this research had consciously chosen their supervisors, had identified what they required from supervision and were active in their subsequent relationship with that person. Successful supervision requires "special, skills, knowledge and attitudes" from the supervisee as well as the supervisor (Inskipp, 1999). Openness and the ability for self reflection were two supervisee qualities most valued by supervisors, along with a willingness to give and receive feedback.

Within this research's definition of 'good' supervision, a 'good' supervisee is thus characterised as having:

- clarity about what is wanted from both the supervision process and the supervisor
- an openness and willingness to participate actively in the supervision process
- honesty to share practice dilemmas and personal responses to practice
- skills to prepare and plan for supervision
- the ability for self reflection
- a willingness to give feedback
- the confidence to challenge the supervisor
- training in supervision.

The supervisor has the responsibility to create the opportunity and the conditions for learning, but whether this learning is taken up is the responsibility of the supervisee. According to Inskipp (1999) training for supervisees is the most efficient way of developing supervisee competence in supervision. It is therefore significant that four of the six supervisees in this research had attended training in supervision and this reinforces the importance of the last item on the list above.

Qualities and attributes brought by the supervisor

The supervisors in this study, chosen by their supervisees, had practice knowledge and expertise which, in the opinion of the supervisees, exceeded or complemented their own knowledge. Other valued qualities included the capacity for honest, interested and open engagement, an ability to challenge in a supportive manner and a willingness to be challenged. The supervisors demonstrated competence at supervision. This required a set of skills and interventions, in addition to their practice skills, which enabled them to facilitate the supervision process and the learning within clear professional boundaries. Supervision training, it is recognised in the literature, is an essential step to ensuring competent supervision (Cutcliffe, 2001; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000; Holloway, 1999; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997; Morrison, 2001). All of the supervisors in this study had attended some form of supervision training.

The supervisors appreciated the supervision that they themselves received. Supervision for supervisors is considered to be an important aspect of supervision practice (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997) and is a requirement for the supervisors of social workers (ANZASW, 1998). In this study the supervisors referred to their supervision as a place to take dilemmas and as a model or standard for the supervision which they provided. This commitment to, and valuing of, their own supervision, demonstrated the integrity of the supervisors' practice, and provided evidence of the modelling, which is described in the literature as integral to the supervision process.

> The first step to becoming a skilled supervisor is to receive good supervision. Without this fundamental step the supervisor lacks both a good role model and also a solid inner experience of how beneficial supervision can be in one's professional life (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000:188).

When 'good' supervision was experienced by supervisees, the supervisors had the following characteristics:

- competence and knowledge as practitioners
- competence and training as supervisors
- an ability to challenge in a supportive manner
- an openness to feedback and an ability to be self-monitoring
- an ability to provide support and containment for a range of situations and emotions
- an ability to manage power and authority
- they received and valued their own supervision.

Choice of supervisor and supervisee

A central feature of this research was the role of choice. This choice for the supervisee comprised not only the decision to engage in the relationship, but also the decision to remain in the relationship or to terminate the relationship. As a result the supervisees conveyed a strong sense of ownership of the supervision process. Within the literature there is discussion about the desirability and the feasibility of supervisees choosing their supervisor (Bond & Holland, 1998), some of this discussion becoming entangled with arguments concerning the role of authority and control and the relationship between line management and supervision (Johns, 2000; Morrison, 2001). The benefit to supervisees of choosing their supervisor is also noted (Ung, 2002) and it is believed that "the greater the opportunity to choose, the more likely will be the supervisee

positively to anticipate engaging in the supervisory process" (Scaife, 2001:13). This was illustrated in the present research where supervisees were energised and enthusiastic about their supervision.

What was not discussed by the supervisees in the research, but which was recognised by the supervisors, was that choice in external supervision is usually mutual. The supervisors have the choice to accept or refuse the approach and invitation to supervise and they have the choice to withdraw from supervision if there are key areas of compliance which are not being met.

The ability to choose was seen in the research to have an impact on both the supervision relationship and the quality of supervision. Both supervisors and supervisees were free to move into, or away from the relationship, a freedom which was regarded as strengthening the commitment to supervision. This commitment, it is suggested, deepened the responsibility of both parties to monitor, review and adjust supervision if it is not meeting the identified needs.

Supervision relationship

The centrality of the supervision relationship to the success of supervision was evident in this research, and the thought and care, described by the supervisees, which went into the choice suggest that this success was not a matter of chance. "Nothing has more influence on the effectiveness of clinical supervision than the quality of the clinical supervision relationship" (Bond & Holland, 1998:77), and this is a relationship where there is mutual influence and process (Holloway, 1999).

The supervisees knew what they wanted from supervision and this allowed them to negotiate and contract for these needs to be met. There is general agreement that the supervision contract underpins and defines the parameters of any supervision arrangement and provides a structure for the relationship (Morrison, 2001; Scaife, 2001). In this study all of the supervision dyads had some form of contract and the importance of this process for defining the boundaries was referred to on several occasions.

The supervisees, in this research, were active participants in their supervision relationships which were characterised by mutuality, respect and positive regard. These three interdependent aspects of the relationship could be considered as creating the base from which the other activities and elements within supervision may develop. The supervisors too were conscious of these three elements and one spoke of the importance of authenticity on the part of the supervisor if genuine interest and regard were to be conveyed. The exchange of energy and enthusiasm became a cyclical process. The supervisees' honesty and their willingness to share material earned the regard and respect from their supervisor. This regard and respect were the conditions required by the supervisees to continue to share.

Interestingly the capacity for self reflection, a characteristic valued in the supervisee, was considered to be dependent on the supervision relationship.

Supervisor: *It develops over time, having a relationship which encourages self reflection. So the relationship doesn't become obvious, underpinning some reflection.*

The capacity for self reflection alone was thus not sufficient to determine 'good' supervision. To be useful, reflection needed to occur within an established relationship. Reflective learning is an interactive process (Butler, 1996) where there is an exchange of perspectives and an opportunity to consider one's world view. In a similar way challenge may also be considered a product of the relationship. Self reflection, it was seen, when located within the facilitated supervision relationship, contains its own ability for challenge which lies outside of the supervisor's interventions, and, in this regard can be considered an expression of critical thinking.

There was permission, and an expectation, for feedback to be given and received within the supervision relationships. Feedback is considered to be a core skill for supervisors and characteristic of the proactive supervisee (Hawkins and Shohet 2000), while on-going feedback to the supervisor is important for the supervisor's own learning (Brown & Bourne, 1996). The supervisees in this research appreciated their supervisors' openness to feedback and this added to their sense of control and the mutuality of the process. The supervisors were aware that responsive supervision, that which accommodated the supervisees' changing needs, required regular review of the supervision process and a commitment from them, the supervisors, to take action in

response to the feedback. This aspect of supervision was well demonstrated by the dyad session where review and feedback of the supervision session was a mutual process and was a routine procedure.

The supervision relationship in 'good' supervision can be summarised as a relationship where there is:

- negotiation of the expectations of supervision (contract)
- mutuality, respect and regard
- authenticity and an exchange of energy and enthusiasm
- a shared ownership of the supervision process
- a facilitated interactive learning process
- support and challenge
- regular two way review and feedback.

The four elements of 'good' supervision, supervisee attributes and qualities, supervisor qualities and attributes, choice and the nature of the relationship are represented in figure 8.1.

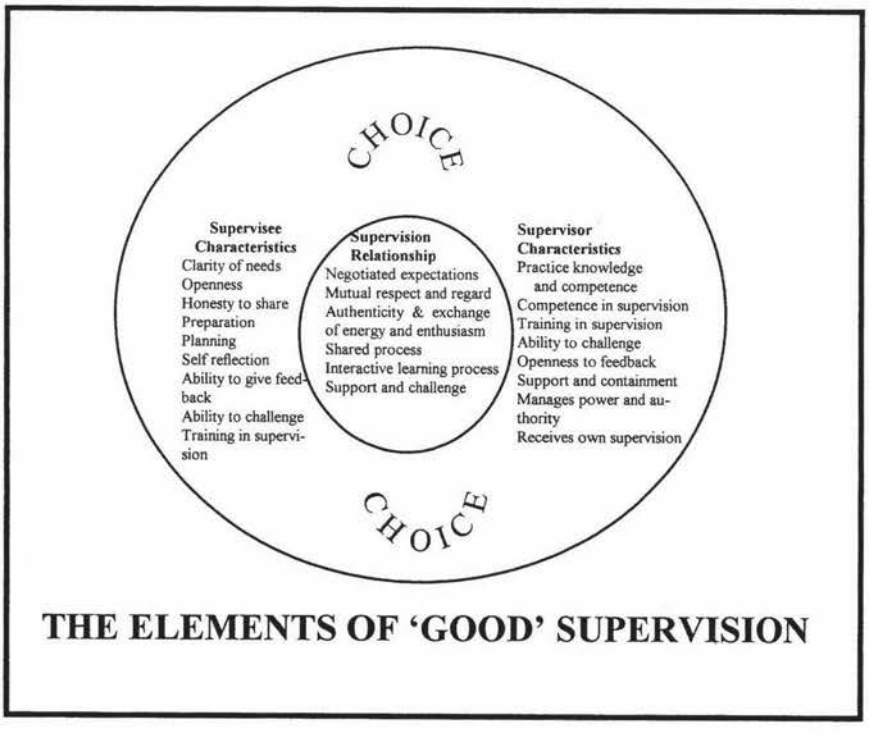


Figure 8.1

This research has thus shown how individual qualities, training in supervision and the freedom to choose the supervision arrangement can combine to create the conditions for a supervision relationship which is defined by a sense of mutual ownership and respect. A fine balance of support and critique creates a safe place for challenge and feedback between the participants.

Limitations of this research

The research participants unanimously, but not unequivocally, identified external supervision as 'good' supervision. Both supervisors and supervisees identified the limitations of this form of supervision and named other processes and services important to their needs. It is possible that a limitation of this current research has been to view supervision with eyes blinkered by tradition. The framing of the research question centred the research around one supervision relationship. It may have been useful to have investigated supervisee needs, and the forums and the relationships which supervisees employed to meet these needs. In this scenario 'good' supervision may have comprised polygamous rather than the traditional monogamous relationships.

A second limitation is the different brief given to each group of participants. The supervisees were asked to describe the 'good' supervision that they received from their one supervisor. The supervisors however were not so constrained and were invited to discuss the supervision that they provided in general, inclusive of the supervisee, but also considering their broader supervision practice. There was therefore overlap but not match between the two groups. The focus on 'good' supervision, as determined by the supervisees, was diluted by this approach where the supervisors were possibly, in their broader perspective, describing supervision which was not identified by the recipients as 'good'.

Finally, it is important to recognise the limitations of the sample studied in this research. All of the respondents and their supervisors were women who identified as pakeha european. Statistics, which suggest that seventy five percent of social workers are women (Social Work Notice Board, July 2002), support this research group as a majority voice within social work, but it is not a group which is representative of either

culture or gender. The findings must therefore be considered with caution within these parameters.

Research data in context

External supervision is the form of supervision described in this thesis. In an arrangement which is similar to Payne's (1994) first scenario, 'good' supervision is characterised by a separation of the professional and management functions. Internal supervision however was also valued. It was agreed by both groups that internal supervision served a different purpose to external supervision, and focussed on clinical work, administrative matters and the sharing of information. The research participants were cognisant of the need for accountability of practice within the organisation. The opportunity for practice to be considered at close hand and in an operational setting was thus regarded as a primary benefit of internal supervision and the lack of this opportunity regarded as a limitation of external supervision. The emphasis given by the supervisors to internal supervision as a means of ensuring safe practice is supported by Morrison (2001), in whose view external arrangements "cannot act as a replacement for supervision from the agency" (Morrison, 2001:118).

External supervision avoids a central tension of social work practice, the tension between control and change. In external supervision the management component of the supervision is either non existent or weakened. By separating the management and professional functions of supervision

> the social work profession and social service agencies have in effect abstained from grappling with the challenges posed by the tension of 'power with' rather than 'power over'. This tension mirrors the same tension social workers face everyday in their work with clients – the tension between being an agent of change or an agent of control (Hirst, 2001:160).

It is possible that the absence of this tension for the supervisees has contributed to the perception of external supervision as 'good'[3].

[3] It is noted that alternative or additional internal supervision was not available to all of the participants in this study. There is also anecdotal and other evidence to suggest that internal supervision is not necessarily an assured event within organisations (O'Donoghue, 1999; Stanley & Goddard, 2002), often being subject to cancellation, postponement or, on occasion, being avoided altogether.

Whether an assessment made by a supervisee that supervision is 'good' can necessarily be a finding that supervision is effective has been questioned in earlier studies (Heppner & Handley, 1981; Ladany, Ellis, & Friedlander, 1999). Individuals in both groups in the current research identified this issue. One supervisee observed

> *Maybe we don't choose the right supervisor – maybe we choose the ones we think will be easiest. The ones where we will hear what we want to hear and make us feel good.*

While a supervisor wondered

> *Do I chose someone who is safe for me and is that necessarily a good thing? Do the people who come to me and like me, is it because we develop a cosy support system?...The down side is not to be challenged at the raw edge or if it got near (the raw edge) the supervisee may move and I would never know.*

"Good' in this research must be regarded within the truths and within the limitations of subjective evaluation. The data raises its own caution about the ability of 'good' external supervision alone to provide sufficient information and authority to ensure good and safe practice and questions whether the very act of freedom of choice favours comfort and personal safety over the discomfort of scrutiny.

It is interesting that no volunteers offered to discuss 'good' internal supervision. There are several possibilities for this. One possibility is that supervisees receiving internal supervision are more ambivalent about that form of supervision. The tensions described above and the common practice of internal supervision being imposed without choice introduce a complexity to the relationship which is not present in external supervision. Another opinion, raised by one of the participants, was that social workers who are receiving internal supervision are less likely to have the autonomy or the time to volunteer to be part of a research project. Implicit here is the suggestion that those who receive external supervision are in different roles or at a different stage of development to those who have internal supervision. This has been suggested by Scaife (2001) who observes that "the degree to which people may select their own supervisors as opposed to having them allocated will often be influenced by their stage of career development" (Scaife, 2001:13).

Recommendations

There are two recommendations from this research .

The first recommendation is for training for both participants in the supervision process. Eight of the ten individuals involved in this research (all of the supervisors and four of the six supervisees) had received supervision training. It is suggested that this baseline of understanding and knowledge contributed not only to each person's ability to identify his or her needs and requirements from supervision, but also to their ability to negotiate these with confidence. Further, it is suggested that a grounded understanding of supervision practice enabled each participant to develop and use the skills appropriate to their separate role within the supervision partnership. 'Good' supervision may therefore require more than a cocktail of personal attributes, skills and professional experience; it may demand specific and focussed training for both parties.

The second recommendation is for the creation of choice within supervision arrangements both internal and external.

The act of choosing, as described in this study, was in itself an act of commitment on the part of the supervisee and contributed to a partnership within which the supervisee experienced and exercised a sharing of the power and of the process of supervision. There is an important challenge here to social work managers to create or identify choices of supervisors for social workers. This may be particularly important for those social workers who are no longer beginners and who seek stimulation and challenge in their work. A creative use of existing skilled supervisors across social work areas or across work sites is a possibility where budgetary constraints restrict the employment of external supervisors.

A re-view of social work supervision

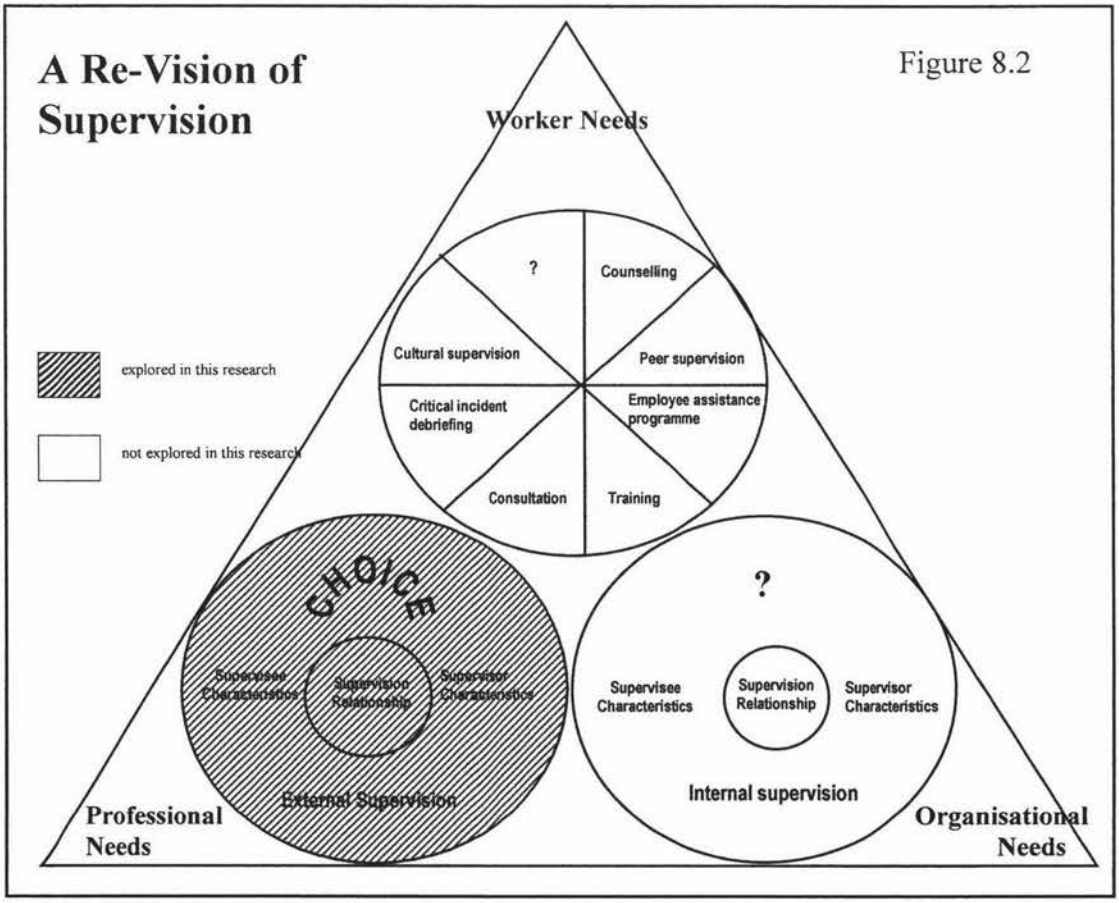
The data presented in this research suggest that the supervision needs of social workers may not be adequately met by external supervision alone. This suggestion is not new. Garrett and Barretta-Herman (1995) describe how practitioners' professional development needs can be met by a mosaic of strategies and Stanley and Goodard (2002) urge child protection social workers to access peer group supervision, consultation and external supervision to meet the breadth of their supervisory needs.

Hirst (2001) found, in Aotearoa/New Zealand, that social work managers' supervision needs were accessed from more than one source.

> ...three forms of supervision together provide managers with a means of support and learning that facilitates effective management of complexity and ambiguity. Each form of supervision is supported equally by the other forms, illustrating that each form of supervision is inadequate on its own and requires the two other forms (Hirst, 2001:172).

The three forms of supervision identified in Hirst's (2001) research were external supervision, management supervision and peer supervision.

The supervisors in the present research viewed external supervision as but one method in a series of services which support, resource and develop social workers. Several of the supervisees also identified arrangements which have contributed to their professional development, safety and support. These arrangements include both internal and external supervision, cultural supervision, employee assistance programmes, peer supervision, consultation, training, critical incident debriefing and counselling. Safe practice, it is suggested, is not assured by any one of these processes but rather a by a combination of two or more. Such a model may be represented by figure 8.2.



This division of supervision into separate forms may reflect present solutions to the impact of management prerogatives within social service agencies and an accompanying recognition of the importance of professional accountability, professional development and the need for support services for social workers. This is a model which recognises a variety of options and has the flexibility to address organisational, professional and worker focussed needs and provide social workers with a diverse range of supports, challenges and opportunities for growth.

Recommendations for future research

The model presented above moves beyond the scope of the present research but also maps the possibilities for future research. What, for instance, would 'good' internal supervision look like? How would the supervisees identify unmet needs and would they concur with the solutions represented in the supervisors' list of alternative services?

The possibilities for further research into social work supervision in Aotearoa/New Zealand are great. With little quantitative evidence of practice and patterns of supervision there are many unknowns. For instance how many organisations who employ social workers have a policy on supervision? How often do social workers receive supervision? What are the general arrangements for supervision? What range of methods and models of supervision are employed? What proportion of social workers receive internal and external supervision? And the list goes on.

Conclusion

Good supervision does not happen by chance. Nor is it a passive event. Good supervision requires active involvement and commitment from both participants, a commitment and involvement which is deepened and enhanced by freedom of the participants to choose their supervision partner. Each partner to the relationship contributes personal attributes: ability for self reflection, confidence to expose one's self and one's work, willingness to hear and offer comment, ability to be congruent and authentic, ability to like people and be interested in them. Good supervision requires a commitment to professional development and education. It specifically requires a knowledge of supervision theory and models. Good supervision is characterised by a relationship where needs are negotiated, where there is mutual regard and respect,

where there is sufficient trust for both challenge to be offered and accepted and for the supervision process itself, and each person's role in it, to be critiqued. Good supervision is active and dynamic and there is a mutual responsibility for ensuring that the outcome to supervision is satisfactory. Good supervision is the result of planning and hard work.

Social work literature and research often provides accounts of poor supervision. It has been therefore a heartening experience to examine and report on good supervision. The descriptions of supervision have been personal and generous and have carried with them a sense that supervision is a special activity which both parties approach with anticipation and enthusiasm. I conclude this thesis with the words of a supervisee and a supervisor.

> *"To me it is invaluable – it is everything – I would not consider not having a good supervisor. If I didn't have one I would find one. It is so important to me supervision, and I love it" (supervisee).*

> *"There is the intellectual stimulation of working with people and ideas and working alongside people or with people trying to find ways of improving their work...preparing ourselves to work in constantly changing environments. I find this intellectual stimulation is energising... I feel I am energised and excited after that and I want to go racing to my files" (supervisor).*

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Appendix One – Ethics Approval

Massey University
Application to Human Ethics Committee

Name	Allyson Mary Davys
Status of Applicant	Masters Student
Department	School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work
Project Status	Masters of Social Work thesis
Title of Research	Perceptions through a prism: Three accounts of 'good' social work supervision
Attachments	**1** Project Advertisement **2** Information Sheets – supervisees **3** Consent Form – supervisees **4** Information Sheets – supervisors **5** Consent Form – supervisors **6** Supervisor Contact Consent Form **7** Additional Information Sheet Audio Tape – supervisee **8** Additional Information Sheet Audio Tape - supervisor **9** Consent Form Audio Session –supervisee **10** Consent Form Audio Session – supervisor **11** Non Identifying Statistical Information –supervisee **12.** Non Identifying Statistical Information –supervisor
Supervisors	Mary Nash, Department of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work, Massey University, Palmerston North. Liz Beddoe, Centre for Social Work, Auckland College of Education.

Perceptions through a prism: three perspectives of "good supervision".

2.2 Application Content

Supervision is a process in which one worker enables, guides and facilitates another worker(s) in meeting certain organisational, professional, and personal objectives. These objectives are competency, accountable practice, continuing professional development and education, and personal support." (ANZASW 1998)

Within the practice field of social work, supervision has been identified as "the worker's most essential professional relationship"(Morrison 1993).

1. DESCRIPTION

1.1.1 Justification

This is a qualitative research project which will examine social work supervision from three perspectives: the participants' construction of the experience of receiving and providing 'good' supervision , a description of an actual supervision session and the models contained in the literature on supervision.

The research sits within a context of on-going change to the provision, organisation and management of social services. Major ideological changes to public sector management in Aotearoa/New Zealand during the past two decades created new priorities and tensions for social service managers. Requirements for measurable outputs, rationalised service, efficiency, effectiveness, performance management and quality assurance were seen, when translated to the supervision context, to threaten the traditional professional (supportive and educative) functions of supervision. By the end of the last decade it would appear however that professional supervision survived for social workers alongside a resurgence of activity around professional identity, education, competence assessment and registration.

It is in this context that the present research seeks to explore how, in 2001 after this period of considerable change, social work practitioners identify and experience 'good' supervision and how this account accords with the literature on supervision. That there is a gap between the ideal represented in professional and official literature on supervision and the reality of supervision, both 'good'' and 'bad', as experienced by practitioners has been noted by more than one author.

To date much of what has been written and researched about supervision has been theoretical and interpretative rather than a record of what actually happens. This research aims to supplement the self report of the participants with a description of an actual supervision session. In this respect the present research has been influenced by the work of Gardiner, who in his research of student supervision, identified two needs

for data collection. The first was to gather data from the participants of supervision and the second "to gather data about what actually goes on in supervision sessions, to report them without reinterpretation, and then to look at the issues raised" (Gardiner 1989).

This research assumes, as do many who write in this field, that there is a key relationship between supervision, 'best practice' and healthy workers. By examining examples of 'good' supervision it is intended that this research will begin to identify the match or mismatch between theory and practice, and what works as opposed to what should work. This position allows an opportunity for practice to inform theory rather than practice being shaped by theory.

1.2 Objective

To identify what social workers in Aotearoa/New Zealand experience as 'good' supervision and to consider this against the professional literature on supervision. The objective of this research will be achieved through:

- An exploration of the experience of 'good' supervision from the perspective of the recipient, the supervisee, and an exploration and identification of the intent of the corresponding provider of supervision, the supervisor.
- A description of the process of 'good' supervision through the analysis of an audio-taped record of a supervision session.
- A comparison of the two accounts of supervision against the models in the literature.

The research will consider whether the expectations and evaluation of practitioners at the 'coalface' reflect the dominant culture of the organisation or whether the professional resurgence has reclaimed the territory and focus of supervision.

1.3 Procedures for recruiting Participants and Obtaining Informed consent

Initial participants in this research will be recruited through an advertisement with the Waikato branch of the Aotearoa/New Zealand Association of Social Workers (attachment one). These volunteers, who will be required to have three or more years experience working as a social worker and who consider their current experience of supervision to be 'good', will be invited to a focus group to explore these experiences of supervision. The definition of 'good' for this research will be subjective and participants will be asked to rate supervision on a five point scale from "excellent –

good - all right - not so good - poor". Social Workers who rate their supervision as excellent or good will be invited to attend the focus group.

These social workers will be asked to discuss the research with their supervisors and to alert them to the possibility that they, the supervisors, will be invited to attend a separate focus group to explore the provision of 'good' supervision. The importance of the supervisors in this research is that they represent an essential half of the 'good' supervision equation.

Potential participants will be provided with an information sheet and consent form (attachments 2 & 3) and a separate information sheet and consent forms (attachments 4, 5 & 6) for the supervisor to complete which will indicate the supervisor's willingness to be contacted regarding the second phase of the research.

Between five and eight respondents will be selected, using a maximum variation sampling strategy which will reflect a range of characteristics such as age, gender, length of experience, ethnicity (Tangata Whenua/Tauiwi) and practice context. The possibility of the involvement of the participant's supervisor will also be a significant criterion for selection.

Following the first focus group those supervisors who have indicated their willingness to be approached will be invited to attend a second focus group to discuss the intent, the process and the focus of the supervision they provide.

At the end of both focus groups participants will be asked to volunteer, subject to the consent of the other party (supervisor or supervisee), to record on audio tape an actual supervision session. One pair, supervisor and supervisee will be selected to participate in this aspect of the research. Additional information and consent forms will be provided for this stage of the research (attachments 7, 8, 9 &10).

The selection criteria for this dyad will aim to select the supervisee who best reflects the general characteristics of the supervisee group in terms of age, experience, gender and work situation. In the event the selection may be limited by the number of volunteers and thus be made on a more pragmatic basis of availability.

1.4 Procedures in which research participants will be involved

There are three stages of participant involvement in this research. The first and second stage will involve the use of focus group discussions. Two separate focus groups will be held, one for supervisees and the second for supervisors. Selection for these groups will be as described above. Each focus group will last for approximately 1.5 - 2 hours. The group discussion will be recorded onto video-tape for ease of

analysis of the content and to enable the researcher to separate out the views of different participants (this is a process which can easily become confused in an audio recording of a group discussion). The video camera will be static and hence no operator will be required. Consent for this will be obtained as part of the written consent. The participants will be advised that the focus of the group will be on their experiences of 'good' supervision and that they have the right to withdraw at any time. Whilst agreement for the discussion of the group to be video taped is a criteria for participation all participants have the right to request that the video recorder be turned off at any time. In this event an alternative means of recording the discussion will be negotiated with the group.

All participants will be asked to complete a baseline information sheet (attachments 11 & 12) which will provide general descriptive and non-identifying information about the characteristics of the focus group.

The third stage of this research invites one dyad, one supervisee and his or her supervisor, to record an actual supervision session onto audio tape. In order for this to be as authentic a record as possible (accepting the constraints of the presence of a recording device) the participants will be requested to record an 'actual', as opposed to a rehearsed or role played, supervision session. The importance of disguising the names of individuals or organisations discussed in supervision will be emphasised and specifically addressed in a meeting with the researcher prior to the recording session.

1.5 Procedures for handling information and material produced in the course of the research including raw data and final research reports.

The focus group meetings will be recorded onto video tape for ease of analysis. This video tape will be viewed and used only by the researcher. Other information may be recorded onto large sheets of newsprint and will also be kept and used only by the researcher. The one supervision session will be recorded onto audio tape and will be edited and used only by the researcher. Whilst the research is being undertaken all tapes, notes, records, data sheets will be kept in a secure cabinet with consent forms and codes being stored separately from the raw data.

When the research is completed and the thesis assessment process concluded all video tape recordings will be erased. The audio recording of the supervision session will also be erased. All other raw data, records or transcripts will be destroyed and any computer stored data or records will be erased.

1.6 Procedures for sharing information with Research Participants

A summary of the findings of the research will be available to all participants on request.

1.7 Arrangements for storage and security, return, disposal or destruction of data.

- During the research:

  all video and audio tapes, transcripts, notes, records and data sheets will be kept in a secure cabinet Consent forms and codes will be stored separately from the raw data.
- On completion of the research and the thesis assessment process:
  - all video tape recordings will be erased.
  - the audio recording of the supervision session will be erased.
  - all other raw data, records or transcripts will be destroyed and any computer stored data or records will be erased.

2. ETHICAL CONCERNS

2.1 Access to Participants

- The researcher will advertise for supervisee volunteers through the local Waikato ANZASW branch and through the regular Newsletter of the Aotearoa/New Zealand Association of Social Workers.
- Potential participants will be sent an information sheet and a consent form. They will be advised of the three stages of the research: attending a focus group, the opportunity for the participation of their supervisors and the possibility of recording a supervision session.
- Supervisors, of the participating supervisees, who indicate an interest in the research will also be provided with an information sheet and a consent form. They will be invited to a separate focus group meeting.
- Supervisor and supervisee dyads will be invited to participate in the third stage of the research and to record a supervision session. One dyad will be selected.
- As I am an independent provider of supervision and a lecturer in the area of Social Work supervision it is important that participants in this research are neither current supervisees nor current students of mine. For this reason the Waikato has been chosen as the locus for the research as it is the area in which I live but not the area in which I teach.

2.2 Informed consent

All potential participants who respond to the advertisement will be sent an information sheet and a consent form for themselves plus a set for their supervisor (attachments 2 - 6).

The information sheet will describe the purpose of the research, the research process, the time commitment envisaged and the people involved (the researcher and research supervisors), and the process for disposal of data on completion of the research. The information sheet will also request potential participants to advise their supervisors of their interest in this research and to provide supervisors with information regarding the supervisor's possible participation in a subsequent focus group.

The consent form will describe the rights of the participants to withdraw from the research at any time, to turn off the recording device, to confidentiality, to clarification at any stage of the research process and to access to a summary of the research findings.

Supervisor and supervisee dyads in this research will be invited to volunteer to record an actual supervision session. All volunteers for this stage of the research will be given an additional information sheet and consent form (attachments 7 -10).

The information sheet will describe the purpose of this record of supervision with specific emphasis on the researcher's interest in the process and structure of the session. The participants will be asked to agree to record an actual supervision session and not a role play or rehearsed session. Specific attention will be given to the need to disguise clients, colleagues and agency identity in order to preserve confidentiality.

2.3 Anonymity and Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be ensured in this research through the use of pseudonyms if individual comments are recorded in the research, and through the use of broad parameters of age, gender, ethnicity and experience to describe the group composition.

Confidentiality in the focus groups will be established through a group agreement on confidentiality. This will include a statement regarding the omission of the names of either supervisor or the supervisee (which ever is relevant to the group in question).

The use of the audio taped recording of a supervision session requires special care. This will be discussed with the participants prior to the recording and some agreement reached regarding the disguise of identity of any person they discuss in supervision. All raw data will only be viewed by the researcher.

2.4 Potential Harm to Participants

The focus of this research is on experiences of 'good' supervision and it is essential that the participants understand this focus, that they are aware of the different stages of the research and the involvement of their supervisor or supervisee. This is phenomenological research which seeks to explore the experience of the practice of supervision as opposed to the theory of supervision.

The pair who participate in the audio taped session may need to debrief after the recording and an opportunity to meet with the researcher will be offered for this purpose. Gardiner, in his research of student supervision, included a final interview with the supervisor about the experience of tape recording the supervision sessions. Not only, he argued, could this be "a legitimate part of the approach but could also have contributed to the validation of the findings"(Gardiner 1989).

Confidentiality will be ensured at each stage by a generalised description of participants in the focus groups and by the title of *supervisor* and *supervisee* for the participants in the audio recorded session.

2.5 Potential Harm to Researcher

No potential harm identified.

2.6 Potential Harm to the University

No potential harm identified

2.7 Participant's Right to decline to Take part

The participants will be advised in the consent form of their right to decline or withdraw from the research at any time and of their right to turn off any recording equipment. These rights will be reiterated at each of the focus group meetings and at the time of recording the supervision session.

2.8 Uses of the Information

The information from this research will be used for the research report and for the publication of academic work.

2.9 Conflict of Interest/Conflict of Roles

My roles as a supervisor and as an educator and workshop leader in the area of supervision have relevance to the research process and experience. It will be important to ensure that participants are aware of my varied roles and to maintain clear boundaries about published material and personal insights and experience. As mentioned earlier I will not include current supervisees or current students in the research process.

2.10 Other Ethical concerns

Refer to 4. Cultural Concerns

3 LEGAL CONCERNS

3.1 Legislation

3.1.1 Intellectual copyright

Copyright of the published and unpublished papers from this research will belong to the researcher.

3.1.2 Human Rights Act 1993

All participants will be treated with dignity and respect.

3.1.3 Privacy Act 1993

All of the data collected will be used only for the stated purposes of this research and will not be available to other parties in the raw form. Participants will be provided with information about the researcher, the research purpose and the research process. They will be asked for their written consent to participate in the research.

3.1.4 Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992

Not relevant to this research

3.1.5 Accident Insurance Act 1998

Not relevant to this research

3.1.6 Employment Contracts Act 1991

Not relevant to this research

3.2 Other legal Issues

None.

4 CULTURAL CONCERNS

As a Pakeha woman there are limits to the perspectives which I feel able to faithfully report in this study. Kaupapa Maori supervision models are being developed however I do not believe that I have the knowledge or the resources to provide the safety and the cultural frameworks to explore this work. A Maori perspective of 'good' supervision is important research which I believe is best undertaken by a Maori researcher.

Any cultural concerns or issues which arise in the course of this research will be discussed and included in the final research document.

5 OTHER ETHICAL BODIES RELEVANT TO THIS RESEARCH

5.1 Ethics Committees

A copy of this ethics application will be sent to the Convenor of the ANZASW Ethic Committee.

5.2 Professional Codes

The researcher is a member of the ANZASW and will abide by that code of ethics with particular reference to section 6 - *Responsibility for Research and Publications.*

6 OTHER RELEVANT ISSUES

There are no other issues I wish to discuss with the Massey University Ethics Committee.

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Advertisement

Research Project: "Good" Supervision

My name is Allyson Davys and I am conducting a research project to complete a Master of Social Work degree from Massey University. This research is concerned with social workers' experience of 'good' supervision.

I am looking for 5 – 8 social workers who:

- Have at least three years experience as a practising social worker
- Currently rate the supervision that they receive as being 'excellent' or 'good' on a five point scale:
  Excellent – good - all right- not so good - poor
- Would volunteer to attend a 1.5 to 2 hour focus group to discuss their current supervision with me.

If you are interested in participating in this research please contact me:

Allyson Davys
Phone: 07 849 5139
Fax: 07 850 9139
Email: AllysonDavys@xtra.co.nz

and I will send you an information sheet which will provide more details about the research project.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, PN Protocol 01/34

Attachment 1

Perceptions through a prism; three accounts of 'good' social work supervision.

INFORMATION SHEET FOR SUPERVISEES

The Researcher

My name is Allyson Davys and I am conducting this research to complete my Masters in Social Work degree. Currently I am contracted by the Auckland College of Education Social Work Centre to lecture on social work supervision on the Advanced Diploma of Social Work programme. I also conduct training workshops on supervision for other professionals and I provide external supervision to a number of social workers and other professionals. I am a full member of ANZASW.

Contact

I am available to be contacted regarding any aspects of the research:
Allyson Davys

Phone: (07) 849 5139 There is an answer phone to leave a message if I am not available.
Fax: (07) 850 9139
Email: AllysonDavys@xtra.co.nz

My supervisors are **Mary Nash** and **Liz Beddoe**.

Mary Nash may be contacted at:
Department of Social Policy and Social Work,
Massey University
Private Bag 11 222
Palmerston North
Phone: (06) 350 5799 ext 2827

Liz Beddoe may be contacted at:
Auckland College of Education
Centre for Social Work
Private Bag 92 601
Symonds Street
Auckland 1035
Phone: (09) 623 8899 ext. 8559

Attachment 2

What is this study about?

This research is concerned with Social Workers' experience of 'good' supervision. How do social work practitioners identify and experience 'good' supervision and how do the supervisors, who provide this 'good' supervision, describe what they do? These accounts of supervision will then be considered against the theory and models of supervision.

What does this research involve?

To participate in this study supervisees must have had at least three years experience as a practising social worker and, on a five point scale from *excellent – good - all right - not so good – poor,* rate his or her current supervision as *excellent or good..* Those supervisees who consider that they receive excellent or good supervision will be invited to attend a focus group to explore this experience of supervision.

The supervisees are requested to discuss their participation in the research with their supervisors and ask the supervisors if they would be interested in being approached to attend a separate focus group to explore the *provision* of 'good' supervision. It is preferable, though not essential, that both the supervisee and his or her supervisor participate.

If the supervisee decides to take part in this research he or she will be asked to participate in a focus group meeting of approximately 1.5 –2 hours duration which will be facilitated by the researcher and which will be held in Auckland. The group will focus on the participants' experience of 'good' supervision and will be video taped for ease of analysis of the discussion. The video camera will be static and there will be no operator present. Only the researcher will have access to the video tape and it will be erased on completion of the study. Agreement to be video taped is a criteria for participation however participants have a right to request that the video be turned off at any time. Should this occur an agreement would be negotiated with the group regarding an alternative method of recording of the discussion.

Following the first focus group the supervisors will be invited to a second focus group to discuss the way in which they provide supervision. This meeting will also be of between 1.5 and 2 hours duration and will be held in Auckland. It too will be video taped.

All participants will be asked to complete a baseline information sheet which will provide general descriptive and non-identifying information about the characteristics of the focus group.

At both focus groups participants will be invited to volunteer to provide an audio taped record of a 'real' supervision session. The agreement of both parties will be necessary for this part of the research. It is important that an actual, as opposed to a role play or rehearsed, supervision session is recorded. From those who volunteer one supervisor/supervisee pair will be selected on the basis that the supervisee 'most' represents the general characteristics of the supervisee group in terms of age, experience and work situation. The audio tape will be analysed in order to describe the structure and the process of the supervision session and will only be available to the researcher. On completion of the research the tape will be erased.

Should the supervisor or supervisee so wish there will be an opportunity to debrief following the recording of the session. Before the audio taped session the researcher will discuss with the participants how client confidentiality will be preserved, ie through the use of pseudonyms.

Attachment 2 ctd

What will participants have to do?

Supervisees:

- Rate his or her supervision
- If he /she rates his/her supervision as being excellent or good - attend a 1.5 –2 hour focus group to discuss the experience of 'good' supervision.

Supervisors:

- Attend a 1.5 –2 hour focus group to discuss the way in which he/she provides supervision

Supervision dyad:

From those who volunteer, one supervision dyad will be selected to audio tape a supervision session.

- Pre recording discussion with the researcher - 30 mins
- Audio tape a session -1 hour
- Debrief of the experience of recording the session if desired.

What can participants expect from the researcher?

All the participants will be treated with respect and confidentiality will be assured regarding their participation in the research.
The information collected will be used only for research purposes and a summary of the research findings will be available to the participants on request. The participants have a right to contact the researcher at any time regarding clarification about any aspects of the research.

Rights

If you decide to take part in this research you will have the right to:

- Refuse to answer any question and to withdraw from the research at any time.
- Ask any further questions about the research at any time during your participation.
- Request to have the video camera or the audio tape turned off at any time.
- Provide information on the understanding that it is completely confidential to the researcher and that it will not be possible to identify you in any of the reports of the study.
- To be given access to a summary of the research findings when the research is completed
- To be assured that all raw material including and audio tapes will be destroyed on completion of the research.

"This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, PN Protocol 01/34"

Attachment 2 ctd

Perceptions through a prism; three accounts of 'good' social work supervision.

Supervisee Consent form

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

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions in the research. I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that it is completely confidential.

I agree / do not agree to having the focus group meeting video taped and understand that I may request that the video record may be turned off at any time during the group meeting.

I agree to participate in this research under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

Signed:_____

Name:_____

*Date:*_____

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Attachment 3

Perceptions through a prism; three accounts of 'good' social work supervision.

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Should the supervisor or supervisee so wish there will be an opportunity to debrief following the recording of the session. Before the audio taped session the researcher will discuss with the participants how client confidentiality will be preserved, ie through the use of pseudonyms.

Attachment 4 ctd.

What will participants have to do?

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Rights

If you decide to take part in this research you will have the right to:

- Refuse to answer any question and to withdraw from the research at any time.
- Ask any further questions about the research at any time during your participation.
- Request to have the video camera or the audio tape turned off at any time.
- Provide information on the understanding that it is completely confidential to the researcher and that it will not be possible to identify you in any of the reports of the study.
- To be given access to a summary of the research findings when the research is completed
- To be assured that all raw material including video and audio tapes will be destroyed on completion of the research.

"This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, PN Protocol 01/34"

Attachment 4 ctd.

Perceptions through a prism; three accounts of 'good' social work supervision.

Supervisor Consent form

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

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions in the research. I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that it is completely confidential.

I agree / do not agree to having the focus group meeting video taped and understand that I may request that the video recorder be turned off at any time during the group meeting.

I agree to participate in this research under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

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Attachment 5

Perceptions through a prism; three accounts of 'good' social work supervision.

Supervisor Contact Consent form

I have been approached by my supervisee regarding my possible involvement in the research named above and have read the information sheet for this study.

I agree to be contacted further about my possible participation in this research and will provide contact details for this purpose.

Signed:_____

Name:_____

Contract address and phone number:

Date:_____

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Attachment 6

Perceptions through a prism; three accounts of 'good' social work supervision.

Additional information Sheet for

Audio Taped Supervision Session: Supervisee

Your Participation

If you take part in the audio taping of an actual supervision session it will be necessary to obtain both your consent and that of your supervisor. From those who volunteer one supervisor/supervisee pair will be selected on the basis that the supervisee 'most' reflects the general characteristics of the supervisee group in terms of age, experience and work situation.

It is important that you agree to record an actual, as opposed to a role play or rehearsed, supervision session. The purpose of this stage of the research is to analyse and to describe the structure and the process of the supervision session.

The audio tape will only be available to the researcher and on completion of the research the tape will be erased. Should either you or your supervisor so wish there will be an opportunity to debrief following the recording of the session. Before the audio taped session the researcher will discuss with both you and your supervisor how client confidentiality will be preserved, ie through the use of pseudonyms.

Rights

If you decide to take part in this research you will have the right to:

- Withdraw from the research at any time.
- Ask any further questions about the research at any time during your participation.
- Request to have the audio tape turned off at any time.
- Provide information on the understanding that it is completely confidential to the researcher and that it will not be possible to identify you in any of the reports of the study.
- To be given access to a summary of the research findings when the research is completed
- To be assured that all raw material, including the audio tape, will be destroyed or erased on completion of the research.

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Attachment 7

Perceptions through a prism; three accounts of 'good' social work supervision.

Additional information Sheet for

Audio Taped Supervision Session: Supervisor

Your Participation

If you take part in the audio taping of an actual supervision session it will be necessary to obtain both your consent and that of your supervisee. From those who volunteer one supervisor/supervisee pair will be selected on the basis that the supervisee 'most' reflects the general characteristics of the supervisee group in terms of age, experience and work situation.

It is important that you agree to record an actual, as opposed to a role play or rehearsed, supervision session. The purpose of this stage of the research is to analyse and to describe the structure and the process of the supervision session.

The audio tape will only be available to the researcher and on completion of the research the tape will be erased.

Should either you or your supervisee so wish, there will be an opportunity to debrief following the recording of the session. Before the audio taped session the researcher will discuss with both you and your supervisee how client confidentiality will be preserved, ie through the use of pseudonyms.

Rights

If you decide to take part in this research you will have the right to:

- Withdraw from the research at any time.
- Ask any further questions about the research at any time during your participation.
- Request to have the audio tape turned off at any time.
- Provide information on the understanding that it is completely confidential to the researcher and that it will not be possible to identify you in any of the reports of the study.
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Attachment 8

Perceptions through a prism; three accounts of 'good' social work supervision.

Supervisee Consent form

Audio Taped Supervision Session

I have read the information sheet for this stage of the study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions in the research. I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that it is completely confidential.

I agree / do not agree to recording on audio tape an actual supervision session with my supervisor and understand that I may request that the tape be turned off at any time during the supervision session.

I wish to participate in this research under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

Signed:_____

Name:_____

*Date:*_____

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Attachment 9

Perceptions through a prism; three accounts of 'good' social work supervision.

Supervisor Consent form

Audio Taped Supervision Session

I have read the information sheet for this stage of the study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions in the research. I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that it is completely confidential.

I agree / do not agree to recording on audio tape an actual supervision session with my supervisee and understand that I may request that the tape be turned off at any time during the supervision session.

I understand that the supervisor has freely agreed to participate in this stage of the research.

I wish to participate in this research under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

Signed:_____

Name:_____

*Date:*_____

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Attachment 10

Perceptions through a prism; three accounts of 'good' social work supervision.

Non Identifying Statistical Information: Supervisees

The following information will be used to describe the broad parameters of this focus group.

Years of experience as a Social Worker:

Type of Agency: ie Non Government organisation
Statutary organisation

How long have you been in your current supervision relationship?

Are you receiving internal and/or external supervision?

Does your supervisor have managerial responsibility for your work?

Is your supervisor responsible for your annual appraisal /performance review?

Do you have a supervision contract?

How frequently do you have supervision?

Did you have a choice of supervisor?

How many previous supervisors have you had?
(please circle one)

none one two three four or more

Do you have a social worker qualification? yes/no
If yes please specify:

What is your: ethnicity: age: gender:

Thank you

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Attachment 11

Perceptions through a prism; three accounts of 'good' social work supervision.

Non Identifying Statistical Information: Supervisors

The following information will be used to describe the broad parameters of this focus group.

Years of experience as a Social Worker:

Years of experience as a Social Work supervisor:

Are you providing internal or external supervision to this supervisee?

Do you have a supervision contract with your supervisee?

Did your supervisee have a choice of supervisor?

Have you attended any training to be a supervisor? Yes/no
If yes please specify

Do you have a social worker qualification? yes/no
If yes please specify:

What is your ethnicity:

age:

gender:

Thank you

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Attachment 12

Appendix Two – Interview Guides

Supervisee interview guide

I am interested in why you have rated your supervision as good or very good.

- What happens in your supervision which means that you come to this rating?
- How do you explain this?
- What does supervision mean to you?

- How does your supervisor contribute to this good supervision?
  Are these to do with your supervisor's
  - skills
  - Knowledge base
  - Personality
  - Qualities

- How much do you contribute to the success of your supervision? Is there anything about your role which effects the way you receive supervision?
  How do you describe your contribution?

- Are there any other factors which influence the good supervision you are getting? Ie organisational
  - policy
  - culture
  - choice of supervisor
  - relationship to line management

If so be explicit

- What are your expectations of supervision?
- Are your expectations met?
- Are there any other things which could improve your supervision/ that you would like to change?
- Any other questions?

Supervisor interview guide

Your supervisees has rated their supervision as 'good' or 'very good'

I am interested in the 'good' supervision that you provide.

1)

- What is it that guides the supervision you provide?
- What are your beliefs and values concerning supervision?
- What models and approaches do you use?
- What key skills do you think are evident in your practice?
- What particular attributes do you personally bring to supervision?

2)

- What are your own beliefs/views about what it is that constitutes 'good' supervision?
- What role do you see the supervisee playing in 'good' supervision?

3)

- Are there other factors which influence 'good' supervision?

  Agency policy/culture?