

# Models of Supervision: Shaping Professional Identity

Judith Kaufman  
Thomas Schwartz

**ABSTRACT.** Prevailing models of clinical supervision are discussed and evaluated within the context of training psychologists for the school setting, with the goal effectiveness of developing a professional identity. Contextual variables (e.g., university versus field-based training), level of training, and interpersonal and intrapersonal characteristics are examined as contributory factors in the supervisory enterprise. A model emerging from Erikson's developmental theory is posited as an umbrella perspective for all models of supervision to facilitate the development of an autonomous and competent professional. Finally unanswered questions and suggestions for future research are specified. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2003 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

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The most visible creatures I know of are those artists whose medium is life. The ones who express the inexpressible . . . without brush, hammer, clay, or guitar. They neither paint nor sculpt—their medium

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Judith Kaufman, PhD, and Thomas Schwartz, MA, are affiliated with Fairleigh Dickinson University.

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is being. Whatever their presence touches has increased life. They see and don't have to draw. They are artists of being alive.

—Anonymous

The transmission and application of clinical skills is a critical and essential component of the training enterprise in school psychology. While didactic content through lecture, readings, and assignments provide the foundation for learning in any applied area, the one-to-one and group supervision, both within the university and in a field-based setting, is crucial for the integration of those skills which provide the basis for training. Supervision is integrated at many different levels of training and in many skill components, culminating in the capstone experience of an internship, where skill and knowledge integration is the expected outcome along with increased independent functioning.

Supervision is a complex, dynamic process involving interactions at multiple levels, potentially with several individuals, subject to internal or individual characteristics and a myriad external influences. When examining the typical approaches to the supervisory enterprise, most contemporary literature, with few exceptions (e.g., Thurnigher, 1998; Harvey & Stuzzio, 1999; Crespi & Forchetti, 1999), focus on the supervision of the therapy/counseling process, which although complex directs itself to a single function. The role and function of the school psychologist is far more complex, and, as such, demands supervision of a wide spectrum of tasks including, but not limited to assessment, individual and group interventions, consultation, crisis intervention, primary prevention, and a host of administrative functions (APA), thus making the role of the supervisor a multi-faceted and complex one, perhaps not limited to a single model or approach. Prior to directly addressing the prevailing models of supervision and evaluating their applicability to the school setting, with the objective of the development of professional identity, contributory factors to the supervision process and factors affecting the selection of a supervisory approach are examined.

### CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCES

#### *Setting*

Among the external conditions that impact on the supervisory process is the setting in which the supervision takes place (e.g., university

vs. field). The primary objective of supervision is the facilitation of competence through skill sharing leading to the intergration and application and that remains constant in any setting. However, specific techniques, supervisor activities, and assumptions regarding the supervisee will differ. According to Murphy (1981), pre-service professional development has its primary focus on the training of skills and acquisition of knowledge, while field-based supervision encompasses issues of effective service provision.

The activities of field-based vs. university-based supervisors also differ. Ward (2001), using a sample of both types of supervisors, found that field-based supervisors reported more involvement in technical activities, while university based supervisors reported more general supervision activities including information sharing and interpersonal involvement. While both groups reported spending the majority of time on case presentation and feedback, the activities of the two groups appear complementary and developmental rather than redundant, thus providing the student with a comprehensive experience.

When students work outside of the university, especially during internship, they may be involved with many supervisors, both within and outside of discipline, therefore having the advantage of different perspectives and special expertise. However, one disadvantage of multiple supervisors is that the lines of responsibility may be blurred and create a stressful environment for the student (Alessi et al., 1981). In the university setting, a single individual typically assumes responsibility and can orchestrate and coordinate the students' experience.

### ***Level of Experience***

The level of training of the supervisee has a direct impact on the nature and content of supervision. One distinction, certainly, is practicum level versus internship level. In general, practica are more thematically focused (i.e., assessment, counseling, consultation), evaluation more direct, and the learning experience better protected from the daily strains and pressures facing practicing school psychologists. In contrast, while practica are often seen as serving educational rather than service activities, internship requires students to employ a comprehensive set of skills, in a wide range of situations, but within one professional role (Alessi et al., 1981). Practica may be focused and integrated within the university setting, while students on internship may have limited on-going contact with their training program. However, there are some notable exceptions where both the university and the field-based supervisors

work collaboratively to create a structured, organized experience, thus paralleling the internship experience (see Welsh, Stanley, & Wilmoth, this issue).

Supervision research generally supports the notion that there are specific levels of training (Benard & Goodyear, 1998; Loganbill, Hardy, & Delworth, 1982).

- *At the beginning level* supervisees are relatively dependent on the supervisor to diagnose clients and establish treatment plans. Fears and fantasies emerge as the student now becomes responsible for a “real” client, with real problems. The supervisee, coming from the protective academic environment, may be unaware of limitations in academic knowledge and deficits in clinical skills. The supervisee may have a low self-concept and become overly reliant on the supervisor, and such dependency can easily be reinforced. At other times, the student may underestimate the need for direction from the supervisor and present as knowledgeable and confident. The supervisor, in this initial contact, needs to be sensitive to the behavior of the trainee, as the rhythm established at the beginning level may provide the foundation for future supervisory contact and the expectations students have of supervision.
- *At the intermediate level*, supervisees rely on supervision for the understanding of difficult clients, but are somewhat resistant when their own competence or self-concept is challenged. However, as the supervisee continues to grow, current and anticipated challenges and self-doubt continue to affect the student’s self-concept, while the student becomes aware of the continued growth. The supervisee may continue to be dependent and seek answers and direction, becoming disappointed as the supervisor attempts to foster independence and autonomy.
- *At the advanced level*, supervisees function somewhat independently and seek consultation when appropriate, while also taking responsibility for incorrect decisions. The supervisee’s view of the process becomes more realistic with an increased awareness of how to make the best use of supervisory time. At the advanced level, students transition into an integrative stage of development. As the student becomes more autonomous in functioning and is able to create solutions to problems and share the information with others, some training programs begin to involve advanced graduate students in providing supervision (McIntosh & Phelps, 2000), thus evolving a mutual training model.

Typically, the trainee begins his or her interactions in a somewhat rigid, imitative way, directly applying classroom concepts without actually evaluating the client. There is a caution for university-based trainers to be particularly sensitive to how they “teach,” as that style/approach is likely to be incorporated into the practice of the new professional. As the supervisee gains experience and exposure, he or she begins to incorporate feelings of competence, self-assurance, attempting to gain greater autonomy and self-awareness, as well as dealing with increasingly complex diagnostic, treatment, and procedural information.

The literature does not make clear when and how a supervisee moves from one level to the other, nor how the competencies at each level are evaluated. What may be of particular concern, although beyond the scope of this article, is how to evaluate those individuals re-specializing in school psychology (most typically with doctorates in clinical psychology) who may have more sophisticated skills in some areas and non-existent knowledge in other areas.

### ***Additional Factors***

Loganbill, Hardy, and Delworth (1981) suggested that the time dedicated to supervision may govern the nature and extensiveness of the supervision experience. When a relatively short period of time is scheduled, the supervision itself becomes increasingly task oriented and goal directed; with increased time, the discussion of process and interpersonal issues become incorporated into the supervisory session.

The structure of the supervision itself is, in part, influenced by the model of supervision and the theoretical orientation of the supervisor (Auld & Hyman, 1991; Langs, 1979). Thus, a particular supervisory session may have an inherent structure that does not vary from session to session and may directly reflect the supervisor’s values and orientation. In contrast, there are those supervisors who consider themselves eclectic and will adjust supervision in concert with the issues and materials that the student presents.

## ***INTERPERSONAL AND INTRAPERSONAL FACTORS***

As in any other situation, individuals, values, and personal characteristics may become an integral part of the supervision process (Ruskin, 1996), and thus must be accounted for when designing a model of supervision. While we often conceptualize the supervision process as a dyad, it

is, in fact, at minimum a triad when we include client variables. Haber (1996) included such factors as stage of professional development, culture including worldview, ethnicity, race, socio-economic states, religion, gender, and gender orientation, as well as personal attributes, personality characteristics, and life cycle factors. This array of factors is pertinent to the supervisor, supervisee, and the client.

In an attempt to identify the "ideal supervisor," Carifio and Hess (1987) reviewed the literature and found that the "ideal" possesses appropriate levels of empathy, respect, genuineness, the ability to be understood, and the capacity for self-disclosure. In addition, the supervisor sets clear and explicit goals for supervision, and these goals guide the content of the session. Murphy added (1981) that the supervisor's behavior should encourage the supervisee to be honest about the interaction with the client, to feel sufficiently comfortable to take risks and admit mistakes in order to grow as a professional. Loganbill, Hardy, and Delworth (1981) indicated that a sense of humor, the capacity for intimacy, positive outlook, and respect and consideration for others are essential elements.

Just as supervisees look for a particular set of characteristics in their mentors, supervisors have their own expectations. The characteristics most often mentioned include (Swain, cited in Hess, 1987a) interest in the client's welfare, preparation for supervision, knowledge, self-awareness, openness to suggestion, boundary management, decision making skills, and self-disclosure. It has been noted that the nature and content of supervision can be directly affected by what characteristics and skills the supervisee brings. Competence in specific skills (assessment, consultation, treatment), having a theoretical identity, and a knowledge of ethics and professional behavior permit the supervisory session to become more conceptual and more process or issue oriented (Loganbill, Hardy, & Delworth, 1981; McIntosh & Phelps, 2000).

The third aspect of the triad includes client attributes. Obviously, in order to maximize training opportunities, trainees (at all levels) should have opportunities to work with a wide range of pupils and education programs, from the severely mentally retarded, emotionally impaired, to the talented and gifted. These populations and programs bring with them unique issues to be addressed in supervision and can aid in professional growth (Alessi, Lascurettes-Alessi, & Lays, 1981). The nature of the client's issues, the demographics of the client, and the setting determine some of the issues that become the focus of supervision (Hess, 1987a). For example, prevention strategies may be emphasized at the elementary level, while follow-up and evaluation of individual educa-

tional plans as well as counseling interventions may be more important at the secondary level. Social issues may emerge at the elementary level, while issues of risky behavior may be prevalent at the secondary level. The way in which the contextual issues, interpersonal and personal characteristics and consideration of supervisor, supervisee, and client interactions are integrated into the supervision process is directly related to the model(s) of the supervision process incorporated into the training experience (Bernard & Goodyear, 1999).

### ***MODELS OF SUPERVISION***

Bernard and Goodyear (1999) enumerated a range of basic theoretical models of supervision which are generally agreed upon in the literature. The existing models will be reviewed briefly, with the view toward evaluating their relevance to school-based practice and their contribution to the development of professional identity.

#### ***Psychodynamic Models***

Psychodynamic models of supervision are most prominent in clinical and counseling psychology, particularly in the development of the therapist/counselor role. Although the underlying principles may not appear to be immediately salient to the role and function of the school psychologist, there may be elements in the model that can facilitate the student's growth as a professional.

Supervision mirrors the potential client/counselor relationship and can provide a model of practice. The counselor/client relationship is often replicated in the training relationship (Caligor, 1984). Constructs of transference and counter-transference inherent in a dynamic orientation are critical to understanding the forces that govern the student's understanding of the nature of treatment and the supervisory process. Our effectiveness as primary providers of mental health services in the schools can be informed by our understanding of relational dynamics.

Focusing on "process" and resistance in both counseling and the supervisory relationship can enrich our understanding of the child as well as our own relationships with staff and supervisors. Supervision following a psychodynamic approach can model and teach an analytic attitude which conveys a genuine respect for the client's autonomy in discovering and understanding his or her issues. While it can be argued that the role of therapy in a school setting is limited, and that one cannot deal

with the etiology of the problems manifested in the school setting, using psychodynamic modeling in case formulation can facilitate a deeper understanding of a client and of oneself. Treatment or practice may follow a different theoretical approach or direction, but a dynamic understanding may govern the focus of a treatment plan. The student's dynamic understanding of causality, process, and the role of self-reflection may contribute positively to the development of an effective professional identity.

### *Cognitive/Behavioral Models*

According to Knoff (1986), there are certain assumptions underlying a behavioral orientation to supervision. These include the concept that service delivery can be discreetly identified, observed, and causally related to usefulness and effectiveness with identified client; that effectiveness of skills can be empirically evaluated; that behavioral interventions can increase, decrease, and assist in developing new behaviors; and that all these approaches can be replicated in multiple settings.

There are several goals of supervision under this model. According to Follette and Callaghan (1995), a supervisor has the goal of establishing a set of conditions that will help the psychologist adopt a particular philosophy of behavior and behavior change, learn to apply a distinct set of basic principles, and develop the ability to apply an analytic method to understanding behavioral problems. Further, the supervisor must assist the supervisee in being able to functionally analyze client problems, apply behavioral principles to those problems, and provide theoretically driven rationale for how treatment of those issues will occur using these principles.

Kratochwill, Bergan, and Mace (1981) pointed out that the structure of the supervisory session is fixed based on the assumptions and goals of such a model. One of the hallmarks of behavioral supervision has been the specification of interventions in operational terms. Empirical evaluation is essential. During supervision, trainees provide data documenting their assessment and intervention efforts and providing measurable outcomes for their treatment. The goal of treatment is also shaped by a behavioral approach, with an emphasis on adaptive behavior and prosocial skills. Developing expectations, behavioral measures, and objective criteria for evaluation contributes to the knowledge and skill development of the trainee. Awareness of the process, the techniques involved, and the ability to produce change supported by data can enhance the trainee's confidence in his or her ability to provide pro-

fessional services, thus contributing significantly to professional identity development.

### ***Systems Approach***

Curtis and Yager (1981) suggested a systems model which they felt reflects the complexity of the role and function of the school psychologist. They defined a system as the orderly combination of a set of component parts that serve to produce a definable outcome or product. In viewing supervision from a systems perspective, supervisees are seen within the context of the larger system in which they function as well as in terms of their own intrapersonal subsystems. Further, these interactions are viewed within the component of larger systems, including the university training program, the school's educational program and the support network of the community at large. During supervision, the particular level of analysis must be identified. The goals of supervision are comparable to other models; however, the establishment of trust and rapport, the assessment of the supervisee's performance level, assessment of the student's needs, goal setting, and the evaluation of the supervisee's achievement of such growth. Constant change, development, growth, and decline are underlying assumptions of a systems approach. The supervisor and supervisee engage in an iterative process, collaboratively developing a directional focus, stages for progress, and a time frame for goal attainment. The incorporation of a systems model brings into awareness the complexity of interaction and a broader framework in which the school psychologist must work, and emphasizes the complexity of the school psychologist's function which broadens the student's professional identity.

### ***Developmental Models***

The primary principle underlying a developmental model is the assumption of on-going growth. A second assumption is that learning is a life-long process. Worthington (1987) noted that the behavior of supervisors changes as supervisees gain experience, thus creating a dynamic change in the supervision experience.

Stoltenberg and Delworth (1987) highlighted nine key growth areas in the supervision experience:

- Intervention
- Skills competence

- Assessment techniques
- Interpersonal assessment
- Client conceptualization
- Individual differences
- Theoretical orientation
- Treatment goals and plans
- Professional ethics

It should be noted that all of these areas are, in fact, “skills” areas and do not reflect the professional growth of the supervisee. One cannot argue with a developmental approach as all of what we are committed to doing involves on-going learning. As our trainees grow and develop, so does confidence and autonomy, leading to an enriched professional identity.

### *Integrated Models*

Many professionals view themselves as “eclectic” and thus integrate multiple orientations. The Discrimination Model (Bernard & Goodyear, 1992) presented as an atheoretical approach focuses on role and function as different from orientation. The roles they specify are those of teachers encompassing direct lecture, instruct, and inform the supervisee. They may act as counselors when they assist supervisees in noticing their own difficulties, and they may act as consultants when providing direction in the treatment process. Further, they highlight three areas for skill building which include process, conceptualization, and personalization.

The Discrimination Model is essentially a training model and assumes that the supervisee brings habits and skills that require integration and development.

The use of orientations suggests the frame of reference used by supervisors which guide their philosophic and pragmatic approaches to supervision, and influence their interpretation of supervision interactions and processes (Knoff, 1986). While the theoretical orientation serves as a guide for the supervisor, it also serves as an orientation to the supervisee as to direction and expectations of the interaction. Further, the theoretical framework can also provide a template for supervisees to develop their own models of practice (Goodyear, Abadie, & Efron, 1984). However, most of these models, while informative, emerge from the field of marriage and family therapy and from the supervision of psychodynamic psychotherapy. Over the past few years, several excellent attempts have been made to provide models in school psychology

(Harvey & Struzzio, 1999). However, these models tend to address functional aspects of training and not a comprehensive theoretical model.

Is one model more effective than any other? There is a significant lack of contemporary research focusing on the outcomes of supervision, and virtually no studies comparing the different theoretical models. Lambert and Arnold (1987) concluded that very few follow-up studies were reported, and even when follow-up is included, there are a myriad of uncontrolled variables. The elements of supervision that seem most important for efficient learning include instruction, modeling, practice, and feedback which are integral components of all models of supervision. Feedback emerges as especially important, particularly when attempting to ensure the quality of service delivery.

In general, supervisors must continuously evaluate the social and professional skills of their supervisees in order to ensure that goals are being met (Alessi et al., 1981), and to be in on-going communication with the training program. What remains clear is that irrespective of model, the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee is essential in the facilitation of professional and personal growth.

### ***AN UMBRELLA THEORY OF SUPERVISION***

After evaluating the models posited in the literature, it is our belief that developmental models override or serve as an umbrella with an emphasis on the unfolding of personal and skill development. Development governs all that we do. Specific theoretical models give the content to the overall umbrella of developmental models.

Many different identities are built from the core of self-identity. We need to consider "professional identity" as a critical component of functioning in which supervision and those individuals who provide it are joined in the parenting process, analogous to the parenting and support which facilitate the core identity development. Obviously, there is a different foundation to work with. Many individuals contribute to the professional identity process: faculty, other professionals, and peers. The supervisor, at various levels of training, becomes the synthesizer, putting those fundamental elements together, individual personal identity, education, academic knowledge, and practical exposure as well as facilitating further growth and development so that the supervisee moves in the direction of autonomous function. An integrating approach that can

provide insight into the development of professional identity emerges from one of our major identity theorists, Erik Erikson (1968).

Erikson summarized the multi-dimensional nature of growth and development which has essential meaning for the supervisory enterprise:

I shall present human growth from the point of view of the conflicts inner and outer, which the vital personality weathers, re-emerging from each crisis with an increasing sense of inner unity with an increase in good judgement and an increase in the capacity to "do well" according to his own standards and the standards of those who are significant to him. The use of the words, "do well" of course points to the whole question of cultural relativity. Those who are significant to a man may think he is doing well when he "does some good" or when he "does well" in the sense of acquiring possessions when he is doing well in the sense of learning new skills and new knowledge or when he is not much more than just getting along; when he learns to conform all around or rebel significantly; when he is merely free from neurotic symptoms or manages to contain within his vitality all manner of profound conflict.

—Erikson, cited in Jahoda, 1950, pp. 91-92

A healthy adult incorporates a personality that actively masters his or her environment, shows a certain unity of personality, and is able to perceive the world in relation to him or herself correctly (Jahoda, 1950; Erikson, 1950). It would seem that those factors would encapsulate a positive professional identity as well, and are fundamental to the outcomes of effective supervision.

How do we get to that point? If we reflect back to Eriksonian stages of identify development, he stated that, "the child grows and develops social capacities and new interactions. The healthy child, *given a reasonable amount of guidance*, can be trusted to obey inner laws of development . . . which create a succession of potentialities for significant interaction with those persons who tend to respond to him and those institutions that are ready for him" (p. 93). According to Erikson, each in-

dividual goes through stages of development, filled with his or her separate challenges.

A brief review of Erikson's psychosocial stages and their relevance to the supervisory process is illuminating. Basic trust, which is the cornerstone of a vital personality, focuses on the essential trustfulness of others as well as a fundamental sense of one's own trustworthiness. If we follow through using Erikson as a foundation, then the first steps in the supervision process is to establish a relationship built on trust. The supervisee not only trusts the supervisor, but also feels sufficiently comfortable to be authentic with the supervisor, as most of the time the supervisee is reporting the client behavior or situational variables through his or her eyes. Trust has also been called confidence and is not built on quantity, but on the perceived quality of the relationship.

Autonomy follows trust and incorporates the will to be oneself, to engage in self-expression as well as self-restraint. The ability to move forward and take independent steps in functioning is clearly one of our goals of the supervision process. At the same time, while moving in the direction of autonomy, a strong and stable reference base is essential. As one begins to develop this sense of autonomy, initiative follows. Going beyond what is learned in the classroom, understanding the complex functional system, and venturing to take intellectual risks in decision making become incorporated into training. Learning, growing, and functioning beyond minimum expectations reflect the capacity for industry as well as being open to new learning and practice opportunities. Questioning and experimenting make the supervision process an excellent forum to engage in broadening thinking, interpersonal risk taking, as well as skill building. The interaction with multiple supervisors, functioning in differing roles, within the context of the complex system, but with the security of a trustful relationship with supervisory personnel, permits the trainee to begin to explore his or her professional identity as a school psychologist. The synthesis of the developmental process is the assumption of being a fully credentialed school psychologist. If the trainee is effectively supported through the "parenting" or mentoring process, identity solidification emerges supporting an individual "doing well" in his or her chosen profession, yielding professional contentment and job satisfaction. The effective supervisor becomes aware of the developmental stages a trainee must negotiate, and can support the growth process, irrespective of a particular theoretical model. It would be important to operationalize an Eriksonian oriented model to evaluate its applicability to the actual supervisory process.

### ***UNANSWERED QUESTIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS***

A review of the literature focusing on models of supervision in the schools and the role of supervision in shaping professional identity raises more questions than it provides answers. An extensive list can be generated; however, our focus is on the most frequently occurring concerns.

- What happens when the “student” knows more than the supervisor?
- Do our training programs have a *model* of supervision which is conveyed (a) within the program and (b) to supervisors external to the program?
- Does the model meet the objectives of the training program?
- What happens if internal (university-based) and external (field-based) models clash? Who advocates for the trainee and how is the conflict resolved?
- If we do not have a model, how do we “objectively” evaluate our students?
- Do we evaluate “personal growth” or only skills acquisition?
- How often do we evaluate a student, and do developmental stages play a role in our evaluation process?
- How are issues of multi-culturalism incorporated into supervision? It becomes the responsibility, not only of the training program, but also of the external supervisors as well to do so.

In conclusion, the critical question remains—can there be a unified model for supervision in the schools? It is obvious that there is a limited amount of data-based research in the field of supervision in general, and even less focusing on school-based models. It remains unclear as to what models produce the clearest outcomes in terms of professional development. It behooves us, professionally, to begin to engage in systematic outcomes research, reflecting the objectives of our training programs.

With that said, given the complexity of school-based practice and the multi-faced roles and expectations of school psychologists, it would be naïve to think that a single model or a particular orientation would suffice in training with the particular objective of developing a professional identity which incorporates autonomy and competence. However, it remains essential to search for those models and methods which support the development of the essential practice skills and interpersonal qualities which are the hallmark of our profession.

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