

SUPERVISION OF PARAPROFESSIONALS IN
THE HUMAN SERVICE FIELD:

A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This research study examines the supervision of paraprofessionals in the human services using a qualitative methodology. It focuses on the views of the paraprofessionals, who were all women, with the central research question: What are paraprofessionals' views of supervision in the human service field? The literature on this topic is scarce and the goal of this research is to improve our understanding of the most effective supervisory practices for paraprofessionals and ultimately to improve practice in this area. The qualitative methodology was based on a phenomenological approach and used one on one interviews to capture the views and experiences of the participants.

The findings indicated that women paraprofessionals clearly value and benefit from supervision and respond best to approaches that are highly supportive, empowering and collaborative in nature, and use a variety of formats including one on one sessions, group meetings and peer support. It is important to ensure adequate job orientation and relevant training.

The supervisory relationship is key to the success of supervision and should include ongoing feedback and validation. Concerns regarding safety in the workplace as well as burnout need to be addressed to improve working conditions and job satisfaction for the paraprofessional. Issues related to oppression and culture are important in understanding the unique experience of the paraprofessional and need to be addressed by both supervisors and the agencies that employ them. Further research on this topic is recommended.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1. Rationale for the Research

This qualitative research study focuses on the paraprofessional's experience with supervision in the human service field. Currently there is limited information and research regarding the supervision of paraprofessionals in the human services. In addition, there is no research that explores the experiences of the paraprofessional in supervision. Given the important work of paraprofessionals, I believe there is a need to explore and understand how to best support and enhance their work. Supervision has the potential to support and enhance the experience of the paraprofessional, which ultimately affects the paraprofessional's work with clients, families and communities. The focus on the paraprofessional's perspective is important, as it will provide valuable insight into supervision of this group. This research has the potential to contribute to our knowledge base, thus adding to the development of a meaningful framework for the supervision of paraprofessionals.

The central research question for this study is: *What are paraprofessional's views of supervision in the human service field?* The purpose for gathering this information is to contribute to our understanding of the most effective supervisory practices for paraprofessionals with the goal of improving supervisory practice. The argument I make is that improving supervisory practice with paraprofessionals will have a direct impact on front line practice with clients as well as the overall quality of service delivery.

2. Background and Interest in this Research

My interest in this research stems from my own experience as a social worker, both as a supervisee and as a supervisor. In my early years as a social worker and as a supervisee in child welfare, I first became aware of the significant impact of supervision on my practice with clients and on my own personal well being. When I received ‘good supervision’ from a supervisor who was available, supportive and offered helpful challenges and solutions to difficult casework, I felt energized, focused and ready to tackle the challenges that I faced in the workplace. On the other hand, when I was supervised by someone who was difficult to access, unsupportive, and with few ideas to assist with problematic casework, I felt isolated, burdened and unprepared to deal with the complex cases that I faced. This led me, early on in my career, to examine the importance of good supervision and the impact that it has on clinical practice in social work.

It is within this context that I embarked on my recent experience as a supervisor of paraprofessionals. My first experience was supervising paraprofessional treatment foster parents for two years in the 1990’s. This was a challenging position, trying to balance the need to be supportive of foster parents while at the same time holding them accountable to provide quality care to high needs children living in their home. More recently, I have supervised paraprofessional home visitors in a specific program within a health care setting. While in the program, I struggled to provide good supervision and ensure that the program delivered a quality service to women who were dealing with addiction issues and parenting. I witnessed the benefits of the paraprofessional model, in particular the

shared life experiences of the paraprofessional and the client as well as the bond that develops between them. This bond enabled the paraprofessional to have a significantly positive influence on the client's growth and development over time.

The concern that I have had with the delivery of this paraprofessional model with high risk women, however, is that the paraprofessional by definition may not be fully equipped to deal with the complex situations that they encounter with their clients in the community. I believe that the supervisor has a significant role to play in ensuring the quality of the service delivery and adherence to appropriate boundaries and ethics. The support offered by the supervisor can also have a significant impact on the health and well being of the paraprofessional as she struggles with complex high risk situations. The literature to date does not provide sufficient guidance in dealing with the complex issues that arise in the supervision of paraprofessionals. Within this study, I have explored the specific components of supervision, according to the paraprofessional, that could address these difficulties. This exploration could contribute to the creation of a meaningful supervision framework which will best support the paraprofessional working in the community, prevent burnout and staff turnover, and enhance the quality of service delivered to the client. In addition, the findings from this study could assist in the use of the paraprofessional model with other populations in the community.

3. A Brief Overview of the Thesis

The first chapter of this study includes an extensive literature review of the key defining constructs regarding paraprofessionals, supervision and the supervision of paraprofessionals. I discuss the contribution this study makes for front line and administrative service staff within human services. The theoretical foundations of supervision are discussed in detail in Chapter 2. In particular, systems theory, supervisory relationships and oppression theory provide a strong foundation for the study. There is a scarcity of information available in the literature on the topic of supervision of paraprofessionals, however empirical findings do exist and are presented in this chapter.

The methodology and research questions are presented in Chapter 3. The qualitative research design uses a phenomenological approach, as this approach best captures the lived experiences of the paraprofessionals with supervision (Creswell 1998). The data collection procedures are presented in detail and include sampling strategies, sites and population, as well as the use of semi-structured interviews. Issues related to oppression including gender, class and culture are presented in the context of data collection from this population. Data analysis for this study is discussed. The analysis is also based on a phenomenological approach, proceeding through methods of reduction, analysis of themes, and a search for meaning (Creswell 1998).

Ethical considerations regarding the impact of the study on the participants are presented and discussed in Chapter 3. In particular issues related to confidentiality, informed consent, associated risks and benefits, and reciprocity were particularly important to

address in studying this population. The strengths and limitations of the research design and the study are also presented. Issues of reliability and validity are addressed. A number of strategies have been incorporated into this design to enhance its rigor and are discussed in detail. They include the use of triangulation, peer debriefing/support, and an audit trail. Finally, the gaps that exist in the literature are discussed and lead the reader to a greater understanding of the importance of this study in terms of building on our existing knowledge base on this topic.

The findings from the study are presented in Chapter 4 and highlight the experiences that paraprofessionals had with supervision, led by the open ended questions asked during the interview. My intention was to give paraprofessionals a voice and to learn from their experience with supervision. I was impressed with their responses, their insight and their ideas for how to improve practice in this area. I was also concerned with the degree of difficulty they experienced overall in their work in the community as well as some of the concerns they expressed about supervision. This further reinforced my belief that supervisors need to better understand and address these issues both within supervision and within their agencies to improve practice in this area.

The discussion in Chapter 5 examines the findings in relation to the literature and what we already know about supervision of the paraprofessional. I discuss theoretical frameworks that fit with the findings as well as new information and understanding about the needs of paraprofessionals that emerged from this research. I had expected to find a strong connection between systems theory and the supervision of paraprofessionals and

this did present itself and is discussed. I also explored the importance of the supervisory relationship on the paraprofessional and this does prove to be a significant framework. I was surprised however by the finding that oppression, in terms of culture, gender and class has a significant impact on the paraprofessional and needs to be fully understood in the context of supervision. This discovery allowed for a deeper understanding of the difficulties faced by paraprofessionals as well as the unique challenges this presents within the supervisory relationship.

In the conclusions and recommendations, I was able to make recommendations regarding the supervision of paraprofessionals based on the findings from the study as well as my own experience working with paraprofessionals. In the end I was able to better understand my experience as a supervisor of paraprofessionals and hope that the learning from this study will contribute to a stronger knowledge base in the area of supervision of paraprofessionals in social work.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

1. *Definitions*

- **Paraprofessionals**

There is general agreement in the literature regarding the definition of 'paraprofessional' in the human service field. In one of the earliest references to the paraprofessional in the literature, Austin (1978) refers to a paraprofessional as "any individual, male or female, who lacks the traditional credentials- of either education or experience-for social work and social welfare jobs" (p.70). He went on to compare the paraprofessional with the professional and suggested that often there is very little difference in the roles of both in a social welfare agency, however, stated that paraprofessionals have lower salaries and status than professionals. Briscoe (1977) in her work on supervision of community workers states that it is the lack of professional affiliation and specific qualifications, which qualifies community workers as paraprofessionals. A more recent definition of paraprofessionals is offered by Hiatt, Sampson and Baird (1997) in their article entitled "Paraprofessional Home Visitation: Conceptual and Pragmatic Considerations" and is consistent with the early definitions offered by Austin and Briscoe. They define the paraprofessional as "an individual who has not received baccalaureate, postbaccalaureate, or professional training but who has practical experience in the community and familiarity with resources" (p.79). Generally the literature is consistent in referring to paraprofessionals as individuals who have no post secondary professional degrees, but who do offer personal knowledge and experience of the community or group to whom they are providing service. Paraprofessionals are paid employees of human service

organizations within a variety of fields. Even though there is occasional mention of paraprofessionals as unpaid labour or volunteers in the literature, this study focuses primarily on paraprofessionals in the paid work force.

In addition to the term paraprofessionals, other terms are used in the literature to describe this population of workers such as nonprofessional, preprofessional, subprofessional, indigenous worker, case aide, outreach worker, support worker, home visitor, mentor, advocate, psychiatric aide, community worker, and others. Siang - Yang Tan (1997) in his article on the role of the psychologist in paraprofessional helping, also includes pastors and other religious workers under the heading of paraprofessional, although this reference is to unpaid volunteers in the community.

Austin (1978) provides an early comprehensive history of the introduction of paraprofessionals into the human services. Paraprofessionals were introduced into the social work profession in the United States in the 1960's in response to a flood of social legislation supported by funds from the War on Poverty Community Action Program. The creation of new programs aimed at fighting poverty led to a need for workers to address problems in the community amidst a shortage of trained social workers. In addition, the relevance of professionals to accomplish this task was called into question, as the typically white middle class social workers were confronted with issues of credentialism and social class bias. The use of paraprofessionals also indirectly addressed poverty by providing employment for those persons who lived in areas that needed improvement in human services. Community members that were hired as

paraprofessionals may have had a high school diploma but often did not. They were typically 'people of color', who had direct experience with poverty as well as extensive knowledge of their community. The War on Poverty programs were associated with a belief that poor people with similar backgrounds to those of the recipients in terms of economics, ethnic origin or social circumstance, should be hired to serve the target population. The use of paraprofessionals can also be seen as part of a social movement having the potential to transform service delivery in bureaucratic organizations. Austin (1978) attributes this movement to what he called "newism" meaning that the idea gained support simply because it was new and not because of any strong research or compelling analysis that led to the preferred use of paraprofessionals.

The literature presents a number of factors that contributed to the emergence of the paraprofessional in the human services during the 1960' and 1970's. Clearly, the use of paraprofessionals helped to solve the staffing shortage. As previously stated, employment of community members living in poverty also contributed to the alleviation of poverty during the early movement. The work experience itself was seen as a therapeutic experience for paraprofessionals who had struggled with poverty. In addition, the use of paraprofessionals was seen as a way to increase the efficiency of services, as their shared experience with clients increased their ability to access and engage with individuals who were struggling in the community. Richan (1972) identified government attempts to cut costs in social programs as another motive for the use of paraprofessionals. Cost conscious government agencies sought to lower credentialing requirements as a way to save money.

Historically, paraprofessionals have made major contributions to the development of the human services. Their efforts to serve the target population were visible and seen as innovative. Their role was an extension of the client and the community and as such, the activities of the workers and their personal characteristics are inseparable. Their value was to act as a bridge between the agency and the client group. “Their ‘indigenouslyness’ would give them a unique ability to cross class lines” (Austin, 1978 p.88). Being embedded in the very community they served challenged organizational bureaucracy and encouraged flexibility in practice. The door to door approach of the paraprofessional surfaced many unmet client needs within the community and new and responsive programs developed in response to these unmet client needs. The paraprofessional was able to reduce the burden on the professional in servicing these needs. Their usefulness as helpers, however, challenged the profession of social work, as professionals were threatened by the fact that someone with less training could potentially do their job or even possibly do it better (Austin, 1978).

Interest in the use of paraprofessionals does seem to have grown in the last decade, as evidenced by the growing body of recent literature presenting paraprofessional models. A number of recent paraprofessional models have been presented in the areas of home visitation to low income mothers (Graham, Stabile, Powell, Pruett, Hakes, Butler, 1997; Hiatt, Sampson, and Baird, 1997; Wakou, 2003), home visitation and advocacy to substance using pregnant women (Grant, Ernst and Streissgruth, 1999), mental health and health services (Musser, Granski and Carillo, 1997; Lambert, 1999; Minore and Boone, 2002) as well as the use of paraprofessionals in education (Riggs, 2001).

Given the current age of 'fiscal responsibility' within government, particularly related to the ever increasing costs of social services and health care, it is likely that the cost saving elements of the paraprofessional model are appealing to government funding bodies. In addition, social problems and related costs in our society continue to rise in spite of the efforts of 'professionals' and programming in the field. As in the 1960's, when the War on Poverty led to the introduction of the paraprofessional as the 'solution' to poverty, perhaps the government of today is also looking to the paraprofessional for the cure to our present day social problems. The reality is that the paraprofessional has continued to be a major contributor within human services throughout this period. The role of the paraprofessional has changed, however, since the 1960's, in response to economic, cultural and systemic change in our society.

Hiatt et al. (1997) state that "the strength of paraprofessional visitors lies in their histories and their potential to share their success in such a way that their clients are inspired to grow, change and shape their own destinies" (p.91). Siang-Yang Tan (1997) adds to this in relation to health care in the U.S. "In today's era of managed health care, paraprofessional helpers will play a crucial role in the delivery of much-needed but ill-afforded mental health services, including rural mental health delivery" (p.368). For the most part, he discusses the use of volunteer paraprofessionals or unpaid workers as a support to psychological services in the community. He rounds up the findings in the literature and states that "the general conclusion is that paraprofessional helpers are generally as effective as professional therapists" (p.368). He sees the benefits of the paraprofessional as "providing support through fostering a service in the community,

relieving client isolation, and providing a safe place where clients can attempt new skills that will result in changing their behaviour for the better” (p.371).

- **Supervision in the Human Services**

Kadushin & Harkness (2002) present a history of supervision in the human services since its early origins in the Charity Organization Societies (COS) in the early nineteenth century. Along with industrialization, came many societal ills including poverty, isolation, and changes in the structure of work and the family. When a family requested help, a paid agent of the COS assessed the family’s need and a volunteer visitor was assigned to the family. The ‘home visitor’ was a person of ‘good character’ who visited families. The essence of their work with the poor was based on the home visitor’s character, not in their technique. The visitor’s work was overseen by the agent in what is considered to be the first evidence of supervision in the helping field. This early function of supervision was strictly administrative in nature and served as a natural form of administrative control. “The agent provided a dependable administrative point of contact for the visitor, gave continuity to the work, and acted as a channel of communication” (Kadushin & Harkness, p.3). As the demand for help in the community increased, the charitable societies also grew and the system of helping had to adapt. The complexity and demand of the work created high turnover in volunteers. It became necessary for the COS to recruit paid staff. The training and apprenticeship of new staff by those more experienced at the turn of the century was the beginning of the educational component in supervision. In addition, the first schools of social work were emerging in the early 1900’s along with the development of social work theory and professionalization. As the

technology increased, there became a need to transfer this knowledge to the front line staff. Supervision and training became the likely mechanism for this function.

Supervision occurs in all fields of human service work as part of the structure of most organizations or agencies. Most of the literature on supervision comes from social work, counseling, health care, community work and public administration. Within this literature review the focus will be on those fields that are directly responsible for providing service to women and families in the community, such as social work, community work, and health services. The unique nature of this work has a specific impact on staff and implications for supervision of these staff. The issue of supervision with high needs populations has been most widely studied in the field of social work and as such, the literature on supervision within this field is very rich. Supervision is widely covered in the field of counseling and psychology as well, however the focus of supervision in this professional context is more clinical in nature and less relevant to the study of supervision of paraprofessionals.

The field of social work is clearly situated within human services. The framework for supervision within social work can be applied more broadly within other organizations based on a number of common attributes. Most notably as discussed by Kadushin and Harkness (2002), service is focused on addressing the needs of human beings and is delivered within organizations that operate with ambiguous goals and outcomes. Public funds are used, and mandates for service exist in health care and public welfare - hence the need for accountability in supervision. A hierarchy is present because social services

operate largely within organizations that rely on bureaucratic structures. The distinctive nature and difficulty of the work makes a demand for support in supervision. Social services are typically delivered within an agency setting that is a complex organization. The complexity of the structure requires a chain of command or hierarchical structure to ensure efficiency and accountability. The supervisor is situated within this structure closest to the front line worker and ultimately the client. Kadushin & Harkness (2002) provide a comprehensive definition of supervision in social work, based on their formative work in the field:

A social work supervisor is an agency administrative-staff member to whom authority is delegated to direct, coordinate, enhance, and evaluate the on-the-job performance of the supervisees for whose work he is held accountable. In implementing this responsibility, the supervisor performs administrative, educational, and supportive functions in interaction with the supervisee in the context of a positive relationship. The supervisor's ultimate objective is to deliver to agency clients the best possible service, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in accordance with agency policies and procedures (p.23).

The importance of the administrative function comes from the need for systematic coordination in the pursuit of objectives within an organization. Kadushin & Harkness (2002) describe in as neutral a manner as possible how:

a bureaucracy is theoretically, the most rational, efficient, effective organizational format for coordinating the cooperative efforts of a sizable group of people, each of whom is engaged in a different task necessary for the achievement of common organizational objectives.... Any organization, particularly a bureaucratic organization, needs administration. Administration is a process which implements organizational objectives (p.45).

Further to this, Kadushin & Harkness (2002) suggest a number of tasks which need to be performed under the administrative component: staff recruitment and selection, inducting

and placing the worker, work planning, work delegation, monitoring reviewing and evaluating work, communication, advocacy, administrative buffer, and change agent.

Kadushin & Harkness (2002) stress the importance of evaluation of the supervisee and present it primarily as an administrative function due to its focus on accountability to agency standards. “Evaluation provides a systematic product, a report, which administration uses in making informed administrative decisions - retention, merit pay increases, promotion, suspension, etc.” (p.347). They do acknowledge the educational function of evaluation stating that evaluation is most commonly used in motivating professional growth and development. “A second principal objective is focused on the worker’s professional growth and development. Evaluation is a teaching – learning process that identifies strengths and weaknesses in the worker’s job performance so as to enable the worker to improve his performance” (p.347). In order to be meaningful, evaluation should be communicated within the context of a positive relationship and should be a mutual, shared process. The authors recommend that the evaluation focus on the work rather than the person and review both strengths and weaknesses, growth and stagnation, and should be fair and balanced.

The supervisor as educator is discussed widely in the literature, and is agreed upon as being a critical function, “concerned with teaching the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for the performance of clinical social work tasks through the detailed analysis of the worker’s interaction with the client” (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002, p.135).

Educational supervision is often referred to as either clinical supervision, which de-

emphasizes the administrative function, or as consultation which has no administrative function. Clinical supervision is defined by Schulman (1993) as “an intensive, interpersonally focused one to one relationship in which one person is designated to facilitate the development of therapeutic competence in the other person” (p.6). Kadushin & Harkness agree with Schulman regarding the importance of the role of educational supervision although Schulman places a stronger emphasis on this role within supervision than do Kadushin & Harkness.

Supportive supervision acknowledges the interpersonal relationship between supervisor and supervisee. The supportive function within supervision is widely discussed and advocated for in the literature, particularly related to the social work profession. It tends to be downplayed or made invisible in the literature related to the counseling field that has a stronger emphasis on professional counseling and consultation. The ultimate goal of the supportive component is consistent with the goals of administration and education – to enable the workers and the agency to deliver the most effective and efficient service to clients. The tasks associated with this component include “seeing that the people who do the job are comfortable, satisfied, happy in their work, and have a sense of psychological well being” (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002, p.226). The supportive component of supervision is primarily concerned with expressive considerations and includes procedures such as reassurance, encouragement, recognition of achievement, and attentive listening that communicates interest and concern. It must be noted that the administrative, educational and supportive components of supervision are interrelated and are most often performed by one person in the role of ‘supervisor’.

Kadushin & Harkness (2002) describe social work supervision in the context of short range and long range objectives. Short range objectives are to improve the worker's ability to do his/her job more effectively, to provide the worker with a work context that helps him/her do their job effectively, and to help the worker feel good about doing his/her job. The long-range objective of supervision is "to effectively and efficiently provide clients with the particular service the particular agency is mandated to offer" (p.20).

Skidmore (1990) identifies supervision as a basic component of social work practice since formal social work education began at the turn of the century. "It is an integral part of most social work agencies and is generally regarded positively" (p.205). He argues that supervision as a concept is more highly developed in social work than in other areas of human service, the medical profession or in the business sector as evidenced by the scarcity of information on supervision in these fields. Skidmore states that supervision encompasses three main functions: teaching, administration and enabling. Teaching is aimed at helping workers increase their knowledge and develop their professional skills. Administration refers to directing and guiding workers, and dealing with salaries, case assignments and other agency work. Enabling involves facilitating the work of the supervisees so that they can deliver service, and opening doors so that they can use their skills and abilities. These three components are similar to the components of supervision as defined by Kadushin & Harkness (2002). Rivas (1991) presents a model for supervision in human service organizations that is also similar to Kadushin & Harkness, but "more clearly specifies the types of supervision provided to an employee in relation

to the employee's position with the organization over time. It also accounts for the relationship between the type (and extent) of supervision and the professional employee's need for increased autonomy over time" (p.192).

Bernard and Goodyear (1992) are cited by Kaiser (1997) and offer their definition of supervision as "an involuntary relationship in which the supervisor is imbued with the power to make decisions or take actions that affect such things as hiring and firing, promotion, salaries, or, in the case of a student, passing or failing" (p.7). Kaiser (1997), in her recent work on supervisory relationships, identifies the function of supervision as "a multifaceted one, involving a complex process of accountability that hopefully leads to the ensurance of competent work with clients" (p.5). Both authors agree that accountability is inherent in the role of the supervisor.

Overall the components of supervision that are the most widely accepted in the literature are the administrative, educational and supportive functions as first identified by Kadushin in the 1970's. Hughes and Pengally (1997) identify a number of additional functions for supervision within human services, as the work in this field has become more complex over time. They recognize the supervisor's increasing role in negotiating with management and other organizations as a mediation function. Schulman (1993) also identifies a mediation function for supervisors and proposes that "the general function of the social work profession is to 'mediate the process through which the individual and society reach out for each other through a mutual need for self fulfillment' (Schwartz, 1961)" (p.20).

The communication function is a second additional function discussed by Hughes and Pengally (1997) and refers to the supervisor's responsibility to channel feedback from practitioners to the organization on policy and practice issues. They describe supervision as being assigned a " 'piggy in the middle' position between management accountability and professional responsibility; between broad policy formulation and its application to individual situations; between the organization and its users; between prescribed procedures and the emotional impact of high risk work" (p.24). Schulman (1993) describes this mediation function between staff and administration as an important 'third force' function of supervisors. Kadushin & Harkness (2002) echo this concept by identifying the supervisor as a member of both management and the work group, or 'middle management', acting as a bridge between the two. The supervisor is responsible for the work of the front line worker and is accountable to the agency administration. He/she is in indirect contact with the client through the worker, helping the worker to help the client. The position of supervisor is hierarchical in nature within a human service organization. In contrast to the role of the front line worker, Kadushin & Harkness describe the agency executive administrator as "primarily responsible for program planning, policy formulation, agency funding, and community relations. Unlike the supervisor, the administrator is externally oriented and is concerned with a broader perspective. Front line supervisors are internally oriented, focusing on the work environment and the job that needs to be done" (p.21). It is easy to see however that the boundary between the two roles is often blurry and overlaps depending on the size of the organization, the management philosophy (autocratic vs. democratic), the skills of the individuals involved, and the mandate of the organization.

A central paradox of the role of the supervisor is presented by Perlmutter, Bailey and Netting (2001) as the balancing act between "the need to motivate with the need to evaluate performance" (p.144). It is necessary for supervisors to inspire confidence and motivate employees, however this must be balanced with ensuring that the work of the organization gets done. They describe motivating, appraising and rewarding as being essential and interdependent activities in supervision.

As previously discussed, the role of supervision with counselors in a professional therapeutic environment has similarities to supervision in social work settings, well as a number of obvious differences. Counselor supervision is defined by Bradley and Ladany (2001) as "a) being performed by experienced successful counselors (supervisors) who have been prepared in the methodology of supervision; b) facilitating the counselor's personal and professional development, promoting counselor competence, and promoting accountable counseling and guidance services and programs; and c) providing the purposeful function of overseeing the work of counselor trainees or practicing counselors (supervisees) through a set of supervisory activities that include consultation, counseling training and instruction, and evaluation" (p.4). This focus on professional training and clinical supervision characterizes counselor / clinical supervision and focuses on the professional development of the trainee. Supervision with the clinician downplays the administrative function of supervision as well as the supportive function of the supervisor, with most of the role focused on training and the education component of supervision.

- **Supervision of the Paraprofessional in Human Services: A Historical Perspective**

The introduction of paraprofessionals into the human service field has challenged the traditional top down role of the supervisor. As described by Austin (1978) the paraprofessional started to send messages back up the chain of command, regarding “the desire for a different supervisor/supervisee relationship, increased autonomy based on the paraprofessionals’ community expertise, a greater recognition of life experiences in contrast to traditional credentials, and a role in the policy formation process which affected agency operations” (p. 94). This challenge contributed to the early identification of the training needs of paraprofessionals, with a strong focus on the paraprofessional as an adult learner. Austin advocates for the use of adult learning concepts and applied these to the training of paraprofessionals. They include the need for 1) autonomy and self direction, 2) life experience as a crucial ingredient in the process of learning, 3) learners grouping themselves according to their interests and learning needs, 4) expansion of their problem solving capacity. He further illustrates the hands on nature of the role of the paraprofessional by quoting an old adage of Confucius. "I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand". (p.122)

Paraprofessionals were, and still are seen as having specialized knowledge from their experience in the community. Because of this, they belong in a different category from untrained workers, as far as supervision and training goes. Certain considerations are of particular importance in the supervision of paraprofessionals. According to Austin (1978) supervisors of paraprofessionals experience a “psychic stretch” in understanding the

paraprofessional's particular expertise. "Extensive self awareness and cultural awareness is basic to an effective supervisory relationship with paraprofessionals" (Austin,1978 p. 119).

In the current climate, the supervision of paraprofessionals builds on the concepts and framework of supervision as described in a dated publication by Austin (1978).

Essentially, he states that the requirements of good supervision apply to paraprofessionals. He goes on to state that supervisors need to assist paraprofessionals to manage the dual responsibility to the client and to the agency, particularly since the paraprofessional will experience more of a pull towards the client. Given their shared characteristics and identification with the client group, the paraprofessional is likely to experience a stronger sense of responsibility for the client. According to Austin (1978), he/she would also be more likely to use a direct mode of confrontation with their supervisor and would be less inclined to see supervision as a shared process. The paraprofessional recognizes they have some expertise but may feel that presenting weaknesses will jeopardize their job. Austin states that supervisors need to create a climate of openness and safety where the paraprofessional feels free to take risks.

Briscoe (1977) presents the supervision of community workers (paraprofessionals) within the framework identified by Kadushin & Harkness (2002) that includes administrative, educational and supportive components. In the administrative function, the supervisor sets up a supportive climate for community workers to carry out their work in the field by educating decision-makers in the organization regarding the unique work of the

community worker. They need to ensure the allocation of adequate resources and flexibility of the work environment to back up community workers. Flexibility needs to be built into their role in the field in order for them to respond to unpredictable work situations.

The educational role of the supervisor is stressed by Briscoe (1977). Training is seen as a priority, as effective community work service is related to the level of skills and abilities of fieldwork staff. Two aspects of the educational component within the supervisory role are identified as self-development and skills and knowledge of the community worker.

The author states that it would be important for the community worker to become increasingly self aware and gain greater awareness of their responses and actions in the field. In addition, these individuals need to develop skills and knowledge in specialized areas related to their particular practice in the community. The author advocates for the use of group work or group supervision related to the educational component for community workers, with the use of additional training from specialists outside of the organization.

The supportive element of supervision is strongly advocated for by Briscoe (1977) and was initially designed to help community workers cope with stress on the job and reduce pressures. The supportive role of the supervisor is seen as being helpful in setting limits on the unstructured nature of the work to ensure the effective use of the worker's time. Workers are so close to the action in the community that it is often difficult to see slow and progressive change over time. The supervisor provides valuable feedback to the

community worker from a more objective position that could lead to corrective action regarding mistakes made in the field and finding solutions, while still maintaining confidence in the worker. Problems with the community worker are often related to idealism and operating outside the constraints of the organization. The supervisor's role is to help community workers become more independent, self-critical and self-directing.

The educational component of supervision has been highlighted in the literature with reference to paraprofessionals and has been most often described in the context of training programs. This is due to the inherent qualifications of the paraprofessional specifically related to lack of training or credentials in the field as previously stated. Traditionally, training programs for paraprofessionals have included a more practical focus and include orientation to the employing agency, the development of knowledge and skills for a specific job function. Training for paraprofessionals has not been designed to provide transferable skills and knowledge to other human service fields as in professional training or educational programs. Overall, the authors cited have historically emphasized the educational component of supervision for the paraprofessional. The literature consistently recommends however, an approach to supervision that includes all three components - administration, education and support as presented by Kadushin & Harkness (2002).

- **Recent Paraprofessional Models and Supervision**

The literature describing the supervision of paraprofessionals is limited, particularly in the recent literature. Authors such as Austin (1978) and Richan (1972) have presented

theoretical frameworks and models of supervision specific to the paraprofessional that are very useful, however these works are dated and are more meaningful within a historical perspective. The theoretical models of supervision of professionals as presented in the previous section are clearly relevant and meaningful in this discussion, however in most cases they fall short of addressing the unique supervisory challenges presented by paraprofessionals.

A number of paraprofessional models have emerged in the literature that specifically discuss the issue of supervision. Graham, Stabile, Powell, Pruett, Hakes and Butler (2000) present a Healthy Start home visiting demonstration project in the U.S. that serves low income pregnant women and families with infants and toddlers. Professional nurses and paraprofessional home visitors provide this outreach service. Because of the difficult circumstances of the projects' target population, it is important for the paraprofessional to work flexible hours and to work towards regularly scheduled visits with families. The authors suggest that supervisors need to help home visitors keep track of families and address problematic patterns of contact.

Home visitors starting the project receive five weeks of initial training and require ongoing training and supervision.

“Intensive supervision is critical in order to provide a quality home-visiting program staffed by paraprofessionals.... Supervision requires the ability to focus on the daily activities that accomplish the mission, solve problems, provide feedback on performance, and continually motivate performance. Supervision of home visitors, especially those who are spread across counties and office locations, is a challenge for even the most experienced of managers. Supervision of paraprofessional home visitors requires frequent large and small group meetings, individual conferences, and review of weekly written reports for

inappropriate behavior” (Graham et al. 2000, p.32).

Due to the intense level of supervision needed for paraprofessionals, the authors recommend a low supervisor / paraprofessional ratio of no more than six home visitors. The supervisor should be personally familiar with every family served by the home visitor and meet each family within the first month of contact. Direct contact with families allows supervisors to mentor home visitors and provide moral support to the home visitor.

Paraprofessionals that are new to the job need detailed guidelines regarding policies and procedures as well as rules regarding dress, office hours, travel, documentation and use of cell phones up front. In addition, “home visitors need to be part of a strong, supportive peer group, fostered by their supervisor. Supports specifically help home visitors deal with personal and job-related stress.” (Graham et al. 2000, p.34) The authors recommend supervisors make daily phone contact with each home visitor to help alleviate isolation as well as weekly one on one face to face supervision with each home visitor. The sharing of experiences, problem solving, and practicing of new skills in supervision helps to boost both performance and morale.

Grant, Ernst and Streissguth (1999) discuss the supervision of paraprofessionals working with high-risk substance using pregnant women in a unique model in Seattle called the Parent Child Assistance Program (P-CAP). They focus on characteristics and hiring of the ‘advocates’. “The most important background characteristics of advocates is their shared history with clients, and their subsequent personal achievements” (Grant et al.,

p.6) Advocates also share characteristics of having empathy, excellent problem solving skills, tenacity, and a direct, honest, but nonjudgmental manner. “Comprehensive ongoing training is essential to a successful paraprofessional program” (Grant et al., p.7). The initial training period of 80 hours for advocates covers issues specific to the work conducted by the staff in the program. For staff satisfaction and retention a limited caseload size of 12-15 clients per advocate is recommended to permit the time necessary to do the intensive work. Community recognition for advocates is also important for staff satisfaction and retention, in that it helps staff develop a sense of pride in their work and helps them to remain positive in the face of client setbacks. Advocates work beyond traditional agency policies and procedures and are encouraged to ‘think outside the box’.

Supervisors provide support and encourage the creative problem solving efforts of the advocates in this model. According to Grant et al. (1999), regular supervision and staff retreats, performance evaluations and adequate salaries and benefits are important administrative strategies to enhance staff satisfaction and retention. Strategies for administering the program include regular individual supervision, group ‘staffing’ or group supervision, communication and accountability, and linkages with the community. The authors refer to findings from other home visitation programs and identify the importance of providing ongoing training and supervision in achieving program success. The program includes an outcome evaluation, program development evaluation and ongoing evaluation activities that combine to demonstrate the effectiveness of the program in achieving its goal to prevent fetal alcohol syndrome. “The combination of sound administrative principles with ongoing program evaluation decreases job stress and

staff attrition, and increases group morale, staff effectiveness, and individual job satisfaction, which in turn have positive effects on the quality of service clients receive from the program” (Grant et al. 1999, p.14).

This program has been replicated in Manitoba, funded by the provincial government under Healthy Child Manitoba by the name of Stop FAS. Umlah and Grant (2003) discuss the use of the same administrative strategies in supervising the paraprofessional staff in Manitoba. “The ‘mentors’ are trained paraprofessional staff with work experience in the social services field, particularly with high-risk populations.... They are women who represent diverse ethnic backgrounds, and who may have experienced many of the same difficulties as their clients” (p.5).

Musser-Granski and Carillo (1997) comment on the training needs for bicultural and bilingual paraprofessionals in mental health services. They state that workers need “personal qualities of caring, empathy, warmth, sensitivity, genuineness, openness, calmness, confidence, and respect for the client. A non-judgmental attitude, maturity and emotional stability, and good listening skills are essential” (p.55). Paraprofessionals need to be paid competitive salaries, and provided with opportunities for advancement. Because of the tendency for paraprofessionals to over identify with clients due to their shared backgrounds, Musser-Granski and Carillo state that paraprofessionals need good supervision and emotional support from professionals, and a safe supportive environment. Citing Egli (1991) and Sauls and Dammann (1991), they discuss the importance of the supervisory relationship with the need for “a trusting, respectful, open,

comfortable, cooperative relationship. They must develop an excellent rapport and understanding” (p. 58). Supervisors should also help paraprofessionals with issues of transference, self-awareness and boundaries.

Lambert (1999) discusses the use of the paraprofessional in mental health and emphasizes the importance of addressing boundary issues in the supervision of paraprofessionals working with the mentally ill. The author identifies a movement in the U.S. towards community-based care and an emphasis on psychosocial rehabilitation that lends itself to the use of paraprofessionals. “Client contact often occurs in nontraditional venues such as on the street, in a client’s home, or at a grocery store using a ‘whatever it takes’ philosophy to engage clients and restore or improve functioning” (Williams and Swartz, 1998, cited in Lambert, p.377). The context of working in such situations leads to complex boundary dilemmas. Given the challenge of managing such a degree of closeness with a client, Lambert suggests that an inflexible approach will be an obstacle to positive treatment outcomes given the stigma, isolation, and difficulty in forming interpersonal connections for the severely mentally ill. “Many front line staff...possess limited training in the therapeutic use of boundaries. Untrained or inexperienced staff run the risk of employing boundary crossings that they have seen modeled by others, which may not be appropriate to the particular situation at hand” (Drake and Marlowe, 1998, cited by Lambert, p.377).

Supervision is seen as critically important in assisting and addressing boundary issues that arise between the client and the paraprofessional. Lambert (1999) advises open

discussions within supervision about boundaries on an ongoing basis. The framework she recommends suggests adherence to the law and ethics code as well as agency-specific guidelines, and traditional boundaries that exist within the helping field. Common themes that are relevant to the supervision of paraprofessionals include the need for individualized decisions based on context, a well developed rationale for the boundary crossing, and the promotion of self-awareness in the paraprofessional. Lambert further suggests that it is important for supervisors to encourage staff to pursue fulfilling personal lives as way to prevent staff from focusing on relationships with clients as a way to meet their personal needs.

2. Theoretical Foundations

- **Predominant Systemic Models in Supervision**

Social systems theory offers a sound theoretical framework that helps to explain the concept of supervision and it's evolution over time. Just as systems theory has shaped social work and the helping professions since the early years of the Charitable Organization Societies, it helps us to understand the development of various components of supervision in response to organizational change. Hughes and Pengally (1997) connect an open systems approach to supervision "stressing the interrelatedness of the individual, group, organization and environment with the management function being essentially one of managing issues at the boundary between these" (p.20).

In consideration of the influence of the external environment on supervision, Perlmutter et al. (2001) discuss new and emerging challenges for managerial supervisors in the field.

They place the human services within a turbulent context of ideological, economic, social and technological change. Even though the authors do not directly address the front line supervisor, clearly these same forces find their way to the level of supervisor and supervisee. Three challenges are identified by the authors: “1) the blurring of the boundaries between the for-profit, non profit and public sectors; 2) the impact of changing public policy on human service organizations and; 3) the requirements associated with the increasing use of teams and new forms of professional collaborations”(p. 11). The authors present several approaches to address supervisory challenges within a changing context. Supervisors must recognize the identity of their own profession and be self aware, particularly in positions where they provide clinical supervision. The authors acknowledge the likelihood of supervising persons from professions other than their own, as well as paraprofessionals and even volunteers. They advise supervisors to maintain a clear focus on the underlying assumptions they bring to their work when responding to their supervisee, particularly in response to inappropriate actions of the supervisee. It is also important for supervisors / managers to maintain up to date knowledge in the field and to provide effective leadership within this turbulent and ever changing context.

Perlmutter et al.(2001) are advocates for the Management by Objectives (MBO) style of supervision that is popular in the business sector (Hunter 1981), which integrates motivation techniques with results based criteria. MBO is characterized by the use of formal and informal performance appraisals, goals and objectives as motivators, recognition of diverse employee needs, attention to equity or social comparison, and staff

development and rewards such as recognition, salary increases, promotions and benefits. Within MBO, management's focus is to motivate employees to perform at their best and in the interest of the agency, and to evaluate an employee's performance from the personal and the organizational perspective. The supervisor's role within MBO is to set measurable objectives and develop a related plan. This business model falls short, for the human service field however, with respect to the lack of focus on relationships within supervision and the absence of the supportive function.

Schulman (1993) uses systems theory as a foundation to the Interactional Approach to supervision, which assumes that the movements of the worker are continuously influenced by other systems, both internal and external. He illustrates this concept with the following diagram (p. 16):

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Even though the model is focused on the social work professional, the author states that it can be applied to workers in any setting in the helping profession. The supervisory relationship is highlighted and he states that supervision requires a positive working relationship with staff. Given the power imbalance inherent in supervision, the author states that the 'authority theme' is one that requires constant attention. A good supervisor is not without problems, but is the one that is able to bring the problems to the surface.

Within the Interactional Model, Schulman (1993) stresses the teaching of core practical skills and the educational function of supervision. He describes supervision within the context of one on one supervisory sessions as well as within a group setting. The author's central assumption about educational supervision is that "staff members are active participants in the learning process" (p.157). He goes on to say that "the supervisor's knowledge of the subject area and ability to transmit ideas clearly are central to teaching, but they are only part of the process. The task for supervisors is to mediate between the learner and the subject areas to be learned" (p.201). Schulman captures the concept of 'parallel processes' in supervision where the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee parallels the relationship between worker and client. "Supervisors are seen as modeling their views of the helping process through their interaction with staff" (Schulman, p.10).

Evaluation is seen by Schulman (1993) as closely tied into the educational function of the supervisor as it has the potential to significantly contribute to the worker's development and ultimately to improve services to clients. Schulman recommends ongoing attention to evaluative feedback with the supervisee rather than saving concerns for the yearly formal evaluation. The attention to the supervisory relationship as well as the education function of supervision within the Interactional Model, provides a useful framework for supervision of the paraprofessional.

Morrison (2001) in his workbook on supervision in social work also focuses on an adult learning model and discusses the impact of organizational culture on workers and on

supervision. He promotes the use of a developmental and a solution-focused model for supervision, and recommends the use of contracts for individual supervision. Like Schulman (1993), he sees supervision as a collaborative process. Morrison provides a practical and useful framework to assist the social work supervisor. His use of the developmental and solution focused approaches could easily fit into a broader framework for the supervision of paraprofessionals.

Psycho-dynamic theory, as well as the emergence of practice theories in social work have made an important contribution to clinical practice and have been used in the training and development of workers in the field. This framework for supervision of the counselor is less interactional in nature and more focused on the role of the supervisor as 'teacher'. Page and Wosket (2001) present a Cyclical Model for counselor supervision that has its roots in psychoanalysis. This model uses a developmental approach focused on clinical supervision initially with the trainee and eventually with the more advanced practitioner. Good supervision should be 'emancipatory' and power should be shared as equally as possible. The authors do acknowledge the power differential in supervision, however they focus more on this in context of supervising someone who is part of a minority group, where there is even a further imbalance of power. "Cultural accountability in supervisors does require active monitoring of contextual (political, social and institutional) oppression but also requires, to use Rapp's (2000) phrase, close attention to 'the subtle ways in which we constantly misuse one another'" (p.227). The literature on counselor supervision, while helpful in its focus on practice skills, is limited in its contribution to the supervision of paraprofessionals given the obvious differences in the

training, knowledge and experiences between professional counselors and the paraprofessional.

Group supervision has become a popular framework for supervision in Britain as well as in the U.S. and Canada. Group supervision can take place in formal or informal staff groups as well as in different types of staff groups including staff meetings, group consultation, group supervision, and in-service training. Historically, both Kadushin & Harkness (2002) and Schulman (1993) have advocated for the use of group supervision as an important supplement to the mainstay of individual supervision. Schulman identifies that group supervision can help staff to develop a culture for work as well as deal with conflict within the staff team (p.257). Kadushin & Harkness identify a number of advantages to a group setting that include the economical use of administrative time and effort, the opportunity for enhancing sharing and learning amongst group members, as well as opportunities for emotional support, and building and maintaining staff morale. The group setting is often seen as less threatening and provides a safer learning environment for supervisees to confront the supervisor.

Proctor (2000) promotes the use of group supervision for supervision of professionals in counseling and psychotherapy. In contrast to Kadushin & Harkness (2002) and Schulman (1993), Proctor identifies group supervision as preferable to individual supervision for a number of reasons. Group members have access to a broader range and variety of learning, stimulation and confidence in a group. They also have an opportunity to experience in practice what is meant by group dynamics, and a greater number of

members allows for the development of a wider choice of creative methods of supervision. Besides being more economical, Proctor states that group supervision has the ability to 'harness' forces of competition and differences that often produce tremendous anxiety in supervision. She presents the Group Supervision Alliance Model that identifies four types of supervisory groups ranging from an authoritative group that maintains the supervisor in a lead role, to the other end of the spectrum in a peer group where members take shared responsibility for supervising and being supervised (Proctor, p.39). For group work to be successful, she states that supervisees need to take shared responsibility for the development of colleagues in the group as well as to share their work publicly and be open to receiving feedback, support and challenges from their colleagues. Supervisors must demonstrate respect, empathy and genuineness as well as develop group work skills and be able to move fluidly within different 'ways of being'.

Peer group supervision is defined by Kadushin & Harkness (2002) who cite Hare and Frankena (1972) in defining peer group supervision as a process by which "a group of professionals in the same agency meet regularly to review cases and treatment approaches without a leader, share experiences and take responsibility for their own and each other's professional development and for maintaining standards of service" (p.483). Kadushin and Harkness state that the use of peer supervision symbolizes the capacity for greater independence of the worker and allows greater freedom in the absence of an authority figure. The difficulties inherent in peer supervision, according to the authors, include rivalries for leadership and control and the reluctance of less experienced workers to participate. At an administrative level, peer supervision presents difficulties regarding

decision making, evaluation and salary increases when the supervisor has not been exposed to the work of the supervisee.

In summary, I believe that group supervision can be a beneficial mode of supervision for the paraprofessional, particularly because of the rich opportunities for workers to process their experiences in the field and learn from one another regarding their work with clients. Peer supervision on the other hand is a poor fit for the paraprofessional given the lack of a clinical framework within which to supervise one another, as well as the paraprofessional's limited experience providing leadership in a work environment.

In contrast to the models for supervision presented from within a bureaucratic and hierarchical structure, Vinzant and Crothers (1998) present a model of Street Level Leadership that they argue is a more appropriate and useful framework for understanding what front line workers do in the human services. They focus on the street level public servant such as social workers and police officers who deal with a wide variety of complex and unpredictable problems in the course of their work on the front line. They state that the crisis nature of the work requires decision-making and action, often without benefit of supervision or direction or back up from the organization. The authors only briefly discuss the educational and administrative role of supervisors.

The Street Level Leadership Model makes very little reference to the supportive function of supervision, as the authors appear to see workers as autonomous workers in the field. They make the case that the outreach or 'on the street' activities of the street level worker

does not lend itself to direct or immediate supervision since the supervisor is simply not present at the scene in the moment of decision making by the worker. Therefore they present the need for an alternative model such as street level leadership that more accurately reflects what actually happens in the field. They present 'leadership' as an appropriate and useful theoretical framework because street level workers must exercise discretion and judgment in complex and fluid environments. Front line workers make decisions based on complex situational factors and they have a great deal of power. Vinzant and Crothers (1998) advocate for a more flattened hierarchy within the bureaucratic system. This model offers an interesting and challenging framework that should be given consideration for professionals within the human service field.

I believe that its description of the front line worker as leader is a fairly accurate portrayal of what actually happens in the field in terms of the need for 'on the spot' decision making. This model does raise important issues for the supervision of the paraprofessional, as they also make decisions autonomously in the field at times, without the benefit of supervision. The challenge is that paraprofessionals, by definition, lack the education and training needed to exercise leadership and discretion on the front line.

- **Importance of Relationship Models**

The supervisory 'relationship' emerged within the context of the Charitable Organization Societies in the early 1900's as the supportive component of supervision was introduced as a way to retain workers in the emerging field of human services. "Since visitors were always difficult to recruit, easy to lose, and often frustrated and disappointed, they needed

supportive supervision from the agent-supervisor in addition to administrative direction and training. The paid agent had to deal with the feeling responses of visitors to their work” (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002 p.4). The literature emphasizes that the supervisor’s administrative, educational and supportive responsibilities are most effectively implemented within the context of a supportive relationship.

The concept of supervisory relationships is presented and discussed by a number of authors and provides a meaningful framework for understanding and delivering supervision. Schulman (1993) as previously discussed, believes that supervision requires positive working relationships among staff. Kaiser (1997) takes this concept one step further and presents a Conceptual Model of Supervision that acknowledges systems theory and places supervision within a larger context of interaction between individual and various systems they encounter. “In the discussion of the conceptual model, I define the process of supervision as one of accountability and the goal of supervision as competent service to clients” (Kaiser, p.8). Accountability includes the telling the truth to the best of one’s ability, and taking responsible actions. She presents the supervisory relationship as the context within which supervision takes place, and includes elements of power and authority, shared meaning and trust.

Kaiser (1997), as well as other authors cited in the discussion of systemic models, makes an assumption that “supervision occurs within the context of a power differential between supervisor and supervisee” (p.26). Supervisees are dependent on supervisors for guidance, education and more significantly on evaluations that can affect future jobs,

salary increases as well as hiring and firing. Professionals in the human service field acquire power from society, from the clients they serve, as well as from a sense of their own personal power. Supervisees also have power, albeit less than the supervisor, in whether or not they choose supervision. They have the power to “enhance or sabotage the supervisory process” (Kaiser, p.48). Supervisors ultimately need the cooperation of the supervisee in exercising their educational function within supervision.

Within Kaiser's model, shared meaning refers to “the grease that allows the smooth running of the supervisory relationship.... Shared meaning (is defined as) both mutual understanding and, ideally, mutual agreement between supervisor and supervisee” (p.88). The greater the overall differences between supervisor and supervisee, the greater difficulty there will be in creating shared meaning. The blocks to shared meaning are even greater in cross-cultural supervision, where the supervisor is from a different culture than the supervisee. To address differences between individuals, the author recommends the use of contracting around “the structure of supervisory sessions, expectations of the supervisee, standards for evaluation, types of information that will be shared in supervision and how that information will be used, and the focus of a particular session” (p.127).

Kaiser (1997) sees trust in the supervisory relationship as crucial to its effectiveness. She identifies two basic elements of honesty and the supervisor's attention to shame in the relationship, which contribute to the development of trust. The supervisee's experience of shame is inevitable and comes from their own sense of personal vulnerability, the impact

of the client's pain, and the impact of transference and counter transference on the supervisee. She believes that there are many different ways to address shame in supervision depending on the individuals and the circumstances. To avoid shame however, the supervisor must be experienced as 'safe' by the supervisee. Honesty is related to the concept of accountability – telling the truth about oneself and taking responsible action. It is incumbent on both supervisor and supervisee to approach one another with authenticity in the relationship if it is to succeed.

Kaiser (1997) discusses the importance of the knowledge differential between the supervisor and the supervisee. How supervisors manage the degree of difference between their level of expertise and that of the supervisee is seen as a crucial issue. The supervisor needs to have greater knowledge and something to teach the supervisee. When a supervisee perceives that the supervisor has nothing to teach him/her, they will not tell a complete story regarding their work and will likely leave supervision unsatisfied. Misuse of the knowledge differential by the supervisor can be destructive. Kaiser states that “the challenge ... is for supervisors to promote their supervisees growth without stifling the supervisee in order to maintain a one-up position and without abdicating their position of power by providing no guidance or support for the supervisee” (Kaiser, p.30).

The limit setting function “occurs at the point at which the supervisor defines a bottom line by telling a supervisee whether certain behavior is acceptable. Any negative feedback a supervisor offers can be defined as limit setting” (Kaiser 1997, p.33). Limit setting is often delivered through formal and informal or ongoing evaluation. According

to Kaiser, evaluation is often sidestepped by both supervisor and supervisee because of reluctance on the part of the supervisor to give negative feedback and risk discomfort, and defensiveness on the part of the supervisee to receive feedback.

Barnes, Down and McCann (2000) discuss the supervisory relationship in light of the 'work' (what is to be done and how will it be done) that is done is supervision rather than the relational aspects between the supervisor and supervisee and their impact on supervision and work with clients. The authors quote Jones (1993) with regards to power and hierarchy within supervision and describe how the pretense of democracy in a supervisory relationship will not work as the supervisor often has greater knowledge and experience as well as structural power in the relationship. Ignoring this can lead to the abuse of this power. The authors go on to describe the process of initial control on the actions of the beginning trainee that evolves over time to more of a consultancy role at the end of the training. This framework is less relevant for the supervision of the paraprofessional as it represents more of a clinical model of supervision in which the professional trainee becomes self sufficient in their work with clients as they become more experienced.

Muse-Burke, Ladany and Deck (2001) agree with Kaiser that the supervisory relationship is a fundamental component of supervision. Bordin (1993), as cited in Muse-Burke et al. identify three primary components of the supervisory relationship as "a) mutual agreement and understanding between the supervisor and the supervisee of the goals of supervision b) mutual agreement and understanding of the tasks of the supervisor and

supervisee and c) the emotional bond between the supervisor and supervisee” (p.57).

Holloway (1997), as cited in Bradley and Ladany (2001) adds that how the supervisor’s power manifests itself in the relationship depends on both the supervisor and supervisee. Holloway states that the conditions necessary for an effective supervisory relationship include empathy, genuineness and respect.

The literature identifies overall that effective supervision occurs within a positive working relationship with staff (Schulman,1993; Kaiser,1997; Muse-Burke, Ladany and Deck, 2001). The concepts of relationship and power are particularly important for supervision of the paraprofessional as there are greater differences between the professional supervisor and the paraprofessional. These differences can lead to greater difficulty creating shared meaning in the relationship which places more importance on a positive working relationship within this context. The power differential is also likely to be greater within this context which would place additional pressure on the relationship within supervision (Kaiser, 1997).

- **Anti-Oppression Models - Culture, Race and Gender**

Mullaly (2002) defines oppression as “the domination of subordinate groups in society by a powerful (politically, economically, socially and culturally) group” (p.27). He presents an anti-oppressive model for social work practice that addresses oppression at personal, cultural and structural levels. His theoretical base and framework provide a useful tool for the social work supervisor who is confronted with experiences of oppression within the client group of the agency, the supervisees as well as the agencies political and structural

climate.

Mullaly (2002) identifies a number of strategies to deal with oppression. At an individual level, he recommends consciousness-raising as well as repairing and counteracting the “intrapsychic damages associated with oppression and...build(ing) strengths in the individual for developing solidarity with others in order to take action against their oppression” (p.192). Regarding cultural oppression, he recommends “developing strategies of resistance, challenging dominant discourses with alternative discourses and confronting negative stereotypes” (192). In terms of structural oppression, anti-oppressive practice “focuses on both confronting and changing those social institutions, policies, laws, and economic and political systems that operate in a way that benefits the dominant group at the expense of subordinate groups” (193). Finally, Mullaly states that the constructive use of anger is the most important element in challenging oppression in any form.

Bishop (2002) in her work on breaking the cycle of oppression, discusses the many forms of oppression in our society including racism, class-ism and heterosexism as well as discrimination based on disability, religion, etc. She encourages all of us to examine how we perpetuate oppression in our society and challenges each one of us to address this in our own lives. She advocates for a movement from ‘power over’ others towards ‘power with’ others. She believes the cycle can be broken through consciousness and healing and recommends speaking out about oppression and healing and reclaiming our connections with others.

APPENDIX C

ATTENTION :

Support Workers / Outreach Workers !

Would you be interested in being part of an important study ?

I am doing a research study with the University of Manitoba to complete a master's degree in social work. I am interested in understanding your experience with supervision as an outreach worker. Your views and experiences are extremely important and are the focus of my research study.

If you agree to participate, I will need one hour or so of your time, outside of work hours to interview you in person. Your name and participation will be strictly confidential. Your workplace will not be told about your participation in the study. Your agency has been advised of this study in general, however and are supporting it.

I need your help !

If you are interested, please call me (Cathe) at ###-#### as listed below. Please leave a message if I am unavailable and I will call you back the same day. I am providing each participant a \$25.00 fee to cover any expenses for your participation.

I look forward to hearing from you !

**Cathe Umlah
Graduate Student/Researcher
University of Manitoba
Ph :**

Please direct questions or concerns to myself or my Faculty Advisor Dr. Lyn Ferguson, University of Manitoba at 474-8273.

APPENDIX D

Consent Form

Research Project Title : Supervision of Paraprofessionals in the Human Services

Researcher : Cathe Umlah BSW

Graduate Student – University of Manitoba

This consent form should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation should involve. A copy of this form will be left with you for your records and reference. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The purpose of this research is to better understand the supervision needs of the paraprofessional within the human services. Hopefully the findings from this study will assist and inform practice where paraprofessionals are employed.

This one on one interview will be one to one and a half hours long and will be tape recorded with your permission.

Your identity and your responses will be kept completely confidential and the tapes will be destroyed after the study is complete. Under no circumstances will your participation in this study be shared with your employer or anyone else involved with this study. Your identity will not be revealed in this study.

Eventhough all precautions will be taken, it is important that you are aware of the risk, however remote, that your involvement in this research may be identifiable to your employer.

A copy of the findings from this study will be made available to you. When the study has been completed, I will contact you to arrange for you to receive a copy.

A stipend of 25.00\$ will be provided to you at the end of this interview to cover any expenses you may have incurred as a participant of this study.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in this study and that you agree to be a participant. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time or refuse to answer any question without penalty. Feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Researcher : Cathe Umlah BSW
Graduate Student – University of Manitoba

Winnipeg, Manitoba

Telephone :

Research Advisor : Professor Lyn Ferguson
University of Manitoba – Faculty of Social Work
Telephone : 474-8273

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba's Research and Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122 or e-mail to:margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's Signature : _____ Date : _____

Researcher's Signature : _____ Date : _____

APPENDIX E

Interview Questions

The open-ended questions that I will be using to guide the interview will be:

1. Tell me about your experience working in this program.
2. Tell me about your interest in this work and how you prepared for this job.
3. What kind of training have you received for this job?
4. Regarding your supervisor in this program, do you know what her professional background and/or training is? (ie, social worker, nurse, arts, etc.)
5. Tell me about the supervision that you receive on the job.
6. Do you receive any other forms of support on the job? If so, tell me about this.
7. Tell me about the kind of supervision that you find most helpful on the job and why. Could you give me an example of this from your experience?
8. What do you find the least helpful about the supervision you receive on the job and why? Could you give me an example of this?
9. What recommendations would you have to improve the supervision you receive on the job?

Demographic Questions

1. How old are you?
2. Do you identify with a particular culture? If so, which one?
3. How long have you been working in this program? In your field?
4. What is your educational background?
5. Would you like a copy of the findings from this research study? If so, what is the best way for me to get them to you?

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