CHAPTER 5

PHILOSOPHY OF PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION

The objective of this chapter is to explore probation officers' and service managers' understanding and philosophy of professional supervision. The areas considered include: their definition of professional supervision; their understanding of the main functions and processes involved; their perspectives on the place of theory; their knowledge of supervision theory; and their perspectives on the role and place of professional supervision for themselves, the agency and the clients of the Community Probation Service. The chapter concludes with a summary, which also considers the implications of both the probation officers' and service managers' philosophy of professional supervision.

Definitions of Professional Supervision

Within the literature, which some commentators describe as a "supervisory jungle", there exists no comprehensive definition or mega-theory of professional supervision that describes its meaning, method or purpose (Tsui, 1997a; Tsui et al., 1997; Rich, 1993; Munson, 1993; Middleman et al., 1985). Munson (1993) suggests that there are four dominant perspectives from which supervision is discussed; namely, the organisational, the situational, the personality and the interactional. According to Munson (1993) these perspectives do not exist in a pure form. In fact he asserts that it is common for them to be intermingled. In addition to these perspectives there is also the contextual perspective which recognises the ecology of supervision and the influence of context mediated through the various systems in which supervision is embedded. This perspective represents an emerging trend in the supervision literature in which writers consider the role of both ecology and context upon supervision practice (Kadushin, 1992a; O'Donoghue, 1998b; Tsui et al., 1997; Holloway, 1995).

The participants' responses to the research question "What is your definition of professional supervision?" varied considerably and did not reveal a common definition from either probation officers or service managers. What was evident though was that professional supervision was being discussed from differing perspectives.

Probation Officers

Within the definitions of the probation officers all of the above perspectives were present to some degree. The most common was the organisational perspective, which discusses supervision in terms of the functions, roles and goals of the organisation. This perspective was evident in the definitions of five of the ten probation officers (Angela, Ellen, Jack, Mary- Jane and Ernest). Angela spoke of supervision as a necessity for providing a quality service. Jack's definition emphasised the classical understanding of supervision as oversight. Mary- Jane linked her definition to the attainment of the organisation's goals, whereas, Ernest defined supervision as an aid that allows the worker to "work effectively in the department". Ellen's definition best illustrated the organisational perspective:

> It [supervision]… makes sure that you're carrying out the functions, roles, etc., of the organisation.

The definitions of Grace, Tania, and Angela reflected the situational perspective. Grace saw supervision as providing a "second opinion" when she became stuck on problems, and Tania spoke of supervision keeping her on the right lines in her work through helping her solve problems with clients. Angela focusing on specific situations and problems stated that supervision was:

> To clarify issues as they arise that may relate to us… that may impact on our work with clients. To provide support, encouragement, and to give feedback. Ideas for change and handling things differently. Positive reinforcement of things we're doing.

The personality perspective, which constructs supervision from the viewpoint of the traits and experiences that people bring with them and which influence both practice and supervision, was emphasised by Kiri, Grace and Joseph. Kiri's focused upon client and worker safety. She asserted that the purpose of supervision was "to discuss anything of a personal nature" that would influence the professional relationship between the probation officer and client. Grace also emphasised safety but, framed it in terms of "accountable practice"; ensuring that the probation officer and client were safe involved knowing "why we're doing what were doing" and being explicit about this with clients. Finally, Joseph's

definition illustrated the personality perspective through his reference to himself as the major tool in his work.

> For me it's on the premise that the major tool in my role as a probation officer is in fact myself. There's probably one or two warts that come with this tool and that I hopefully am aware of the worst warts, and in my interaction with clients work to ensure that I don't tip the balance of whatever's going on according to my personal predilections and things like that…

Joseph's example also includes elements of the interactional perspective, that is how people interact and how their interactions are varied to fit with specific content. This perspective becomes more explicit in Joseph's next sentence:

> I expect from supervision to be continually challenged to be the best probation officer I can, … to be aware of myself as a person, and also to be aware of the currency and so on of styles of interaction.

Aspects of the contextual perspective, in which the ecology and the supervision context are mediated and understood through the interaction between the various systems which affect supervision, were only present in the following quote from Mary-Jane's definition:

> One of my supervisors would always link me into the bigger picture; what's going on in society as well as what's going on in the organisation. Which was really good because often you get waylaid in doing the day-to- day monotony, and you sort of forget why you're doing it and how come you're changing the way you do things.

Service Managers

The five service managers interviewed offered definitions that revealed the organisational, situational and personality perspectives. Of these, it appears that the situational was the most common, being present in three of the five service managers' definitions, (Neil, Joan and Sofia). Neil defined supervision as assisting the probation officer "to provide alternative models of treatment for clients." Joan had a similar perspective defining supervision "as a link between theory and practice" which included "things such as

mentoring, support, practical ways of working and professional development." Sofia couched her definition in terms of "safe practice", stating that supervision involved "helping them [the supervisee] to see there might be other ways of dealing with issues."

Sofia and Neil also revealed elements of the personality perspective in their definitions. Sofia, for example, spoke about looking at "the personal things that are happening for a probation officer", particularly, where the officer "might be … interpreting what's happening for the client because of their [own] experiences." As well as highlighting, the personality perspective Sofia seemed to be drawing attention to the psychoanalytic concepts of transference and counter-transference and how these are raised, managed and worked through in supervision (Kadushin, 1992a; Shulman, 1993; Brown et al., 1996; Strean, 1996). Neil's perspective, on the other hand, related to personal bias; supervision helped "ensure that they [supervisees] …don't bring to their work any personal bias." In essence, Neil was drawing attention to the role that values and beliefs have in social work practice and seemed to highlight that supervision ensured that the values of the worker did not unduly colour interaction with the client (Biestek, 1961; Egan, 1990; Munson, 1993).

Susan and Nicholas were the two service managers whose definitions revealed the organisational perspective. Susan emphasised both accountability and safe practice, whereas Nicholas appeared to emphasise the traditional managerial construction of supervision within the agency setting. He stated that:

> I would see professional supervision encompassing not only casework supervision, which I suppose is the historical definition in this organisation, but it would encompass administrative areas, managerial responsibilities…That is an opportunity for a case work supervisor to spend time with a probation officer to make sure that the agency's policies are being adhered to in terms of monitoring and case notes

Commentary

What is immediately apparent from the above is that the probation officers as a group defined supervision from wider perspectives than the service managers did. However, despite this difference it is also clear that the organisational, situational and personality perspectives were the most dominant with the interactional and contextual perspectives

being quite minor. One implication of the dominance of the first three perspectives is that professional supervision was mainly defined in terms its of content. Munson (1993:14) asserts that each of these three perspectives relates specifically to content drawn from the agency, the work itself and the persons involved. Whereas the interactional perspective relates specifically to the process and the contextual perspective relates to the interaction between persons and the environment (Munson, 1993; O'Donoghue, 1998b). The dominance of the organisational, situational and personality perspectives highlights that the respondents were more aligned with those in the literature who construct professional supervision in terms of its functions (Kadushin, 1992a; Middleman et al., 1985; NZSWTC, 1985), as opposed to those authors who are more process oriented (Munson, 1993; Hawkins and Shohet, 1989; Brown et al., 1996; Rich, 1993; Von Kessel et al., 1993; Tabbi, 1995).

A further point of interest was the concept and theme of safe practice, which appeared in three probation officers' and three service managers' definitions. Morrison (1993) particularly highlights this theme. He believes that supervision provides protection to vulnerable groups (including staff and clients) and that without it they would be at greater risk of professionally dangerous practices.

The Community Probation Service definition of professional supervision as being "synonymous with clinical supervision" and encompassing "accountable practice, professional development and personal support and mediation/advocacy" (Community Corrections, 1998b:3) was not articulated in full by any of the respondents. However, when looking at the elements of the Service's definition the picture is somewhat different: two probation officers and one service manager made reference to accountable practice; four officers and four managers referred to professional development; three officers and four managers spoke of personal support; and two officers included both mediation and advocacy, while a third probation officer included only mediation and a service manager included advocacy in her definition. Susan was the only participant who discussed professional supervision's link with clinical supervision. She stated that:

> I see supervision lying in three areas. I see that there is an administrative component to supervision…a personal component. But there's also what we would call a clinical component. And I think, when our department

> talks about professional supervision, in effect they're meaning clinical supervision.

Obviously neither the probation officers nor the service managers share the Community Probation Services' definition of professional supervision. While, there was some agreement on professional supervision encompassing professional development and personal support, the respondents gave little recognition to the elements of mediation/advocacy and accountable practice. Finally, there was also a difference of opinion as to the role of administrative or management supervision within professional supervision. The wider implications of the participants' definitions are that they appear to mirror Kemshall's (1995:139) finding that "Field staff and managers [lack] either clarity or agreement over the purpose, function and process of supervision."

Main Functions of Professional Supervision

There is a clear history in the literature of identifying the functions of professional supervision (Kadushin, 1992a; Rich, 1993). Again, however, the participants' perspectives revealed no consistent shared understanding within each group or overall, and showed a tenuous connection to the functions identified in the Community Probation Services' policy.

Probation Officers

Whilst varied, the probation officers' responses did identify some functions that were common; namely, education, professional development and support. These functions were identified by four of the ten officers (David, Grace, Ernest and Mary-Jane). David spoke of these functions as part of a "four-leaf clover model" in which the stem or the common link was increased development and better practice. Grace, in her identification of the functions, appeared to concentrate her thinking on the personal support function and saw this in terms of gaining insight into how her private and professional lives influence each other. Ernest also seemed to concentrate on the support function, however his emphasis was more in regard to affirming the worker and monitoring their overall well-being in the workplace. Mary-Jane, on the other hand, placed her emphasis on education and training rather than support. In this regard she stated that "you need to be looking at education and training a lot". The next most common functions identified were mediation and advocacy .

Three probation officers (Ellen, David and Grace) identified mediation, two of whom linked mediation with advocacy.

The only participant to name all the functions identified in the Community Probation Policy was the probation officer that was involved in the working party that produced the June 1997 report:

> Well that whole thing about accountable practice. The personal support… I mean obviously whatever you do, your personal life impacts on that. So that whole linking of what's happening for you in your daily life, and how it might be affecting you…the whole thing of further training. You know, promoting further training and learning. And I guess that if issues come up, then your supervisors are there to sort of help you and mediate for you and advocate for you if necessary.

Two other themes are of interest in terms of the officers' responses. The first was the inclusion of management or administrative functions by Ellen and Ernest. This appears to reinforce a brief point made in the previous section concerning a difference of opinion between the Community Probation Service and some participants in regard to the place of the administrative function of supervision within professional supervision. The second theme, that of monitoring the well being of the worker, was illustrated by Mary-Jane and Tania. Mary-Jane emphasised the influence that the officer's emotional stability could have in practice when she said:

> I suppose checking out you're emotionally stable, I think is important. You wouldn't want to be running around here being psycho and no one knowing about it. Ruining peoples lives.

Tania, on the other hand, spoke of the need for workers to be assisted to keep healthy and to be examined by someone "who has some ideas of what you're talking about." Tania and Mary-Jane, in other words, both appeared to be raising the matter of the interface between personal and professional issues, particularly in relation to the personal support function of professional supervision. Another officer (David) seemed to outline the dilemma present within this area when he said that:

> I'm aware that most winters I go into a sort of depressed phase. I get down. And I'm aware that most winters also … performance at work slips. So I tend not to meet deadlines. I tend to mope around. Now that's definitely a personal issue for me. To what extent that's also a professional supervision issue, as against an administrative supervision issue, I'm unsure about. …I'm also unsure about … what should my supervisor be saying to me if he notices that or what should my supervisor be doing? Yeah … is it their role to support me or is it their role to refer me or what?

David seemed to raise the question of whether therapy was a function of professional supervision. The literature reveals a mixed response to this matter. Some authors from the counselling and psychotherapy disciplines support the notion that therapy is an important aspect of professional supervision (Rich, 1993), but there is quite a strong tradition of opposition amongst social workers to therapy as a function of supervision. This opposition is based on the argument that therapy changes the purpose, focus and power relationship within supervision (Kadushin, 1992a). Itzhaky et al. (1996) provide the middle way through this issue by proposing a guiding principle of the least or minimum necessary intervention.

Service Managers

In contrast to the probation officers there was considerable divergence in what the service managers identified. Nicholas drew from Proctor et al. (1988) for his functions and named her normative, formative and restorative tasks. These tasks have a clear correlation to the traditional construct of supervision in social work offered by Kadushin (1976; 1992a) of administrative, educational and support functions (O'Donoghue, 1998a; Beddoe et al., 1994). Joan identified testing, improving and practical instruction as her main functions, whereas Susan identified the enhancement of credibility through an examination of practice. Sofia and Neil both included safety in their functions but appeared to differ in other areas. Sofia emphasised the linking of theory with practice, the management of the personal issues and professional development. Neil, on the other hand, tended towards problem solving, affirming, and values clarification in his identification of the functions.

Commentary

The literature does not have any clearly agreed concept of the main functions of professional supervision. The most commonly accepted construction of the main functions is Kadushin's (1992a:23) "administrative, educational, and supportive" functions (Tsui, 1997a; Shulman, 1993; 1995; Payne, 1994; Shulman, 1993).

Rich (1993:150-151) reviewed twenty-six authors' differing constructions of the functions of clinical supervision and developed an integrated model of clinical supervision. He asserted that the functions of clinical supervision were "facilitation, staff development, staff socialization and service delivery". Rich (1993) defined the facilitation function as fostering a work environment that encourages creative thinking, autonomy, communication and increases staff competence. The staff development function involved a training/teaching environment in which skill learning is encouraged and opportunities for skill development and growth were provided. Staff socialisation was the process by which new and existing direct care staff were integrated and socialised into the desired set of organisational and professional values, ethics, standards and culture. Finally, the service delivery function involved assuring the ethical and competent delivery of client services in accordance with the organisation's and the profession's standards.

Overall, the functions identified by the participants in the present study, though not uniform in their presentation, do appear to fit within the broad functions outlined by Kadushin (1992a) and Rich (1993).

Processes Involved in Professional Supervision

Two main areas are covered in this section: first, the extent to which the processes involved in professional supervision parallel those used in practice; and second, the role that gender and culture play in the processes used in professional supervision.

Parallel Processes

The concept of parallel process or mirroring has been identified as significant in the literature (Shulman, 1995; 1993; Munson, 1993; Morrison, 1993; Kadushin, 1992a). It involves the recognition of parallels between the dynamics of professional supervision and any other helping relationship. Based upon this recognition, the behaviour and process

exhibited in the practice setting by client and worker may become mirrored by the worker and supervisor in the supervision setting.

The perspectives of the participants in this study, supported the concept that the processes involved in professional supervision paralleled those in practice. Fourteen participants (9 of the 10 probation officers and all of the service managers) stated that the process used in professional supervision was similar to the process of direct client work. Areas of similarity identified by the probation officers were the relationship, learning, problem solving, boundaries, role, setting, purpose and task-centred approach. The use of practice approaches as a basis for professional supervision is well documented. Payne (1993:50), for example, specifically identifies the 'Task-Centred' social work approach as the key form of both professional and managerial supervision. The following responses from David and Mary-Jane provide clear illustrations:

> There's some preparation before hand from both parties. So that issues or any recent potential conflict are identified already. There's a contracting period, where issues of time and issues to be dealt with are discussed. There is a clear understanding of what steps will follow from the supervision afterwards and what obligations there are on the two parties. The bulk of the time is devoted to the content of the supervision session.

> Well, establishing a relationship I guess is the first part…The contract, I think you need to have a contract if you're doing supervision. Like setting ground rules. And I guess we do that with our clients as well. We tell them what we expect, and tell them what they can expect from us. And we even have written down case plans. What we're going to do, to achieve, just so we stay focussed. We'd do that in supervision too I would assume. Note taking. You know, so you'd write maybe tasks or goals. That would be the same. All that emotive and encouraging stuff. That would all be the same I guess.

One link not made by the probation officers that was explicitly made by two service managers (Nicholas and Susan) was to the Integrated Supervision Model for Offenders, known commonly as ISM within the Community Probation Service. According to Dale

(1997) all probation officers and unit managers were trained in 1996 in this model, which consisted of four key elements: namely, a standardised risk assessment; a humanistic counselling style; a pro-social behavioural approach; and a task-centred problem solving method (Trotter, 1993).

Whilst the main thrust of the responses related to similarities, there were nevertheless differences identified by Kiri, Ellen, Ernest and Sofia. The first difference related to the purposes of professional supervision and client practice. In this regard, Kiri stated that supervision and client practice are "totally different" in terms of power. Kiri believed that "the supervisory relationship is an equal one", whereas a client/probation officer relationship was not. She emphasised this by referring to the role of the law in the probation officer/client relationship, and the need "to enforce conditions." Ellen, for her part, made reference to the level of expertise present in each relationship and argued that the probation officer/client relationship was one in which clients had deficits and needed to learn, whereas in the supervisory relationship the level of skill or knowledge was more even. Ernest identified differences in terms of depth, motivation and goals. He stated that in supervision "you'd probably get a bit deeper", because the worker is "more motivated than the average client to develop themselves." Ernest also made the point that the goal for officers was to try to get their clients "to take responsibility for themselves…in an acceptable way in society", whereas workers' goals were more professionally orientated. The final difference was that of the voracity of sanctions for non-compliance. In this regard, Sofia essentially reinforced the difference highlighted by Kiri, but instead of talking about it in terms of power. She emphasised the consequences when she stated that:

> Our role is a bit different from just plain social work … because if the client doesn't come we take them back to court. So that's where we'd deviate… the consequences are more severe.

The differences highlighted above appear to emphasise the greater degree of coercion in the probation practice process than the professional supervision process, and the challenge for officers in balancing the social control aspects of their role with the helping process (Trotter, 1993; O'Donoghue, 1995). The supervision literature also identifies a similar challenge for supervisors in balancing the administrative and professional aspects of their role. What is interesting in this regard is that, according to prior research, supervisors in the

main are reluctant to use the authority and power vested in the administrative function (Kadushin, 1992b) and that the principal source of power in the supervision relationship is the personal expertise of the supervisor (Kadushin, 1992c; Munson, 1993).

Gender and Culture

The literature indicates that very little research has been undertaken in relation to the influence of gender and culture upon the supervision process (Tsui, 1997a; Munson, 1993). Despite this lack of research, there is a body of supervision literature that promotes anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice (NZASW, 1998a; Morrison, 1993; O'Donoghue, 1998a; Brown et al., 1996).

Gender

The responses from both groups of participants varied in respect of the influence of gender. Two officers (Angela and Grace) tended to indicate that gender was generally not an issue for them and that they thought that it was largely dependent on the parties involved and the content of the supervision. Another perspective was offered by Tania who asserted that gender was important but not absolute. She did not "necessarily [need] to have a woman supervisor" but she did not want a male chauvinist supervisor who did not have "some understanding" of women's issues. Mary-Jane's reflection on the influence of gender stressed that the supervisee ought to choose their supervisor and that gender may be a factor in the choice made:

> I think it is important that people get to sort of have a bit of stipulation. Our clients get to choose ethnicity and male/female for some of their counselling. So I guess it's the same for us and our supervisors. Because you can go on to some personal kind of stuff, can't you. You can get there. And maybe you have to feel comfortable with that particular person, otherwise there could be a lot of blocking, barriers and stuff like that.

Another issue raised was whether the organisation took enough care in matching gender in terms of supervision. Joseph, for example, was concerned about the match between the gender of officers and clients, and he stated that he "would see with supervision that a similar care or opportunity for matching ought to be there." This issue appeared to be reinforced by Ernest when he noted that the dominance of patriarchal power

structures had been significantly challenged in society and the majority of people in the agency were female. Because of these factors, he felt that it was not easy for male supervisors:

> It's another messy one for male supervisors… Replicating society, you know, the power structures and all those things come in to it. You know I don't want to be in the firing line…reflecting male dominance.

Ellen considered gender to be significant and referred to a feminist approach for supervision developed by Diana Crosson, who used to work for the Department of Corrections. The approach Ellen outlined covered "the whole thing about how power is organised" between a supervisor and supervisee, and noted that this was particularly significant for women. She also stated that this approach considered "the way that women learn" and how it differed from male approaches.

The paper by Crosson (1981) referred to above, and a two page feminist model of supervision in the New Zealand Social Work Training Council's (1985*) Supervision Resource Package* were the only local literature found on this topic. Both documents highlight challenging stereotypes, patriarchal hierarchy and power structures. They also emphasise that the personal is political and collective/collaborative work processes.

The Service Managers' responses in general terms tended to mirror those of the probation officers. Joan, however, outlined reasons why she had changed her view and now had a supervisor of the same gender and culture:

> I used to think that that didn't matter, until I needed … professional supervision myself. And then it was extremely important that I had a pakeha woman, but it was also important that I had somebody from outside the organisation. Because I didn't feel that anybody, any other manager in the organisation, would be able to see things objectively, clearly…. So I have to change my views… and I'd have to say that it's very, very important that that supervisor is the appropriate one.

Neil, emphasising that as individuals we "bring our own history, experience, biases and others to the job", discussed the need for a non-biased approach. He made the point that in both practice and supervision it is a challenge to "don't love the sin, but love the sinner".

In other words, Neil was saying, put the bias aside and focus on "how can I help this person?" Finally, Nicholas emphasised the role that difference plays in professional supervision. He made the point that difference was present through the nature of the relationship, the people themselves who come from different backgrounds, and "…have perhaps cultural, gender differences that they bring to the relationship." The last difference he identified was in terms of how people relate and communicate with each other.

Culture

It is worthwhile at this point to consider how the Community Probation Policy itself actually addresses the influence that gender and culture have on the process of professional supervision. The policy document (Community Probation, 1998b) and the contract do not in fact include an explicit statement about anti-discriminatory or anti-oppressive practice.The closest they come is by outlining (a) a list of cultural attributes which are deemed to be appropriate for a professional supervisor, and (b) a list of factors to consider when providing supervision to Pacific Island staff (Community Probation 1998b: 9-10).

The participants' responses concerning the influence of culture on professional supervision processes were varied, ranging from no affect to important, and were quite similar to the responses about gender. The general theme appeared to be that the influence of culture depended on the people involved.

Jack stated that both gender and culture have no influence on the processes used in professional supervision. " …gender and culture doesn't mean anything to me really. People are people." For Grace, however, the affect of culture was dependent upon the parties involved and their relationship. She did not see culture as being necessarily important, but did concede that "there may be things that come up in supervision" that need cultural input. A lot depended on her relationship with her supervisor. Ellen, on the other hand, considered culture to be important in terms of process and appeared to promote an explicit dialogue acknowledging differences in the case of cross-cultural and cross-gender supervision:

> If you're looking at culture, … it's pretty important…. I think if they're out in the open, down on the table and clarified, …particularly if it's mixed gender or culture.

Mary-Jane also spoke of differences in terms of the supervision process for people from different cultures, and advocated that the supervisee choose their supervisor so that they can gain appropriate supervision.

In contrast to the above responses, the only Maori probation officer (Kiri) interviewed had this to say about the influence of culture upon professional supervision process:

> For me, because I'm Maori, unless I have a specific cultural matter that I want to discuss, it doesn't matter… As long as they can give me what I need in terms of the client. I'll clarify the Maori part. If I have a client who is Maori, and I have a genuine "I don't know what to do", "this is worrying me" etc etc, the process for dealing with Maori people in a Maori way is entirely different to dealing with Pakeha people... The Maori people who want to be dealt with in the usual Pakeha way, that's fine as well…but dealing with Maori people in a Maori way is entirely different…I've been lucky enough to have outside people in the community to be able to go to. I've used professional supervision with a Maori supervisor in the past, and the Department's paid. I think there should be more of that. But because that's been too hard to access easily, I've given up and just used people out there whom I know, and they've done it before. Just for the good, for nothing and from the heart.

When she finished, I saw Kiri's head and her eyes become downcast so I asked her how she felt about that? She replied:

> Okay in one way because they're willing to give. Not okay in another, because we're using them. This Department, this statutory Department is using them and I feel bad about that. But in order to do what I can do, I have to do that. You know? So I'm compromising basically my Elders, or people who know better, and not giving them anything, in order to get something for my client.

The above statements, both from the Pakeha officers and the Maori officer, arguably correlate with a number of the areas discussed by Jackson (1988). The first of these is that

the criminal justice system within which probation officers work is mono-cultural and Westminster based and provides limited scope for working with Maori according to Maori values. The impact of this is that the role of probation officer tended to be defined and constructed from this mono-cultural position. Jackson (1988) also argued that probation casework approaches were individually focused and foreign to the primacy given to the wider group influences in Maori values. Another point that Jackson (1988) made was in relation to social reintegration, arguing that this term was frequently understood by probation officers as re-fitting their clients into the wider Paheka community, rather than finding the most appropriate means of establishing their place and identity within Maori society. Jackson (1988) emphasised the role that a dominant context plays in influencing peoples' understanding of an issue. In regard to professional supervision, Tsui et al. (1997) argue that traditional supervision in the social services has been embedded in the organisational context. They state that this context has been viewed as the sole influence upon professional supervision with the result that culture has been overlooked as a major context in supervision (Tsui et al., 1997).

The service managers' responses to the influence of culture generally mirrored their responses about the influence of gender. One notable exception was that of Sofia, who recognised a need for cultural input when dealing with cultural dynamics and said that:

> I think where it matters is if that person is really wanting to find out more about, and check out … cultural dynamics, then I think it's most likely to [warrant]… a culturally appropriate supervisor.

Theory and Professional Supervision

Two distinct areas are covered in this section, the place of theory in professional supervision and the participants' knowledge of theory and models of professional supervision.

Place of Theory in Supervision

Thirteen of the participants believed that theory had a place in professional supervision. Eight of the ten probation officers held this view, while the two remaining did not feel qualified to answer the question because they were not social work trained. Amongst the probation officers a variety of reasons were given as to why they believed theory has a

place in supervision. Ellen made the point that having a theory base was what differentiated professionals from volunteers, a point that implies that formalised theory is linked to professional identity. Jack, on the other hand, asserted that "theory is the basis of all practice" and that you can't provide practical assistance unless you have "the theory to go with it". Grace believed that theory had a place in "accountable practice" and emphasised the value of using "what works" according to research with clients. She also stated that it was important for supervisors to have a good knowledge of theory, particularly "in terms of the professional development" of their supervisees. Mary-Jane, made the point that "it would be really helpful if her supervisor had a knowledge of theories", particularly behavioural and psychodynamic theories, because it would facilitate understanding of where she was coming from in her work with clients. Finally, Tania argued that theory is important because it provides "focus", "direction" and "guidelines". In this regard she commented that:

> I know since we've had the Trotter model, and now this CRIMPS has come in, which I think is really wonderful, it gives you guidelines. It give you a direction. It gives you a way to go, instead of wondering off on a whole lot of side things, without having an idea of what you're actually trying to achieve. Theory can do that.

The managers also thought theory had a place in supervision and their reasons were similar to those of the officers. Sofia saw theory as providing a "framework" and an "anchor" that keeps things in perspective, and Neil argued that theory was important for learning whereas Joan thought that it was "the greater part of supervision" and provided a background upon which to test the actual practice. Susan, in common with Sophia but extending the point, spoke of theory as helping to maintain focus and providing meaning and a rationale for practice decisions. She also argued that "If you can't articulate what base you're coming from" then you don't actually know what you're doing.

Overall, the participants' views generally reflected the professional supervision literature which gives theory a significant place in professional supervision (Kadushin, 1992a; Munson, 1993; Rich, 1993; Tsui et al., 1997). One further point which emerged from their responses, however, was that when they spoke about theory they seemed to lack

any differentiation between formal theory and practice theory, and espoused theory and theory in use (Argyris et al., 1974; Munson, 1993).

Knowledge of Supervision Theory

When the participants were asked about their knowledge of professional supervision theory and models, their responses revealed that they had either little or no knowledge or were unable to articulate their knowledge of such theory. Kiri, who had just finished a social work diploma, stated that she knew "something about it, but ask me to recite something and I can't." Ellen and Grace, on the other hand, had both had either training or study in supervision but still experienced difficulty outlining their knowledge. Ellen was able to name "Kadushin", who's name came up in an old study guide she brought with her to the interview, but in the next breath said, "Don't ask me what he's on about, but it looks good." Grace gave a similar response, stating that she had completed the Central Institute of Technology's short course in clinical supervision, which trained people in the TAPES model, but then said, "Don't ask me about it."

The service managers appeared more knowledgeable, especially Nicholas who articulated the Brigid Proctor (1988) model of supervision:

> What springs to mind is Proctor's model of supervision which was the three-pronged formative, restorative and normative elements of supervision….The formative being the sort of training, or rethinking plans, that sort of thing. Normative being the standards of practice, and monitoring case management assessment role, and restorative being the opportunity for a probation officer to ventilate, to discuss feelings, that's the supportive element of the role.

Sofia and Susan linked practice theory to supervision. Sofia did this through reference to motivational interviewing, task-centred practice and reflective approaches. Susan, on the other hand, spoke of supervision using a problem-solving model that starts with:

> The professional, it's their session, the supervisee comes to the session, they come prepared with whatever they're bringing, and you help them elicit their own solutions … if it's an issue or if it's a piece of good practice you can examine it and actually give them the credit for doing that.

Skills Important in Professional Supervision

The predominant theme which emerged from 14 of the 15 participants was that the skills that were thought to be important in supervision were those associated with interpersonal relationships (e.g., listening, empathy, and communication skills). Joseph illustrated this theme well when he said:

> Basically … similar skills to what we'd expect in a social worker…. the good old things like empathy and being nice to clients, unconditional regard, respect and whatever those things are about saying "You're a person, and I accept the person as a person. Accept him or her as in charge of … their own destiny." I do expect that of a supervisor toward me.

Joseph, Jack, Mary-Jane and Sofia all linked these interpersonal skills with social workers, whereas Tania identified them as skills associated with counsellors. Generally, the picture presented by the participants of the skills that were important seemed to correlate with Kadushin's (1992a) research in which the majority of strengths that supervisees identified in their supervisors related to the expressive aspects of the supervisory relationship.

There were, however, two specific skill sets identified which were not related to the expressive aspects of the supervision relationship. The first of these, identified by two service managers (Nicholas and Sofia), involved the skills of challenging supervisees, and getting them to think about their work practice. Sofia particularly emphasised the role that questioning played, whereas Nicholas emphasised behavioural aspects such as the positive reinforcement of good work and "confronting the work that has not been done or not been done to standard".

The second skill set, which Ernest identified, included strategic vision, foresight and advocacy. Ernest thought that it was important for supervisors to be able "to see into the future" and plan how best to manage change and any potential problems that may arise from change with their supervisees. Upon reflection, I think that he may also have been indicating that it was important for supervisors to be able to assess where the agency, the profession and society were heading rather than just the supervisor's team. An indication of this broader perspective was evident in Ernest's discussion of advocacy skills:

> A good supervisor is sort of tussling with the organisation ... Not just a lackey to a higher level.…they will put pressure on when they see things that aren't maybe ethical or practical, they will kind of have an energy to change those things…that sort of advocacy.

Ernest's description of advocacy skills appears to link to Shulman's (1993: 294-308) "Third force function" with its emphasis on mediating between staff and the administration. Shulman (1993: 295) states that "work in this area requires confrontation and advocacy", particularly when the system is unresponsive to issues that impact upon staff and their practice.

Role and Place for Participants

The participants' responses with regard to the role/place of professional supervision for themselves revealed that all but one of them considered supervision to be important.

Probation Officers

All the probation officers thought that professional supervision was important. The reasons expressed were safety, reflective and accountable practice, to reduce complacency, to deal with job-related stress, to enhance motivation and for efficiency in practice.

Kiri and Ellen believed that professional supervision was important for safety reasons; namely, their safety and that of their clients. Kiri emphasised both the "nature of the work" and her professional identity as a counsellor in her response, whereas Ellen spoke more personally and said she "would feel very unsafe" if she did not have regular supervision.

For David, professional supervision was important as a means by which he could reflect on his practice, reduce any complacency present and be held accountable. He also appeared to be saying that the space provided by supervision to reflect on practice enabled him to develop professionally:

> My experience is that if I continue to practice without reflecting on it, then I tend to repeat both the good and the bad things that I do. If I reflect on it, I require the discipline of a structured process and a structured time … because otherwise I'm going to leave it as too difficult…not that it's not important, but there's always something more urgent to do … And for me

> also the fact that I know that I'll be accounting to my supervisor for my own practice, probably puts an edge to the work that I do, rather than sitting back and saying "this will be good enough".

David's last sentence emphasises how the process of explaining one's practice in supervision challenges complacency. This was echoed by Jack who stated that job-related stress can lead to becoming "really stuck in a rut in relation to your professional practice". He also said that, "You tend to find shortcuts and do the easy stuff because it's less stressful." Jack believed that professional supervision was important because it helped "bring you back into line" and provided a means by which burnout could be prevented or managed.

For Grace supervision was important because it could provide her with motivation and a means by which she could improve her practice. Mary-Jane also identified motivation as important and pointed out that supervision was an important anchor that "keeps us grounded and focused on our work", particularly when agencies and society are continuously changing. She thought that supervision did this through "keeping us in touch with what is happening, and supporting us in all the changes". In regard to helping her work more intensively with clients, supervision was needed to encourage and support probation officers in the use of "CRIMPS, which is cognitive restructuring, relapse prevention and motivational interviewing". Mary-Jane seemed to be making the point that supervision had a role, for her, in terms of ongoing learning and the implementation of new practice models and techniques. Tania added to this point when she spoke of supervision being important in terms of efficiency, ensuring that practice time was used to its optimum and encouraging officers to use practice models that facilitated this.

Service Managers

Four service managers considered professional supervision to be important, whereas the fifth (Neil) stated that he had not given the role and place of supervision much consideration:

> I've only really started thinking about that since you actually asked me into this and after I read your Information Sheet…I would have said up until the

> time you contacted me, I would have said, "No"…However, I think it's mainly…to deal with the stresses.

The other four service managers argued that supervision helped manage risk, aided safe practice, helped in the management of staff, assisted with professional development and provided support. Nicholas, for example, linked supervision to the management of risk, and spoke of it as "the first line of protection" both for the agency and himself. He argued that supervision enabled the service manager to prevent, minimise and manage risk through giving him knowledge of his staff and their work.

In a similar vein, Sofia stated that supervision was important because it aided safe practice. She made the point that as a service manager she was involved in training probation officers and generally provided supervision to them when a crisis arose and they did not have immediate access to their supervisor. Sofia also outlined the difficulties she had had in maintaining the external supervision budgeted for her staff, and in doing so revealed how important she felt supervision was for both her and her team:

> I basically stood my ground … for ethical reasons I was totally supported by my team. For one thing, I had a little out, because I could say probation officers aren't even trained in this yet anyway… and I'm not going to have them having nothing. And seeing we'd started it, I don't want to stop it.

Susan's reason for holding that professional supervision was important concerned its place in the management of staff. Whilst service managers do not have a client caseload they do "carry caseloads" in that they manage staff. Susan seemed to emphasise the isomorphic or parallel process aspect of supervision and asserted that the modelling shown by managers influenced probation officers who in turn influenced clients. In these terms, the management role of supervision can be linked to both the reduction of risk and maintenance of safe practice.

The fourth service manager, Joan, stated that professional supervision had an important role and place because it assisted professional development and provided her with support as a woman working in an all male management team that she would not otherwise have. The key element for Joan was mentoring, which she spoke of in terms of helping her to plan future career prospects.

Commentary

The research literature generally indicates that professional supervision is considered to be of prime importance to practitioners and supervisors in terms of facilitating professional development, and providing support, safety and accountability (Shulman, 1995; 1993; Payne, 1994; Kadushin, 1992, 1992a; 1992b; Rich, 1993; Morrison 1993; Beddoe, 1997a). In these terms the findings outlined above are consistent with the perceptions presented in the research literature.

Role and Place of Supervision Within the Agency

Responses in regard to the role and place of supervision within the agency reflected a range of views. Overall, the participants' perspectives reflected the themes of supervision being contracted out to external providers, internal provision, organisational culture, and its role and place in the organisation's strategic direction. Each of these themes is addressed in the following pages.

Contracting Supervision Out

Two officers (Kiri and Joseph) and one manager (Sofia) argued for the external provision of supervision. Kiri believed that a supervisor "should be from outside the immediate work environment" on the grounds that internal supervision was not safe, particularly if you had "something to spill". She was also of the opinion that a supervisor within the agency would have difficulty finding time for supervisees. Joseph, on the other hand, argued for external professional supervision based on his understanding of the supervision philosophy espoused in the initial policy development document produced by the Community Probation Service (Community Corrections, 1997a). He wondered whether the change in direction from external to internal supervision was based on "monetary restraint", and outlined his belief that internal when provided in a peer relationship could be collusive.

Sofia also thought that professional supervision ought to be paid for and provided externally. Her concerns about the agency's policy were focused on unsafe practice; "training up probation officers to do it, on their own peers…is compromising both the probation officer… and the person supervising them." Based on her own experience, Sofia asserted that external supervision was better in both professional and monetary terms:

> I reckon what I'm doing is still more cost effective than a probation officer doing it… I got a really good price with qualified people.

A further point made by Sofia was that external supervisors were more likely to have a clearer perspective on practice situations because they were not directly involved in either the practice situations or the agency context. As an agency supervisor in the past, she found that:

> You can't see the wood for the trees, because I'm really really busy. They're [probation officers] really really busy. So you can miss some of the tell tale signs.

Internal Provision

Both Angela and Ellen recognised that the Community Probation Service had attempted to highlight the role and place of professional supervision within the agency but expressed concerns about the implementation of the supervision programme. Angela pointed out that the separation of professional supervision from casework administration was a new initiative and her particular concern about the implementation of the supervision programme was the process by which people volunteered to be supervisors. Some of these volunteers had not received supervision "for maybe 20 years, if …at all."

For her part, Ellen felt that the emphasis on having supervision provided by peers was "dangerous". Supervision was best provided by the service manager, who Ellen considered to be:

> By both rank and financial reward … in a position, not necessarily of authority, but of speciality, where they have the ability to have the overview of everyone's work…and also be privy to what's happening for that person in a professional way, like you might know that they've had the flu, so are not going to be able to function that well.

Organisational Culture

Two probation officers (David and Ernest) and one service manager (Nicholas,) expressed concerns in relation to the organisational culture and its affect on the role and place of professional supervision. David's concerns related to the change culture that he perceived

in the Community Probation Service, in particular the General Manager's desire to change the culture so that everyone would "be as self-driven… as she is." What David appears to be highlighting was the self-responsibility ethos found in the business management literature, whereby employees are to act as business persons (Peters, 1993: 40). He made the point that this ethos was contradictory to the traditional role and place of supervision, and also pointed out that the ethos and values of probation officers differed from those of business people. In doing so he argued that:

> I'm not sure that's a realistic expectation…like [do] I need the discipline of somebody as my supervisor saying "Hey how're you doing this?" Or, "What's wrong with this?" …I need somebody behind pushing and so for me and others like me, the temptation is to do the same things in the same old way without necessarily improving.

The issues Ernest raised relate to those outlined by David. Ernest felt that there was a "lot less energy" put into supervision and attributed this to "a move away from … social work … principles" to a "paint by numbers" or follow "the road map" approach. For Ernest this type of bureaucratic approach was contrary to the body of knowledge and expertise he had accumulated as a social work professional and it left him thinking "the people who drive the organisation see us not as social workers … [but] as income support type workers."

Nicholas, a service manager, saw risk management as the role and place of professional supervision, and appeared to highlight this aspect of the organisational culture and its influence on supervision. Nicholas believed that professional supervision is the first-line of protection against things that have the potential to embarrass the Service. One of the inferences that can be taken from his concept of supervision as a risk management system is that it can transfer risk from the agency to individual managers and practitioners because the agency has a supervision policy and system.

Strategic Direction

Susan, a service manager, raised the issue of the role and place of supervision in the Service's strategic direction via reference to her participation in the Integrated Offender Management project. She saw the "appointment of interim professional supervisors from the main grade staff as being very much a stopgap measure" and thought that there needed

to be a commitment to good outside professional supervision, or up-skilling managers for supervision, particularly since the Integrated Offender Management project was "contingent on having good professional supervision in place." The project would require "probation officers to up-skill in some areas such as behavioural interview". Supervision was important, she believed, because it reinforced the new learning by helping to maintain a focus on "coaching, training and targeting on-going training."

Commentary

The four themes identified above portray different views of the role and place of supervision within the Community Probation Service. The first theme, external supervision, emphasised the role of ensuring safe practice and the provision of supervision as a service to agency personnel by external consultants. This theme highlights two developing areas in the supervision literature; namely, whether the administrative or managerial aspects of supervision should be separated from the professional aspects (i.e. education and support), and the influence of agency theory and the purchaser-provider form of contract management. The literature in regard to the separation of the administrative from the professional functions is conflicting. Kadushin (1992a: 496-498) argues that opinion appears to be against separation, whereas Erera et al. (1994) argue that the role conflict involved makes the combination of administrative and professional supervision incompatible. It is also worth noting that the separation of managerial and professional accountability is a hallmark of new public management (Boston et al., 1991:9).

The influence of agency theory and its reliance on the purchaser-provider form of contract management for service delivery and supervision provision is discussed by Brown et al. (1996: 182-183) who state that the contracting of consultants is likely to occur for the developmental components of supervision. They argue that the main advantage would be in terms of the removal of mistrust and suspicion caused by the duality of the supervisor's role. The disadvantages they list as potential problems with consultants understanding the agency context, the supervisee's day-to-day work and the likely outcome that contracting will have on social work management – that is, its disappearance.

The second theme, internal provision, revealed the participants' recognition of the agency's commitment to professional supervision, but they were concerned about the way

it was fulfilling its commitment. In the literature, Morrison (1993) stresses the importance of agency supervision policies and an organisational commitment. He does this through reference to a number of major reports on supervision in the child protection field in the United Kingdom, which revealed serious organisational problems in regard to policy implementation.

The theme of the influence of organisational culture appears to reveal a culture that is unlikely to be supportive of professional supervision. Hawkins et al. (1989:131-139) address the role that organisational culture has on supervision, with particular attention to cultures where bureaucracy, crisis and a "watch your back" mentality dominate. They argue that these cultures have a negative influence, and assert that only a learning/developmental culture fully supports professional supervision.

The fourth theme, supervision's role and place in the organisation's strategic direction as a support mechanism for the Integrated Offender Management project, provides an insight which essentially views the current programme as a useful preparatory training and development exercise, one which addresses immediacies and supports a core strategic initiative. The literature on this theme of supporting strategic initiatives seems to be sparse. Indeed, the only item found was a study by Rapp (1998:163-194), who argued that group supervision focused on the case-manager's practice using the strengths model, was essential for providing a supportive case-management context and that it facilitated successful use of the model, ongoing fine tuning and (ultimately) successful client outcomes.

Arguably, the four themes identified stress that the organisation is, for the participants, the dominant context which influences the role and place of professional supervision. This perspective is consistent with the literature which has historically constructed professional supervision as embedded within the context of social service organisations (Tsui et al., 1997; Gibelman et al., 1997; Rich, 1993).

Role and Place of Supervision for Clients

Thirteen of the 15 participants interviewed (9 officers and 4 managers) considered that professional supervision was significant for clients. Their reasons were that it helped maintain professional boundaries and ethics, protected clients and provided a means of

quality assurance. The other two participants expressed the view that clients were unaware of and uninformed about the supervision of probation officers.

Maintenance of Boundaries and Ethics

Two probation officers (Angela and Ellen) and two service managers (Neil and Susan) thought that supervision had a role and place for clients in the maintenance of professional boundaries and ethics. According to Angela there wouldn't be supervision without clients and she emphasised its role in helping workers separate themselves and their issues from clients and their issues. Angela made the point that "it's going to be much harder for us to help them with stuff, if we've got our own stuff that we haven't dealt with yet." Ellen, for her part, believed that supervision was critical and that it would not be ethical to see clients if you were not being supervised. However, she did not elaborate or give any reasons as to why she held this view. Susan's support of supervision for ethical reasons, related to the fact that what occurred in practice with clients was rarely directly observed, and she stated that "a lot of probation officers …are reticent about having their practice examined." She expressed the view that it was difficult for staff to assert that "we're modelling good pro-social behaviour" if no-one actually sees them doing that. Finally, Neil's perspective was related to the influence that personal biases had on certain cases. His point was that supervision provided protection for clients against the discriminatory practice of probation officers.

Protection

David, Sofia, Nicholas, Mary-Jane and Joseph all emphasised the role and place that supervision had in protecting clients from unsafe and poor practice. David, for example, thought that supervision ensured that clients were not sold short by their probation officers. It was potentially dangerous for clients "if we sell them short", argued David, because the sentencing "tariffs ratchet up" with repeated offending. Sofia supported the perspective of not selling clients short and accentuated the role and place of supervision in working more "intensively with … high risk people…and really trying to reduce reoffending" by targeting the offending behaviour.

Nicholas believed that supervision was very important for client protection. If staff were well trained, aware of their role, secure and well supported - not only by the

supervisor but also by other staff - " the chances of clients being mistreated, mishandled, call it what you will, is less." Nicholas further asserted that the on-going learning and training provided by supervision was pivotal because it presented the opportunity to learn from other more senior members and thereby equipped "staff with the many skills to cope with the job."

Mary-Jane and Joseph seemed to reinforce Nicholas' points from the perspective that the work of probation officers' with clients is generally unobserved. Mary-Jane stressed this when she said that "basically we're left to do our own thing, so we could be doing terrible things to people, or if we had our own agendas." She also made the point that supervision provided a check on the worker's well being and helped limit the damage that "dysfunctional" workers can wreak on clients. Joseph expressed a similar view. Supervision was needed for client safety because in its absence "clients are left very much at the whim of individuals…who…are … not sufficiently self-aware when it comes to dealing with other people." What Joseph seemed to be saying was that supervision offered an opportunity for practitioners to examine and modify their behaviour and in doing so afforded clients safer practice.

Quality Assurance

Jack and Ernest thought that supervision had a quality assurance role for clients, keeping the worker up to speed and providing a check on the quality of their work. In Jack's view supervision provided the "reinforcement" and "correction" needed from time-to-time, and was a guard against "short cuts" and sloppy work practices. Ernest, on the other hand, thought that it was important for clients to understand that the people seeing them are competent, overseen and accountable to someone for their behaviour.

Unaware and Uninformed

Kiri argued that clients were unaware that probation officers have professional supervision, and claimed that they don't care whether their probation officer is supervised. Accordingly, Kiri saw supervision as helping her " to give my best to the client. Even though they mightn't be aware, and they might abuse me, it's still a must as far as they're concerned." Joan, on the other hand, thought that clients were uninformed and therefore in no position to judge the competence of their probation officer:

> I think we're in a different sort of organisation. If it was a business organisation, where you're working with, you know …marketing products for instance, to a perceptive client base, there would be a higher degree of expertise required by those clients. But to be honest, I don't really think that our clients are in a position to evaluate our skills, whether or not we're good or bad. I think as long as they get what they think that they are there for, then that's as far as their judgement goes.

Commentary

The themes outlined above have a clear link to the literature which emphasises supervision's role and place for clients in terms of assuring the quality of practice, protecting them from unsafe, discriminatory and unethical practice (Brown et al., 1996; Kadushin, 1992a; Morrison, 1993). The points raised by Kiri and Joan about clients being unaware and uninformed in terms of supervision highlights the view that clients are generally invisible in the supervision arena. Only one relevant study was found in the literature search. This study, conducted by Harkness et al. (1991), involved clients in the supervision loop, and stressed that client satisfaction with services increased when the supervision of workers was focused upon the client's problems and the worker's interventions.

Summary and Implications

The objective of this chapter was to explore the professional supervision philosophy of probation officers and service managers through the presentation of research findings. This objective involved discussing how both groups defined and constructed professional supervision in terms of its functions, processes, theory, and its role and place for them, their agency and the clients of the Community Probation Service. Overall, the findings presented indicate the absence of a shared philosophy of professional supervision amongst the participants.

In terms of how professional supervision is defined, the research findings, revealed that probation officers defined professional supervision from wider perspectives than the service managers – in particular the organisational, situational and personality perspectives (Munson, 1993: 13-14). The dominance of these three perspectives in the definitions accentuates the content and functions of supervision, rather than its process and context.

The findings also indicated that the alignment between the respondents' definitions of professional supervision and the Community Probation Service's definition was limited to the areas of professional development and personal support. This general lack of alignment or restricted alignment was also evident in the participant's identification of the main functions of professional supervision. The functions they identified showed little shared or common agreement other than those of professional development and personal support.

The findings in relation to the processes involved in professional supervision were mixed. Fourteen of the 15 respondents thought that the processes used were similar to those employed in direct client work. This feature clearly supported the concept of mirroring or parallel process found in the supervision literature (Kadushin, 1992a; Morrison, 1993; Shulman, 1995; 1993; O'Donoghue, 1998a). However, when the participants were asked about the influence of gender and culture in the processes used there was a considerable degree of variation in their responses. The general view seemed to be that the influence of gender and culture depended on the individuals concerned, the specific context and their relationship. Arguably, the findings in relation to gender and culture were not reflective of the strong anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice strand found in the professional supervision literature (Morrison, 1993; Brown et al., 1996; NZASW, 1998a; O'Donoghue, 1998a). Rather, they reflected the monocultural Westminster system within which the Community Probation Service operates, and supported the view that the processes used in professional supervision are significantly influenced by the dominant context of the organisation (Jackson, 1988; Tsui et al., 1997).

The findings in terms of theory and professional supervision were contradictory. Thirteen of the 15 participants thought that theory had a place in professional supervision and considered it to be important. However, when asked about their knowledge of professional supervision theory the responses revealed surprisingly little knowledge. Despite this contradiction the findings are consistent with the professional supervision literature which highly espouses theory, yet is described by commentators as being poorly organised and poorly understood by practitioners (see Rich, 1993: 173-174).

The skills identified as important in professional supervision by both the service managers and probation officers were generally those ascribed to interpersonal communication and appeared to relate to the expressive aspects of the supervisory relationship (Kadushin, 1992a).

In relation to the role and place of professional supervision for the participants themselves, the Community Probation Service and the clients of the agency, the findings indicated that the participants believed that professional supervision had an important role and place for both themselves for clients in relation to the delivery of quality service and as a protection against unsafe and unethical practice. However, in regard to the Community Probation Service, whilst the majority indicated that it had a role and place there were differing opinions with respect to its specific role and place within the Service. These differing views tended to reflect concerns related to the external and internal provision of supervision, the separation of managerial from professional supervision, the organisational culture and the strategic direction of the Community Probation Service.

To sum up, the findings indicate that a clear philosophy of professional supervision was lacking amongst the participants, whose knowledge and understanding was at an elementary level. Furthermore, there was an obvious lack of alignment between the participants' philosophy and that espoused by the Community Probation Service.
In terms of their implications, these findings signal a need for the agency to socialise and educate its staff in both (a) the functions, processes and theory of professional supervision, and (b) its philosophy of professional supervision. The findings presented also raise questions about the likely success and effectiveness of the professional supervision programme introduced by the Service, particularly as the findings suggest that the Service does not have a culture in which professional supervision is a common and shared experience.