Instructional supervision has long drawn on psychoanalytic concepts and techniques for insight into the dynamics of supervisory processes. Yet, only in the last decade or so has interest flowed substantially the other way. The field of psychoanalysis has begun to direct much attention to the subject of supervision, both as a practical matter of coordinating and improving services in psychiatric settings and as a subject of theoretical interest focusing on the supervisor-supervisee relationship. This article reviews some developments in psychoanalysis that relate directly to supervision as a topic of study and that seem especially relevant for clinical supervision in schools. I will also attempt to show how recent theoretical advances in psychoanalysis can help supervisors better understand the nature of teaching and guide their own relationships with teachers.

SUPERVISION AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

An historical development in the field of psychoanalysis that has relevance for instructional supervision began in the late 1950s with the awakening of an interest in psychoanalytic education. Psychoanalysts held formal discussions at conferences and through their professional journals concerning the quality of teaching and the integrity of training programs at psychoanalytic institutes. This movement crested with the publication of a major status report entitled, *Psychoanalytic Education in the United States.*¹ Not surprisingly, dialogue continued into the 1960s and soon included issues of curriculum² and supervision.³⁴⁵ Because the interpersonal nature of supervision makes it a subject

particularly suitable for psychoanalytic investigation, and because the two processes of supervision and psychoanalysis in fact sometimes overlap and influence each other, supervision still continues to be a subject of study among psychoanalysts.

Although similarities among the processes of therapy, supervision, and teaching are recognized, the literature of psychoanalytic supervision warns that supervision is not to be confused with therapy. Supervision is viewed as being much closer in nature to teaching, because the two processes of supervision and teaching involve to a substantial degree the transmission of specific information and skills. Supervisors in psychoanalytic settings are told straightforwardly to "at all times retain the primacy of the teaching function." This educative function of supervision is favorably portrayed as stating a problem more directly than a therapist would in order to give the supervisee "a greater chance for rational control." Approaching problems in supervision too indirectly, or so obliquely that they are left unspoken, is dysfunctional because such "therapeutic" techniques are likely to create more anxiety for the supervisee than a simple, open description and discussion of the difficulty.

On the other hand, the literature of psychoanalytic supervision also consistently emphasizes the importance of developing in the supervisee a solid and confident professional identity, and it is here that the supportive and nurturant side of the supervisory process comes to the fore. The task of helping another develop a firm sense of professional competence is too complex for simple didactic instruction and involves more than mere prescriptions of technique.

Acquisition of a professional identity involves a strong identification with what one does and with learning to utilize oneself as an actual instrument for one's accomplishments. Ekstein and Wallerstein express it this way:

Professional identity is a higher form, a later acquisition than the self concept. It is an extension from the self concept, perhaps more easily given up under stress, such as severe illness or social upheaval, but nevertheless important ingredient without which the professional function would unduly suffer.

A task of the supervisor, then, is to help the supervisee relinquish mechanical application of technique and develop instead a unique style based on personal

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11 Ibid., p. 44.


13 Ibid., p. 66.
talents. To bring this about, the supervisor must establish a trusting relationship that is warm, empathic, nonjudgmental, and characterized by a sharing of feelings. The supervisor should be available as a model for identification as well, and should seek consistently to clarify and affirm the supervisee's unique style as it emerges and evolves during supervisory conferences.  

In other words, supervision seems to require an approach that is at once straightforward and confronting when it comes to technique yet tactful and sensitive when encouraging the emergence of personal style. Jackel resolves this apparent dilemma by advising the supervisor, as in the case of therapy, to avoid asking for justification of a particular action: "Why" implies to both patient and supervisee that they should not have done what they did. The supervisor may ask, "I wonder what made you do that?" or "What was the urge to do that?" or "What did you have in mind when you said that?" This may serve as a tactful confrontation. Sometimes one is surprised to learn that the supervisee said or did the wrong thing for the right reasons.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE SELF

In practice it is necessary for supervisors in any field to comprehend clearly what they believe and what they want to accomplish, and to be aware of their own feelings at any given moment. But when facilitating the development of the professional identity of another, the most critical element is to understand and empathize as fully as possible with that other person; that is, as much as possible, to know what that other person believes and feels. While there are no shortcuts to knowing another person's professional self so thoroughly, a recent major theoretical advance in the field of psychoanalysis called *self psychology* may give instructional supervisors some useful insights into both teaching and supervision.

*The Analysis of the Self,* and further work by Kohut and others, presents a perspective on the teaching and learning process that promises to be much more acceptable to educators than that provided by classical psychoanalytic theory. This new perspective encourages us to view teaching holistically and as a positive force in the development of others. The remainder of this article outlines this theory of the self and speculates on possible implications for instructional supervision.

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16 Ibid., p. 30.
The self is an intrapsychic construct that develops during the second year of life, it marks the infant's acquisition of a sense of continuity across space and time. Prior to self formation, the infant is believed to experience reality in a fragmented way, as unrelated, transitory sensory experiences. The cohesion of a sense of self occurs gradually as a result of the prolonged interaction of the child with its mother and other nurturant figures in the environment.

Self psychologists believe that the basic elements of a psychologically nurturant environment are the presence of others who (1) mirror to the child a sense of its own narcissistic grandiosity and (2) simultaneously represent models of omnipotent perfection for the infant to idealize. The mother's presence during this stage provides the stable psychic structure that the child has not yet achieved independently. The infant experiences the mother and other nurturant figures as an extension of itself—a selfobject, over whom it expects the sort of control an adult exercises over his or her own body and mind, rather than the control an adult realistically expects to have over others.

The formation of the self represents an initial awareness of one's own existence, and is a necessary prelude to ego development. Educational researchers who have utilized a psychoanalytic paradigm in the past have long recognized that the teacher-student relationship closely resembles the narcissistic preoedipal mother-child relationship. On the basis of the Freudian model, however, the teacher role has been variously portrayed as regressive, as dysfunctionally controlling, and as childishly exhibitionistic. Self psychology, in contrast, rejects the assumption inherent in classical theory that postoedipal relationships (that is, relating to the world as an independent object) are inherently superior to all narcissistic attachments (that is, relating to the world as a part of oneself).

Self psychology represents a major departure from the classical view in contending that narcissism and the capacity for narcissistic attachments, which originate in the preoedipal mother-child relationship, are not replaced by more mature ego functions (such as sequential rationality). Rather, narcissism and the capacity for narcissistic attachments are seen as continuing to develop separately into mature and culturally valuable achievements of the personality such as creativity, empathy, the capacity to contemplate one's own impermanence, a sense of humor, and wisdom.

The period of self formation and a reshuffling of the self components can be reactivated among adults, according to self psychologists, during transitional situations in life arising from intellectual, biological, or social changes.

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21Benjamin D. Wright and Shirley A. Tuska, "From Dream to Life in the Psychology of Becoming a Teacher," School Review 76 (September 1968) 253-293
22Marjorie McDonald, "Teaching the Beginner," Psychoanalytic Quarterly 40 (October 1971) 618-645
followed by a rebuilding of a self more suited to the new circumstances. During such periods of crisis we may look to another person to serve the nurturant selfobject function, to someone who provides the missing psychic structure for us either by mirroring and affirming our sense of self-esteem or by representing an idealized calm, reassuring figure. Turning to another for the selfobject function helps us avoid further fragmentation by regulating and maintaining our self-esteem.

THE TEACHER AS SELFOBJECT FOR THE STUDENT

Kohut describes a "higher transformation of narcissism," which involves development along the lines of empathy, creativity, humor, and wisdom, and the capacity for engaging in nurturant narcissistic attachments such as the mirroring function and the idealizing transference. What this suggests for understanding teaching is that the teacher may be viewed as representing a stabilizing selfobject for the student as the student proceeds through childhood and adolescence. The teacher, like the preoedipal nurturant parent, alternately mirrors the child's sense of self-importance and also represents an idealized figure. Both functions maintain the child's self-esteem and psychic equilibrium and provide for the gradual internalization of values and the development of a firm and realistic sense of self.

This is not to say that the teacher should become a part-time psychoanalyst, only that the teacher ought to provide a positive mirror and model of competence for the student to emulate during classroom instruction. The acquisition of information and skills is, of course, paramount in the classroom, but learning is difficult and unlikely when it is perceived as overwhelmingly threatening. This implies, simply, that the teacher should strive sensitively to encourage the development of a firm, positive, and realistic self concept in the student by praising the student's accomplishments, by allowing the student to take personal responsibility for dealing with minor problems, and by being there to provide reassurance when the student is having major difficulties.

The following quotations from secondary school teachers illustrate the mirroring and idealizing dynamics of the classroom as experienced by the teacher:

"I'm a mirror for them [the students] and they are a mirror for me. If I say something and get... a very negative response from them, then it's very natural for me to mirror that right back and then they would mirror that back. It could be a positive mirror. My satisfaction increases my effectiveness."

That gets them involved, and with their involvement, my involvement increases. When I feel that I've been effective, I've gotten something across to the kids I've done

something for them. I’m more satisfied . . . When I get the looks from the kids in the classroom that they understand, I feel effective. All I need is a look. . . .

It doesn’t happen all that often, but you can tell immediately Their eyes light up they’re asking questions, and they have their heads fixed on you You know it. Feel it And, you can tell that they are enjoying what they’re hearing that’s the most, right there!

You can tell if you have their full attention, if you’ve got the eyes of all the kids and they are listening and taking notes. I think that shows me that I’m being effective.

Conceptualizing teaching as a higher transformation of narcissism draws together rather neatly what otherwise appear to be disparate and unrelated characteristics of teaching. Specifically, the following salient characteristics of the teaching act and role seem to constitute a narcissistic configuration: (1) a focus on and explicit idealization of youth, (2) inordinate attention given to the effect of one’s behavior on others, (3) isolation, (4) transitory relationships, (5) exhibitions of omniscience and omnipotence, (6) emphasis on oral communication and aggression, (7) inordinate expectations of control over the behavior of others, and (8) primarily intrinsic rewards.

What this suggests for instructional supervisors is that this particular pattern, which seems ubiquitous in education, may grow directly out of the narcissistic processes involved in the tasks of teaching and learning. Consequently, this pattern is likely to be especially resistant to externally directed change efforts. The intensity of the experience of oneness between teacher and students also means that the supervisor is necessarily an outsider and will have considerable difficulty gaining access to this closed system. Perhaps instead of trying to change this configuration of teaching to make it fit linear rational models of instruction and organization, we ought to accept it more or less as a given and direct more energy toward optimizing its effectiveness in terms of its own internal logic.

THE SUPERVISOR AS SELF-OBJECT FOR THE TEACHER

The psychology of the self and the subject of supervision in psychoanalytic settings converge, interestingly, in the work of Muslin and Val. Consistent with others in the area of psychoanalytic supervision, these authors emphasize the pedagogical aspects over the therapeutic, and discuss the supervisor-supervisee relationship in terms of teaching and learning processes. The influence of self psychology is evident in their definition of learning as an

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"accretion of self-structure and teaching as those activities that promote the accretion of psychic structure."\textsuperscript{30}

Regarding supervision, Muslin and Val observe that an alliance built upon trust and confidence must be established between both partners before information and skills can be transmitted and the professional self of the supervisee developed:

In a learning situation such as that of supervision the learner’s needs for esteem building are heightened as he exposes his work which includes his perceptions and his subjective reactions with the manifest goal of absorbing knowledge and skills.\textsuperscript{31}

The responsibility for achieving this alliance rests with the supervisor, who must be willing and able to enter into the inner world of the person being supervised.

Muslin and Val are cognizant of the differences that exist, however, between adult learners and children. As noted earlier, adults continue throughout life to need others occasionally to serve the mirroring and idealizing functions that maintain self-esteem, and the need is particularly great during periods of change. But the merging that occurs between the supervisor and supervisee is seen as only temporary and not as intense as the merging, for example, between teachers and children.

The supervisor, thus, represents what is called a “mature selfobject,”\textsuperscript{32,33} providing nurturance and leadership only on a temporary basis according to the needs of the supervisee through a capacity for empathic resonance. “Our first task in supervision,” according to Muslin and Val, “is to be able to empathize with our supervisee in the scrutinization of the data, i.e., to see the data as he has seen it. . . .”\textsuperscript{34} Only after the supervisor understands the supervisee’s rationale, cognitions, and feelings with respect to his or her own behavior can the supervisor contribute to their further development. Without such understanding, the supervisor can offer only superficial suggestions.

On the other hand, to be an effective helper and leader, the supervisor has to be accepted by the supervisee. Demonstrating a willingness to understand fully the other’s perspective and promote the experience of safety is the best way to gain acceptance.\textsuperscript{35} Occasionally, however, it may be necessary to deal with prejudicial resistance on the part of the supervisee. Differences involving culture, age, or sex can block the establishment of a proper relationship if the supervisee does not perceive the supervisor as a potential

\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., p 1
\textsuperscript{31}Hyman L. Muslin and Eduardo Val, "Supervision and Self-esteem in Psychiatric Teaching," \textit{American Journal of Psychotherapy} 34 (October 1980) 549
\textsuperscript{32}Hyman L. Muslin and Eduardo Val, "Supervision A Teaching-learning Paradigm," paper presented at the Institute for Psychoanalysis Conference on Learning, Chicago, April 24, 1982
\textsuperscript{33}Heinz Kohut, \textit{How Does Analysis Cure?} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984)
\textsuperscript{34}Hyman L. Muslin and Eduardo Val, "Supervision and Self-esteem in Psychiatric Teaching," \textit{American Journal of Psychotherapy} 34 (October 1980) 545
\textsuperscript{35}Hyman L. Muslin and Eduardo Val, "Supervision A Teaching-learning Paradigm," paper presented at the Institute for Psychoanalysis Conference on Learning, Chicago, April 24, 1982
source of nurturance or leadership. This can be corrected only by recognizing and confronting such obstacles when they occur. Otherwise, the supervisor can neither help nor lead.

**PSYCHOANALYSIS AND INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISION**

Because the psychoanalytic literature addressing supervision emphasizes the supervisor's empathy as a necessary prerequisite to the task of developing the supervisee's professional identity, it is difficult to formulate strategies or tactics that would serve this end in every case. The needs of supervisees to a certain degree are always idiosyncratic. However, psychoanalysis can provide insights and generalizations concerning the dynamics of teaching and supervision that may be useful to instructional supervisory practice.

Psychotherapy, teaching, and supervision share two important dimensions that in fact characterize all interpersonal interactions—namely, the transmission of information or skills, and a contribution to the development of a sense of self. In any of these interactions, one is likely not only to gain some bit of objective learning, but, largely as a result of the manner in which one is treated (or treats the other person), to come away as well with some estimation of self worth. Instructional supervisors should keep both of these dimensions in mind when working with teachers.

The supervisor's initial step in establishing an appropriate supervisory relationship for the purpose of helping a teacher develop a professional identity is a sincere attempt to understand as fully as possible the teacher's point of view. While this starting point may seem unconscionably equivocal to those interested only in enforcing prescribed technique and organizational policy, it is entirely consistent with the recommendations of Goldhammer and Cogan, who first outlined the stages of clinical supervision.

Novice teachers appear to follow a fairly typical pattern in their professional development. They often start out with unrealistic, idealized images of students, and with equally unrealistic and grandiose conceptions of their own capacities and capabilities. The first year or two can be a psychologically harrowing time as the teacher desperately acquires new information and skills, and engages in the equally important task of building a professional identity. This psychological and social transition to professional status involves many of the elements of self formation.

The instructional supervisor would be wise to understand that beginning teachers may behave overtly as if they neither need nor want help, while in fact they may be struggling to survive. Supervisors should not be put off by

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such initial resistance to their efforts, but should continue to make themselves available in order to provide help in the form of information, materials, suggestions, and support when needed.

It seems important at all times for the supervisor to strike a balance between a nondirective and a directive approach, but especially when working with new teachers. If the supervisor is overly nondirective, the novice obviously cannot benefit from the experience and insights of a more seasoned colleague. New teachers may face difficulties when grappling with a problem in a rational way if it is not stated initially in a straightforward manner. Being overly directive, however, may encourage dependency on the part of the new teacher toward the supervisor. Playing an omniscient and omnipotent role may be narcissistically gratifying to the supervisor, but it does little for the novice teacher’s development of professional autonomy, self-assurance, and personal style.

It also is useful to recognize that the two dimensions of interpersonal interaction themselves interact. The patient’s, the student’s, and the supervisee’s needs for esteem increase whenever their behaviors, perceptions, assumptions, and reactions are exposed to critical examination. Thus, even the veteran teacher will need a certain amount of self-affirmation when his or her technical expertise is exposed to an outside observer for analysis. This need is likely to be greater, in fact, the more fully self-invested the individual is in the teacher role. The supervisor may have to perform the function of mirroring a positive image or representing an idealized figure, therefore, to even the best and most experienced teachers during times of change, because the objectively simple acquisition of new knowledge and skills also may involve some degree of redefinition of the teacher’s professional self.

The supervisor has the responsibility of establishing both the appropriate content and tone of the supervisory relationship. Being consciously aware of one’s own feelings and goals is essential. After striving to understand the data as the teacher perceives it, the supervisor should be willing to confront the teacher when technical or organizational demands require it, or if a teacher’s prejudicial attitude interferes with the establishment of an appropriate relationship.

Once an empathic understanding has been established, the supervisor’s capacity to nurture, give direction, and provide ideas, according to the needs of the supervisee, determines success. Thereafter, confrontation is considered the “optimal stance” for securing behavior considered appropriate from an institutional and technical standpoint. As noted earlier, a tactful confrontation that avoids judgment and asking for justification is most beneficial. Again, however, the key is to understand and appreciate the supervisee’s perception of the data. Only then can the supervisor accurately “perceive when less or more direction or silence is needed.”

In summary, recent interest among psychoanalysts in the process of self-formation and its relationship to teaching and supervision can help us better understand the personal and interpersonal dynamics involved in these activities. Successful teaching requires more than simply correct application of technique. Like other professions, teaching also demands a fairly high degree of self investment. Instructional supervisors need to be sensitive, therefore, to the teacher's sources of satisfaction and personal style. Supervision should reinforce not undermine a teacher's self-esteem and should actively encourage teachers to express and develop their own creativity, empathy, humor, and wisdom in the classroom. Implementations of technical and organizational "innovations" are unlikely to succeed if the internal coherence and integrity of the teaching act are violated, and the professional self of the teacher is threatened.

On the other hand, work in the area of psychoanalytic supervision also suggests a more directive role for the supervisor in recommending specific techniques, provided that the supervisor fully understands the supervisee's beliefs and intentions. While remembering that teachers are adult professionals, we may want to consider seriously the advantages of thinking about supervision as a type of teaching rather than as administration or therapy. The metaphor of supervision as teaching, guided by self psychology, highlights growth and development instead of control or remediation.

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Data reported from Goodlad's *A Study of Schooling*, focusing on findings related to senior high schools and organized around the topics of being a teacher, student perceptions, classrooms (activities, materials, interactions), and recommended policy changes.

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Data reported from Goodlad's *A Study of Schooling*, focusing on findings related to junior high schools and organized around the topics of integration, exploration, guidance, differentiation, socialization, articulation, change, and improvement.