

❖ ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To the good people of Wisconsin who, for over half a century, paid me for doing what I would choose to do even if I did not have to do it for a living—teaching, researching, and writing.

Over the sixty-five years that I have practiced, taught, and engaged in social work research, I have learned very much from clients, students, and academic and practitioner colleagues. I owe them all a deep debt of gratitude for what they taught me.

And above all, to Sylvia for a lifetime of help, support, comfort, laughter, friendship, and love. To Goldie and Raphael, perennial sources of interest, excitement, pride, warmth, and affection. And, in loving memory of my parents, Phillip and Celia.

—A.K.

To Harriet, my wife, my best friend, and the love of my life. To Julie, Geoff, Nick, and Sam, my treasured and talented children. And in memory of my parents, Orlo and Maxine.

To my supervisors—Bob Dailey, Rea Stoll, Bob Dailey, Sandra Shaw—thank you for modeling good social work supervision. To those who trained me—Arthur Katz, David Hardcastle, Arno Knapper, Goody Garfield, John Poertner, Charlie Rapp, and Ann Weick, thank you for lessons you may not know that you taught. To Cynthia Bisman, who supervised my first exploration of the supervision literature. To my social work colleagues—Joe Brunson, Milt Klein, Robert Payne, and Charlie Pohl. To my friends—Jack Fitzpatrick, Paul Lehnert, Lorna Jorgensen, and Rob Turrisi—with thanks for your patience. To my intrepid graduate research assistants—Catherine Anderson, Ricki Franklin, Lori Henderson, Ashlee Peila, Deborah Proffitt, Marla Van Skiver—thanks for your eagle eyes and all your hard work.

And to the good people of Idaho as well—buckaroos and loggers, entrepreneurs and tycoons, farmers and ranchers, migrant field hands and single parents working three jobs—thank you for supporting social work education in this, perhaps the nation’s most conservative state.

Special thanks for help from Dwight Hymans (Director of Board Services, Association of Social Work Boards), Lucinda Branaman Klapthor (Product Manager, NASW Assurance

Services), and Tracy Whitaker (Director, NASW Center for Workforce Studies).

Finally, very special thanks indeed to Barbara Glackin (Associate Dean of Albertsons Library), Melissa Lavitt (Dean, College of Social Sciences and Public Affairs), and Roy “Butch” Rodenhiser (Director, School of Social Work) of Boise State University for extraordinary resources and unflagging support.

—D.H.

SUPERVISION IN

SOCIAL WORK



CHAPTER 1

History, Definition, and Significance

Historical Development

There are few and scattered references to social work supervision before 1920. Many of the references listed under *supervision* in the index of the *Proceedings of Conferences on Charities and Correction* or in older social work journals refer, in fact, to quite a different process from the supervision of the past hundred years. Such references are usually concerned with the administrative supervision of agencies by some licensing authority or governmental board to which the agencies were accountable for public funds spent and for their service to the client. In this case, supervision referred to the control and coordinating function of a state board of supervisors, a state board of charities, or a state board of control. Originally, the term *supervision* applied to the inspection and review of programs and institutions rather than to supervision of individual workers within the program.

The first social work text that used the word *supervision* in the title—*Supervision and Education in Charity* by Jeffrey R. Brackett (1904)—was concerned with the supervision of welfare agencies and institutions by public boards and commissions. Sidney Eisenberg, who wrote a short history of supervision in social work, notes that Mary Richmond, “one of the most original contributors to the development of social work, made no mention of supervision in her published works” (Eisenberg 1956:1).

Although the term *supervision* originally applied to the inspection and review of programs and institutions rather than to supervision of individual workers within the program,

over time supervision became infused with additional duties. In addition to the efficient and effective administration of agency services, the education and support of the social worker fashioned the three-legged stool of modern social work supervision. In the service of administering agency services and helping the case, social work supervision meant helping a social worker develop practice knowledge and skills and providing emotional support to the person in the social work role.

Starting with the publication of the journal *The Family* (subsequently *Social Casework*, and now *Families in Society*) by the Family Welfare Association of America in the 1920s, there have been increasingly frequent references to supervision as we know it today—that is, supervision of the individual social worker. Mary Burns (1958) commented that although components of the supervisory process were described in the literature as early as 1880 and 1890, the entity with which we are concerned in this book was not clearly recognized an explicitly identified until much later. It “was not included in the index of *Family* until 1925 and not until after 1930 in the *Proceedings of the National Conference on Social Work*” (Burns 1956:8).

Supervision as we know it today had its origins in the Charity Organization Society movement in the nineteenth century. Concern about the possible consequences of indiscriminate almsgiving led to the organization of charities on a rational basis. Starting in Buffalo, New York, in 1878, Charity Organization Societies soon were developed in most of the large cities in the eastern United States. The agencies