Supervision Models in Social Work:
From Nature to Culture

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This study examines the format, purpose, relationship, use of authority, and ideal of social work supervision in the cultural context of Hong Kong. A grounded theory approach was used to explore the experiences and views of local supervisors and supervisees, the participants in seven focus groups and forty in-depth interviews, to construct a cultural model within the local context of Hong Kong.

It was found that the format of supervision in Hong Kong is relatively loose. Written agendas and supervisory contracts are seldom used. Both supervisors and supervisees view successful client outcomes as the major purpose of supervision, but supervisors see the process as a rational and systematic tool for safeguarding the standard and quality of service, whereas supervisees hope that supervision will provide emotional support and foster teamwork.

The supervisory relationship is both personal and professional. Tension is reduced by the traditional Chinese cultural values of reciprocity: *qing*, *yuan*, and "face." The use of supervisory authority reflects the political strategy of the British–Hong Kong government — "consensus by consultation and

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consent" — which was used to reduce conflict and gain acceptance. Supervisory practice in Hong Kong is a combination of, and compromise between, the North American concept, the British system, and the Chinese culture. Four major cultural themes were identified, namely time perspective, concept of space, value orientation, and attitudes. Implications for practice, research, and education were also discussed.

The Nature of Social Work Supervision Revisited

Historical Review

Social work supervision began as an administrative practice of charity organizations in the early years of the 19th century. At the beginning of the 20th century, universities set up training programs, and gradually a body of knowledge and a theoretical framework for social work supervision emerged. Unsurprisingly, supervision became an educational process. At the same time, the impact of psychoanalytic theory and its treatment methods led to the casework-oriented format and structure of supervision. When social work evolved into a mature profession, support grew for independent autonomous practice among social workers. However, due to the increasing demand for accountability in the last decade, supervision is now regarded as an administrative necessity; it is a means to ensure quality of service to clients and to satisfy regulating bodies. The development of social work supervision can be perceived as the result of the influence of external funding bodies and the forces of professionalization over the last 125 years (Tsui, 1997a, 2004b, 2005a; Tsui & Ho, 2003).

Theoretical Review

After a review of the theoretical models of social work supervision, five categories of supervision models emerged (see Table 1) (Tsui, 2001, 2005a; Tsui & Ho, 1997, 2003).

Table 1. Models of Social Work Supervision

Name of Model	Sources
1. *Practice Theory as Model:* To adopt therapy theories as models for supervision.	• Bernard & Goodyear, 1992; Liddle & Saba, 1983; Olsen & Stern, 1990; Russell, Crimmings, & Lent, 1984; Storm & Heath, 1985
2. *Structural-Functional Models:* To focus on objectives, functions, and authority structure of supervision.	
a. Supervisory function model	• Erera & Lazar, 1994; Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Tsui, 2005a
b. Integrative model	• Gitterman, 1972; Lowy, 1983
c. Models of authority	• Munson, 1976, 1979b, 1981, 2002; Tsui, 2005a
3. *Agency Models:* To reflect different levels of administrative accountability and professional autonomy within the agency.	
a. Casework model	• Kadushin, 1974, 1992; Ko, 1987
b. Group supervision model	• Brown & Bourne, 1996; Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Sales, 1970; Tsui, 2005a; Watson, 1973
c. Peer supervision model	• Watson, 1973
d. Team service delivery model	• Kadushin & Harkness, 2002
e. Autonomous practice	• Barretta-Herman, 1993; Epstein, 1973; Kadushin, 1974; Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Kutzik, 1977; Rock, 1990; Veeder, 1990; Watson, 1973; Wax, 1979
4. *Interactional Process Model:* To focus on the interaction between the supervisor and the supervisee.	• Gitterman, 1972; Gitterman & Miller, 1977; Hart, 1982; Latting, 1986; Shulman, 1993; Stoltenberg, 1981; Worthington, 1984
5. *Feminist Partnership Model:* To propose an alternative feminist partnership model which assumes that social workers can be self-directing, self-disciplined, and self-regulating.	• Chernesky, 1986; Hipp & Munson, 1995

From the analysis of the above supervision models, the following seven principles of supervision emerged (Tsui, 2001, 2005a):

1. *Interpersonal interaction* — Supervision is an interpersonal transaction between two or more persons. The premise of supervision is that an experienced and competent supervisor helps the supervisee and ensures the quality of service to clients (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Tsui, 2005a).

2. *Agency objectives* — The work of the supervisee is related to the agency objectives through the supervisor (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Shulman, 1995).

3. *Flows of authority, information, and feelings* — In the process of supervision, there are the use of authority (the organizational/administrative function), the exchange of information and ideas (the professional/educational function), and the expression of feelings (the emotional/supportive function) (Munson, 1976, 1979a, 1979b, 1981, 2002; Tsui, 2005a; Tsui, Ho, & Lam, in press).

4. *Professional values* — As part of the indirect practice of social work, supervision reflects the professional values of social work (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Munson, 2002; Shulman, 1993; Tsui, 1997a, 2005a).

5. *Job performance* — The supervisor monitors job performance, conveys professional values, knowledge, and skills, and provides emotional support to the supervisee (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Tsui, 1998, 2005a; Tsui & Ho, 2003).

6. *Evaluation criteria* — In order to reflect both the short- and long-term objectives of supervision, the criteria for evaluating supervisory effectiveness include staff satisfaction with supervision, job accomplishment, and client outcomes (Harkness, 1995; Harkness & Hensley, 1991; Kadushin & Harkness, 2002).

7. *Involving parties* — From a holistic point of view, supervision involves four parties, namely the agency, the supervisor, the supervisee, and the client (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Shulman, 1993; Tsui & Ho, 1997, 2003).

Supervision is recognized as one of the major determinants of the quality of service to clients, the level of professional development of social workers, and the level of job satisfaction of social workers (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Munson, 2002; Shulman, 1993). However, reviews of its history and theoretical models revealed that academic debates still focus on basic issues in supervisory practice (Epstein, 1973; Erera & Lazar, 1994; Harkness & Poertner, 1989; Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Payne, 1994; Rock, 1990; Shulman, 1993; Tsui, 2001; Veeder, 1990). In addition, all the existing supervision models limit the forum of supervisory practice to its organizational context and pay little attention to the effects of cultural context on supervisory practice (Tsui, 2001).

Supervision in Cultural Contexts

Traditionally, supervision has been recognized as a practice embedded in an organizational setting (Holloway & Brager, 1989; Miller, 1987; Munson, 2002). This approach, however, is valid only when supervision is perceived as a process taking place between two employees (i.e., the supervisor and the frontline worker) of a human service organization. When supervision is viewed more comprehensively as an interactional process involving four parties (i.e., the human service organization, the supervisor, the frontline worker, and the client), the organization becomes only one part of the supervisory process (Tsui & Ho, 1997). Obviously, if we perceive supervision as a multi-faceted interactional process, we need to identify the factors that affect all of the four participating parties.

Within this four-party relationship, frontline social workers report the results of their professional intervention to their supervisors.

Supervisors report key information about service delivery to the top management of the agency. The agency must be accountable and responsive to the needs of clients in order to receive the support of the community. Culture deeply influences the problems experienced by clients, the solutions to these problems, the intervention approach taken by the supervisee, the role and style of the supervisor, and the organizational goals and processes of the agency (Tsui & Ho, 1997).

Unfortunately, it is easy to discuss but difficult to define "culture." It is an abstract concept and has different meanings for different people in different contexts (Berry & Laponce, 1994; Ingold, 1994). Although culture is difficult to be defined, it is easy to distinguish and identify. Distinct cultural traits can be identified. Within the context of supervision, culture affects all four parties involved in the supervisory relationship. Supervision is a part of a complex theoretical and professional value system and a service network situated inside a particular culture. Therefore, it can only be understood as part of the cultural context of the participants.

The comprehensive model of social work supervision proposed by Tsui and Ho (1997) provides a holistic view of the context of social work supervision (see Figure 1). In this model, the culture, not the organization, is recognized as the major context. The components of social work supervision are reconceptualized within a wider perspective. In addition, the effectiveness of supervision depends on several factors: the relationships among the individual parties (the agency, the supervisor, the supervisee, and the client); the contract, format, and developmental stages of the supervisory process; the balance among various supervisory functions; and the relationship between the distinctive features of a supervisory method and the culture of the external environment.

Figure 1.   A Comprehensive Model of Social Work Supervision
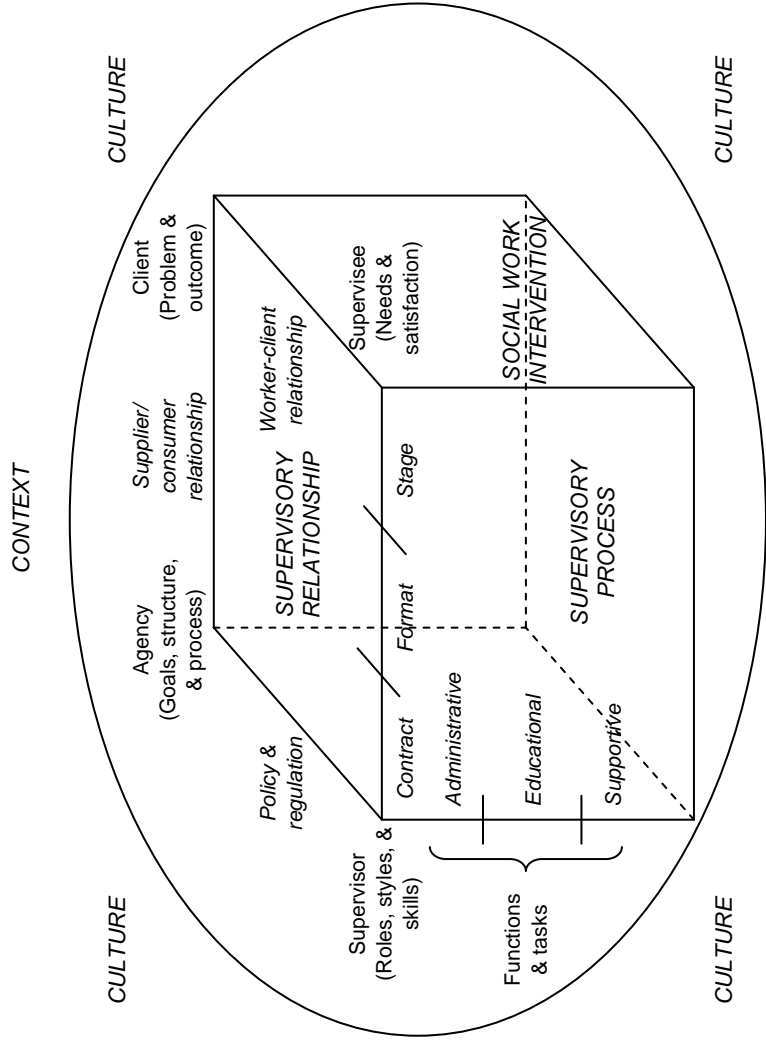
Methods

This study examines social work supervision within the Chinese cultural context. A qualitative research paradigm was chosen because qualitative methods can provide detailed descriptions of phenomena, address questions that have received little attention, and suggest new insights and understandings. In this study, we examined what people do (the behavior of supervisors and supervisees), what they say (the views and wishes expressed by supervisors and supervisees), and the tension between their activities and their real opinion (e.g., the use of supervisory authority). Through focus groups and in-depth individual interviews, the researcher was able to have direct contacts with practitioners in the field. These in-depth encounters with the participants in the study provided an opportunity to explore meanings and motives, and led to a much better understanding of the special and particular language of social work supervision within a specific cultural context. The primary research questions of the study were as follows:

1. What are the distinctive features of supervisory practice in the Chinese culture?
2. How is supervision practiced in the Chinese culture?

The interviewer began by asking supervisors and supervisees to describe their experiences. Starting from the experience of the participants is typical of the "grand tour" approach (Spradley, 1990), aiming to help participants feel that they are "experts" in the context of the discussion. (For the interview guides for supervisors and supervisees, please refer to Appendices 1 and 2.)

This research study is based on a large interview data set related to counseling supervision in Hong Kong. Related findings from this data set have been reported in Tsui (2005b, in press) and Tsui, Ho, and Lam (in press). Whereas these studies were based on the same data source, different aspects of the supervision process were examined.

Sampling

A total of 20 interviews with supervisors and 20 interviews with supervisees were conducted. (For the information about the informants, please refer to Appendices 3 and 4.) A common method of selection — theoretical sampling — was adopted. A category represents a unit of information composed of events, happenings, instances, or alternative patterns that are repetitive and thematically saturated (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The objective is to maximize the categories until no additional data are found to develop their properties. Interviews continue until the theory is expressed in all of its complexity. The researcher uses a constant comparative method to measure the information gathered from the field against the emerging relevant categories (Creswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The sampling began with the selection of a homogeneous group of individuals. The participants were in similar positions and similar situations. In this study, they were supervisors and supervisees in the field of social work in Hong Kong. Colleagues and peers in the social work field were invited to be the first group of participants, and they, in turn, provided names of supervisors and supervisees who were willing to take part. As the data collection proceeded and the categories emerged, the sampling was extended to a more heterogeneous group to test the boundaries of the categories. Social work supervisors and supervisees with different levels of education, a range of working experience, and a variety of service settings were selected.

To be included in the sample, supervisors were required to be responsible for supervising frontline social workers. The supervisees sampled were full-time, paid employees who were trained in social work, held a social work position, and were supervised by a senior social worker. There were three focus-group sessions for supervisors, which

collect ideas for formulating protocols for the following 40 individual in-depth interviews, 20 for supervisors and 20 for supervisees. The supervisors and supervisees interviewed were not dyads (i.e., supervisors with their supervisees in pairs) since interviewing both parties can be a very sensitive matter and involves a degree of constraint (Munson, 1981). After the 40 in-depth interviews, a focus group with local experts in social work supervision was conducted. Six agency directors and social work scholars, all being very well-informed on issues relating to supervisory practice in Hong Kong, were invited to share their views, in order to confirm the findings generated from the interviews and focus groups.

Data Analysis

After the in-depth interviews, the audiotapes were transcribed, and reflections and marginal remarks were added. A "zigzag" process (Creswell, 1998) was used: the participants were interviewed, the data was analyzed, and then further interviews were conducted, followed by further data analysis, and so on. Three methods of qualitative data analysis were adopted: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). For the open coding analysis, transcripts and field notes were examined to develop initial categories of information about supervisory practice in the Chinese culture. Axial coding involves assembling data in new ways in order to interconnect categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). A coding paradigm was used to identify a cultural context that would provide insights into the interpersonal relationships influencing supervisory practice and specific supervisory strategies. Selective coding supplies a narrative to integrate the categories in the axial coding model. In this phase, the core category of cultural characteristics was identified. The relationships between the core category and other relevant categories were also validated and elaborated.

Reliability

Qualitative research emphasizes the credibility and dependability of the findings. The strength of qualitative research lies in its narrative power, which enables an understanding of the undocumented processes that may not be revealed without close contact and detailed knowledge of the people in context. Several measures have been taken to ensure the reliability of the study:

1. *Triangulation* — The aim of this procedure of qualitative inquiry is to examine a single social phenomenon from more than one vantage point. This may involve the use of multiple researchers, multiple information sources, or multiple methods, in order to enhance the inter-subjectivity of the study. Information about supervisory practice in Hong Kong was collected from multiple sources: the supervisors, the supervisees, and the local experts. Two local researchers were invited to be peer researchers who would help conduct the focus-group sessions and peer debriefing. Multiple methods were also used in this study: literature review, focus-group sessions, and in-depth interviews.

2. *Peer debriefing* — In this study, two other scholars who are experts in supervision served as peer researchers. One was an expert with eighteen years of practice experience in clinical supervision, and the other was a student fieldwork director with eighteen years of experience in student fieldwork supervision. Through this process, the researcher discussed the rationale, research design, data collection procedures, and data analysis methods of the study with the two peer examiners.

3. *Members' checking* — Two supervisors and two supervisees were randomly selected to countercheck the accuracy of the transcripts of their own in-depth interviews. This measure aims to enhance the reliability of the interpretation of the informants' contributions. In

addition, the English version of the transcripts was checked by the author's academic peers to ensure an accurate translation from the Chinese version. Parts of the transcripts were selected for translation from English back into Chinese to ensure the accuracy of translation.

4. *Literature review* — After developing the theory or model, the literature of social work supervision published in North America was used for "supplemental validation." In addition, references to the Chinese culture were used for checking the credibility of the findings related to the cultural influence. The purposes of referring to the literature were to validate the accuracy of the findings and to investigate any discrepancies between the findings and the published literature. Theoretical literature and empirical research literature on social work supervision published in the last five decades were reviewed and compared with the findings of the study.

Limitations of the Study

As supervision involves a power relationship between a supervisor and a supervisee in a formal organization, it is a very sensitive topic to study. In Hong Kong, this sensitivity may be increased because the Chinese culture, which emphasizes "face," does not encourage supervisors or supervisees to discuss any negative aspects of supervision that involve both parties. In addition, the top management of some human service organizations may not allow the staff to participate in in-depth interviews conducted by an external researcher on supervision, because such interviews are perceived as violating the privacy of internal agency matters. Finally, the impact of managerialism and changes of the funding system, which introduced a demand for a high level of job performance with reduced resources, also threaten frontline social workers in Hong Kong. Fortunately, only two of the supervisees who were invited to participate refused the invitation due to personal reasons.

Results

The Format of Supervision

Although many social work supervisors in Hong Kong have the title "service supervisor," they do not have any training in social work supervision. Their supervision practice is based on imitating the behavior of their superiors and following organizational policy. The format of social work supervision in Hong Kong is relatively loose with the following characteristics: (1) the supervision sessions are not as frequent as those in North America, and (2) the supervisory process begins with a verbal agreement (no supervisory contracts are used).

The typical format of a supervision session in Hong Kong is individual sessions supplemented by group supervision. The duration of supervision sessions is between one and two hours. However, supervision sessions usually occur only once a month, and sometimes as infrequently as twice a year. Overall, supervision sessions may not be adequate to fulfill both monitoring and educational functions.

In Hong Kong, verbal supervisory contracts are implicit and indirect statements, which help both parties establish a certain degree of consensus in order to minimize conflict in the future. However, according to the data collected in this study, the supervisor and the supervisee in Hong Kong seldom use written or explicit supervisory contracts, and there is only a verbal agreement at the beginning of the supervisory process. In fact, Chinese social workers try to avoid using the term "contract" as the word has legal implications. In the Chinese culture, legal solutions for conflicts are discouraged; conflicts are resolved by means of traditional authority and reconciliation. The use of a formal contract implies that there is lack of mutual trust (Ko & Ng, 1993). The verbal agreement usually covers the format, frequency, and nature of the discussions for the entire course of the supervision sessions.

It seldom identifies the criteria for evaluating staff performance, and it does not provide guidance on preparations for the supervision sessions since no agendas are provided. However, many supervisors take written notes for their records, which are later used as one of the major sources of information for evaluating staff performance. The whole arrangement allows supervisors to have the freedom to make decisions according to their personal preferences.

The Purpose of Supervision

The participants in the study agreed that the primary goal of supervision is to ensure that the quantity and quality of service leads to a successful client outcome as a result of the social work intervention. As well, supervision is considered a means to enhance staff development. It helps to equip the supervisee with the professional knowledge and skills necessary to do the job effectively. The participants also felt that supervision provides a time and place for the supervisor to show appreciation and give emotional support to the supervisee. Finally, supervision gives social workers the opportunity to communicate, coordinate, and cooperate with one another as a team.

A distinct feature of supervision in Hong Kong is that both the supervisor and the supervisee consider emotional support and teamwork important aspects of supervision. According to the findings, discussion in supervision sessions sometimes turns to personal matters; however, in North America, professional/personal boundary is more strictly maintained. In addition, in Hong Kong, supervision is seen as a way of promoting the consensus between the supervisor and the supervisees, and cooperation among team members are achieved by supervision.

The perception of social work supervision in Hong Kong is distinguished by three features. First, there is a consensus between the supervisor and the supervisee about the purpose of supervision. This is

not surprising: the Chinese culture emphasizes harmony and compromise, which is achieved by the use of authority. Social groups function smoothly when there is an authoritarian interaction pattern between the superior and the subordinate (Bond & Hwang, 1986; Fei, 1948; Ko & Ng, 1993). Second, discussion of personal matters occupies a significant portion of supervision sessions. This is consistent with the traditional Chinese view that a superior must show both authority and benevolence because an effective leader is required to make clear decisions and take care of subordinates (Bond, 1996; Bond & Hwang, 1986; Leung & Nann, 1995; Wu, 1986; Zhong, 1989). Third, supervision is used to achieve not only individual goals but also collective ones such as team building. This reveals the tendency of Chinese people to place the collective interest before individual interests. Individual achievement is assessed and recognized in terms of its contribution to the collectivity. A member's excellent performance is viewed as his or her contribution to the group (Fei, 1948; Hui & Tan, 1996; King, 1990a, 1990b, 1994).
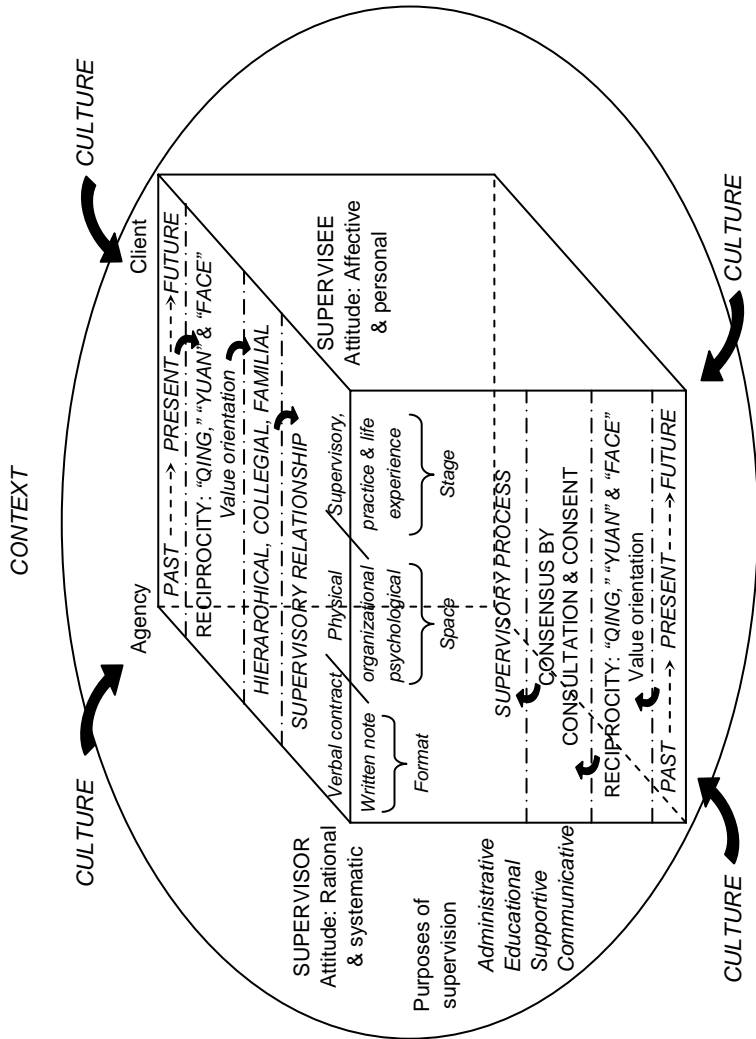
Cultural Influence on Social Work Supervision in Hong Kong

The influence of culture on supervision is evident in four areas: the perspectives of supervisors and supervisees on time; the view of space, which includes not only physical space but also organizational and psychological distance; the value orientation of supervisors and supervisees; and the differing attitudes of supervisors and supervisees (see Figure 2).

The Time Perspective

The time perspective includes time management, time orientation, and stages of development. The following discussion will focus on the time management of supervision sessions, the time orientation of supervisors and supervisees, and the stages of development of the supervisory process, the supervisor, and the supervisee.

Figure 2.   A Cultural Model of Social Work Supervision in Hong Kong

CONTEXT

CULTURE

CULTURE

CULTURE

CULTURE

Client

PAST ‑ ‑ ‑> PRESENT ‑ ‑ ‑ ‑>FUTURE

RECIPROCITY: "QING," "YUAN" & "FACE"
Value orientation

HIERARCHICAL, COLLEGIAL, FAMILIAL
SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIP

Agency

SUPERVISEE
Attitude: Affective
& personal

Supervisory,
practice & life
experience

Stage

Physical,
organizational,
psychological

Space

Verbal contract

Written note

Format

SUPERVISORY PROCESS

CONSENSUS BY
CONSULTATION & CONSENT

RECIPROCITY: "QING," "YUAN" & "FACE"
Value orientation

PAST ‑ ‑ ‑ ‑> PRESENT ‑ ‑ ‑ ‑>FUTURE

SUPERVISOR
Attitude: Rational
& systematic

Purposes of
supervision

Administrative
Educational
Supportive
Communicative

The irregular schedule of supervision sessions and infrequent contact between the supervisor and the supervisee in Hong Kong are particularly striking by North American standards. The loose structure arises from the perception of supervision as an informal opportunity for discussion, rather than a professional mechanism for monitoring service quality and enhancing professional development. The agreement between the supervisor and the supervisee is consensual instead of contractual. No formal supervisory contract is used, nor is there any agenda for formal and professional discussion. The lack of a clearly defined structure reflects the interplay of personal and professional interactions between the supervisor and the supervisee, which can be directly attributed to the cultural context. As a result of this approach to time management, supervision sessions in Hong Kong may be too infrequent to fulfill the functions of monitoring service outcomes and enhancing the professional development of social workers. Supervisors find that they cannot depend on supervision sessions to monitor the progress of service programs and must rely on additional informal meetings with staff. Frontline staff think that opportunities for professional development are neglected and that supervision sessions are too administratively oriented.

More importantly, supervisors and supervisees in Hong Kong have different time orientations. Supervisors focus on future duties, such as ensuring the quality of service in order to safeguard future funding, or educating staff members for further professional growth and development. Supervisees, on the other hand, want emotional support here and now. They are also anxious to resolve staff conflicts, and establish staff consensus and communication. Supervisors are more future-oriented than their supervisees as a result. Here again, we see the professional/personal nature of the supervisory relationship in Hong Kong. In this case, supervisors are more professionally oriented and are

preoccupied with future concerns, whereas supervisees are more personally oriented and are anchored in the present situation.

The study also revealed that the use of supervisory authority and the expectations brought to the supervisory relationship are greatly affected by the past experiences of the supervisor and the supervisee. In this respect, the time orientations of the supervisor and the supervisee are quite similar: both are strongly influenced by the past. The past experiences of supervisees include fieldwork in student placements and their later employment, and these experiences have a considerable impact on their attitude and behavior toward their supervisors. For the most part, supervisees hope that their supervisors will provide intensive professional supervision that is similar in format, structure, and style to their student fieldwork supervision. However, supervisors may not want to do so for two reasons. First, there are so many administrative duties that they cannot devote themselves to such a time-consuming task. Second, they may lack expertise in direct practice, which needs to provide specific action guidelines.

The authority of supervisors is closely related to their background and experience. There are three types of experience: supervisory experience, practice experience, and life experience. In Hong Kong, experience and seniority are highly respected. The more supervisory experience supervisors acquire, the stronger their authority. Such "status in the field" is greatly valued by supervisors and supervisees. Extensive practice experience gives supervisors confidence, especially when they provide specific advice to their supervisees related to direct practice. Finally, a supervisor's life experiences, such as marriage, parenting, sickness, and separation, are viewed as assets, which increase the supervisor's understanding of staff members as human beings and strengthen the staff's acceptance of the supervisor's seniority.

For supervisees, the experience of fieldwork supervision during their professional training affects their expectations of their supervisors. They hope that the staff supervisor will play the teacher's role. The practice experience of supervisees also affects their expectations of their supervisors. The accumulation of life experiences strengthens supervisees' confidence and makes them more reluctant to follow the instructions and advice of their supervisors. Once again, the personal and professional factors both play a part in the handling of past experiences.

From a time perspective, the process of supervision in social work in Hong Kong can be divided into stages, each with a different emphasis. This division makes it easier for supervisors to focus their efforts on improving professional competence, enhancing staff morale, or providing emotional support to their supervisees as required. For example, at the beginning of the supervisory process, the focus of supervision is mainly on orientation, job induction, and fine-tuning of the newly established supervisory relationship. At this stage, supervision sessions are held more frequently than at later stages.

In Hong Kong, supervisors themselves undergo several stages of development. As novice supervisors, they must make the transition from direct practitioner to supervisor. At this stage, supervisors are required to adjust to a new role set. When supervisors take managerial duties, they become human service managers. When they become at ease in this role, and achieve a balance between managerial and professional work, they reach the stage of mature supervisors. When, finally, supervisors are free to devote their attention to the personal needs and emotions of the supervisees, they become mentors.

As a frontline social worker, the supervisee also has various stages of development. In the first stage, as a new worker, the supervisee

undergoes orientation and job induction. The supervisee experiences a great deal of anxiety while establishing work patterns and mastering the basic level of required practice skills. At this point, the supervisor offers emotional support and provides the necessary information for day-to-day service. After completing the orientation and job induction stage, the supervisee becomes an autonomous social worker. This second stage marks the transition from dependence to independence. At the third stage, the supervisee becomes a member of the service team — a transition from independence to interdependence. At the fourth stage, the supervisee, with the supervisor's help, develops an area of specialization. Through the course of professional development, the job satisfaction and morale of the supervisee should increase. Finally, the supervisor prepares the supervisee for future development. The supervisor considers not only professional and managerial factors but also personal aspirations of the supervisee. If the supervisor and the supervisee have a clear understanding of each other's developmental stages, as well as the developmental stages of the supervisory process, their relationship will be more likely to progress smoothly.

The developmental stages of the supervisor, the supervisee, and the supervisory process affect the format and structure of supervision, the purposes of supervision, the supervisory relationship, and the use of supervisory authority. The combination of the stages of the three variables (the supervisor, the supervisee, and the process) makes the interaction of the supervisory practice very dynamic and complex. In Hong Kong, supervisors feel more comfortable when working with supervisees with less, but similar, working experience. Understanding each other's background (the nature of their experiences and their attitude toward their experiences) and time orientation (past-, present-, or future-oriented) increases the efficacy of supervision.

According to the findings, time management, time orientation, and stages of development have a significant influence on the format,

purposes, relationship, and use of authority in supervision. The major implication for practice is that it is necessary for both the supervisor and the supervisee to make full use of supervision sessions, and to understand each other's background, time orientation, and stage of development, in order to achieve an effective supervisory process.

The Concept of Space

Space, in the context of supervisory process, has three dimensions: physical, organizational, and psychosocial. Regarding the physical dimension, the setting of the supervision session has a significant impact on the atmosphere of the discussion. An official setting will heighten both the supervisor's and the supervisee's awareness of the differences between them in the power hierarchy of the organization. Thus, a formal venue for supervision will make the supervision session seem more like an administrative meeting. This may encourage the supervisor to review progress of work and demand accountability, but it may also discourage the expression of personal feelings for both parties and suppress concerns for each other as peers and friends. In contrast, the use of an informal setting for supervision sessions may enhance the ability to share feelings and exchange ideas, but it may not be appropriate for providing progress reports and giving instructions. When the supervision session is held in the supervisor's office, supervisees are reminded that they are subordinates. In general, supervisors are relatively unaware of the impact of the physical arrangements; they feel very natural to conduct supervision sessions within their own physical boundaries. However, the choice of setting may not reflect the orientation of the supervisor or the supervisee, but the limitations of the agency. Physical space in social service units in Hong Kong is extremely restricted. The supervisor and the supervisee must work together in close physical proximity. This may further reduce the privacy and sense of autonomy of frontline social workers.

Regarding organizational space, both supervisors and supervisees feel that they are constrained by the restrictions imposed by agency policies and procedures, and by the external demands of the funding sources. Under these circumstances, the organizational space — the discretionary power of the supervisor and professional autonomy of the supervisee — is painfully limited. Since the introduction of a new funding system for agencies in the last five years, the demands of external funding sources have become urgent, strict, and impersonal; there is no room for supervisors, as middle management, to use the "consensus by consultation and consent" approach. Frontline social workers who were accustomed to the stable and harmonious working environment of the old funding system and a "personal and professional" supervisory relationship have found it difficult to adjust to the rapidly changing and impersonal demands of their supervisors.

Between the supervisor and the supervisee, the usual decision-making mode is "consensus," which reflects the well-documented practice that the British adopted during their governance in Hong Kong. After supervisors decide on their own response to an issue, they have a discussion with their staff, who have a hidden agenda of their own. During this consultation process, the supervisor learns more about the staff's ideas, views, feelings, and anxieties regarding the issue. If there is a consensus, the collective decision is easily reached. When supervisors disagree with the views of the supervisees, they will implicitly communicate their views to the staff. Supervisees seldom oppose their supervisors in front of others. As a result, the consensus is achieved by the silence of the staff, which is an acknowledgment of the constraints placed on them by the supervisor. First-line supervisors are both "managerial" and "marginal." They are the most senior frontline workers but the most junior administrators. Hence, supervisors feel that they are caught between the demands of the top management and those

of their staff, and that they have little space and autonomy in their supervisory practice.

In Hong Kong, the major funding source for social welfare organizations is the Social Welfare Department of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. The introduction of a new funding system has imposed constraints on the activities of subsidized non-government organizations. Their top management, including the board and the executive, sets stricter organizational policies and regulations to ensure the quantity and quality of service. The Social Workers Registration Board also exercises control over the behavior of social workers in their professional practice. These demands limit the autonomy of both supervisors and supervisees. These changes are recent and reflect the current organizational culture and professional culture of Hong Kong.

Psychosocial space refers to the personal distance between the supervisor and the supervisee. Supervisors and supervisees develop various kinds of personal relationships, sometimes even friendships or family-type relationships; however, both parties never forget the power imbalance in their situations. Almost all of them view the official relationship as the dominant one. As influenced by Western professional training, supervisors clearly distinguish official matters from personal matters. Only those personal matters affecting job performance are discussed in supervision sessions; other personal matters are discussed after office hours or in informal chats. Supervisors adopt a personal role when discussing such matters.

The participants in the study maintained that the life experiences, work experiences, gender, and personality of the supervisor and the supervisee all significantly influence the supervisory relationship. Life experiences and work experiences are assets for supervisors, but

supervisors find those frontline workers with complex life and work experiences more difficult to supervise due to the respect given to seniority in the Chinese culture. Gender is also a complicated issue. Among the supervisees interviewed, male supervisees unconditionally preferred male supervisors; they felt uneasy when supervised by females. Female supervisors prefer female supervisees. In Hong Kong, female supervisors feel stronger need than their male colleagues to demonstrate their competence, and, as a result, they are more demanding. Finally, the more similarities between supervisors and supervisees in terms of personalities, the better their relationship. This is why supervisors find that the staff that they have recruited are easier to supervise.

Value Orientation

Values are the norms and beliefs that guide the supervisor and the supervisee, and that are reflected in the purposes and functions of social work supervision. The behavior of the supervisor and the supervisee is affected by the values of the funding sources, the agency policies and regulations, the organizational culture, and the societal culture. To satisfy the requirements of the funding sources, the demands on the service agency must be met; otherwise, funding will be cut in the near future. In Hong Kong, funding sources now focus on cost-effectiveness, financial accountability, and value-for-money. This demand has encouraged the top management of human service organizations to develop a new set of values, which are reflected in agency policies and regulations. Supervisors are the gatekeepers in frontline service settings; they ensure that social workers abide by agency policies and follow the regulations.

Organizational culture refers to the social environment and working atmosphere of an organization. It is the totality of the norms, symbols, systems, and behavior of the staff members over time. It varies according to the objectives, size, complexity, and products of the

organization. The characteristics of organizational culture are developed through interaction among staff members over a long period of time. Participants in the study observed that organizational culture has a great impact on the supervisory relationship and the use of supervisory authority. Supervisors learn from their superiors, and the frontline staff internalize the customs of the agency from more experienced colleagues. In fact, each member of the staff, regardless of rank, undergoes a process of informal socialization.

In terms of societal culture, although supervisors and supervisees are at different levels of advancement and have different social circles, both are deeply influenced by the cultural context. For example, the importance of reciprocity in interpersonal relationships in the Chinese culture has a profound effect on the beliefs and behavior of supervisors and supervisees in Hong Kong. The supervisory relationship is characterized by *qing* (a primary and intense relationship)*, yuan* (a predetermined relationship), and "face," which greatly affect the supervisory relationship. Reciprocity releases tension and sustains the supervisor-supervisee relationship in a harmonious manner. The use of supervisory authority has also been significantly influenced by the political culture of Hong Kong society. Consensus is achieved by consultation, co-optation, and consent, which ensures the legitimacy, stability, harmony, and continuity of the power structure. This culturally endorsed strategy adopted by supervisors reinforces the status quo of the professional relationship and enables supervisors to direct the frontline staff while maintaining good feeling.

Attitudes

Attitudes refer to the ways in which the supervisor and the supervisee perceive their roles and deal with each other. The findings revealed that differences in terms of position and power between the supervisor and the supervisee are recognized by the supervisors and

accepted by the supervisees. For supervisors, supervision process, being a professional practice, is rational and systematic. They see the supervisor-supervisee relationship as a one-to-many relationship. The supervisor deals with a group of staff; a supervisee is only "one of the colleagues who needs my monitoring and guidance." The supervisor is very careful to be competent and fair. From the perspective of a supervisee who is also a frontline social worker, however, the supervisor-supervisee relationship is a one-to-one relationship, similar to other personal relationships. "The supervisor" is the only person who can determine their job prospects and their well-being on the job. The supervisory process is not only professional but also personal. This great discrepancy between the supervisor's and the supervisee's attitudes toward their roles can be the cause of many conflicts, misunderstandings, and disappointments. It also accounts for their different foci: the supervisor focuses on "what the staff should be," whereas supervisees are concerned about "what the staff are." If supervisors listened with more patience and focused on the emotional needs of supervisees rather than on the accomplishment of tasks, the story of supervision in Hong Kong might be different.

The above-mentioned discrepancy in attitudes is reflected in the emphases placed on different supervisory functions. Supervisors and supervisees agree that there are four major functions of supervision (i.e., administrative, educational, supportive, and communicative), but with few exceptions, supervisors pay more attention to the administrative and educational functions. Exceptional supervisors pay a great deal of attention to the needs of their supervisees and assess their situation in relation to their developmental stage. Supervisees need emotional support as well as professional guidance. Most of them understand the constraints of their supervisor and accept the supervisor's administrative authority very well.

Obviously, there are great differences between the supervisor and the supervisee in terms of self-image, status, and roles. In the cultural context of Hong Kong, supervisors are highly conscious of their image, whereas supervisees only perceive themselves as members of the staff. Both parties recognize the power difference. Supervisees are well aware of their inferiority in the power structure and they accept it as a fact of life. This may explain the fact that collegial relationships are not fostered in the supervisory context in Hong Kong. Supervisors are usually strongly motivated to be the leader, and their adoption of this role is more tolerable for their supervisees than it is for supervisees in North America. Although there is tension between the supervisor and the supervisee, the conflict is reduced to a minimum because supervisors take the role of a leader and supervisees accept their position as followers. This compatibility ensures stability and minimizes conflicts.

Discussion

Implications for Supervisory Practice

The study revealed that supervision in social work is not only a professional practice but also a personal practice embedded in cultural and organizational contexts. The form of supervisory practice in Hong Kong is a combination of, and compromise between, the North American concept of supervision and the British system of government within the Chinese cultural context. It is astonishing that these contradictory components coexist without conflicts. It suggests that social workers do not pursue ideas in a linear manner, but tend to be intuitive, relying on unconscious processes (Schön, 1987). In their daily practice, social workers go through the loop of retrieval of information, reflection, and professional response again and again (Bogo & Vadya, 1998). In this loop, social workers handle the competing values at different layers of thought. Hence, these values are not necessarily in

conflict with each other. The situation seems to resemble a clever child handling conflicting demands from parents, teachers, and peers.

Hence, both the format and physical setting of supervision sessions should reflect not only the goals of supervision but also the culture of the society and the organization. An incompatibility between the format and goals will affect the effectiveness of supervisory practice. This is not only the case in Hong Kong, but also the case in other societies.

As the study indicates, life experience, practice experience, and supervisory experience are very important determinants of the behavior of both the supervisor and the supervisee. The top management should endeavor to match supervisors and supervisees with complementary backgrounds and experiences. A satisfactory match of supervisors and supervisees based on values, background, personalities, and gender is highly recommended. Of course, this may be difficult to achieve as there are many constraints on the arrangement of personnel. Still, an understanding of each other's backgrounds, including professional qualifications, work experience, and supervisory experience, will enhance communication between the supervisor and the supervisee and encourage a harmonious working relationship. Building mutual understanding and formulating contracts are important issues that should be addressed by the supervisor and the supervisee. A clear, mutually agreed-upon contract, whether verbal or written, would help the supervisor and the supervisee to clarify their respective expectations. It would eliminate unnecessary conflicts and, to a certain extent, protect the autonomy of the supervisee in direct practice. For the supervisor, the support of the frontline staff and the sanction of the top management are equally important. Without this support, supervisors become "sandwiched" between the two levels of the hierarchy, thus facing demands from both the top and the bottom, and feeling isolated.

For both the supervisor and the supervisee, the source of emotional support should come not only from each other in the vertical power hierarchy but also from colleagues and clients. Peer support can be encouraged by informal sharing sessions among supervisors of the same grade and among supervisees. There should also be opportunities for recognition of the contribution of frontline social workers by clients.

The findings in this study reveal that supervisors and supervisees have a common mission: to provide quality service to clients in order to solve their problems. However, both parties must use this common base to create a shared vision. Without the shared vision, meaningful supervision cannot be achieved. The study revealed that, in fact, supervisors and supervisees use different words and live in different social worlds even though they work closely in the same organizational context. In order to fully realize the capacity of supervision to develop the skills of social workers and thus to improve the quality of service, the supervisor and the supervisee must understand each other's thoughts and feelings. This study is a starting point for the process to achieve this end.

In fact, social workers in Hong Kong are at a crossroads. In the last five decades, almost all social workers in Hong Kong have worked for the government or in government-subsidized human service organizations. They have little sense of identity of an individual professional due to the absence of a professional registration system and the scarcity of private practice. They view themselves as employees of specific human service organization instead of individual members of the social work profession. The establishment of professional self-image is still in its early stages. This may explain why social workers in Hong Kong tend to rely on their employers to provide both educational and emotional support to enhance their own professional growth.

If frontline social workers want to enjoy professional autonomy, they have to pursue their own professional development in a self-directed manner. Like other professionals (e.g., medical doctors, lawyers, and engineers), social workers must recognize the fact that they have to pay for the benefits of professional development. In this regard, professional associations and peer networking will play critical roles.

Without resolving the issue of positioning professional identity, the supervisor and the supervisee will continue to be dissatisfied with each other because, in fact, they both want contradictory things. Supervisors want supervisees to show professional competence, but they continue to treat them as employees. Supervisees demand professional autonomy, but are only willing to make the effort of an employee. These discrepancies inevitably create tension and conflict between the supervisor and the supervisee because they feel disappointed with each other.

Supervisees in the study expressed the desire that supervision for staff social workers should resemble student fieldwork supervision. We should not treat this desire as a sign of regression in the face of difficulties in the supervisory process. In fact, student fieldwork supervision is superior to staff supervision in many ways. There are many areas in which staff supervisors can learn from student fieldwork supervisors, including the preparation for supervision sessions, teaching and learning strategies, assessment of training needs, supportive attitudes, and the establishment of learning contract. Obviously, student fieldwork supervision is more specific, systematic, and well-planned than staff supervision. More importantly, students in fieldwork supervision are encouraged to put their ideas into practice and tell the supervisor their problems. The sense of security established during fieldwork ensures that students will not be embarrassed in the process of pursuing professional development.

Of course, we should not ignore the basic differences between these two kinds of supervision in social work, especially in terms of purpose and power structure. In the case of supervision for staff social workers, the supervisees are paid staff who have the obligation to get the job done effectively and efficiently. The supervisor is in a higher position in the hierarchy and must monitor their job performance in order to ensure that the quality of service can meet the expectations of clients, funding sources, and human service organizations (Kadushin, 1992; Munson, 2002). In the eyes of the top management of human service organizations, professional growth and emotional support are just byproducts of the supervisory process. However, in the case of student supervision, students pay a tuition fee to the university in order to receive learning opportunities. The "supervisor-supervisee" relationship is, in fact, a teacher-student relationship. This is why student fieldwork supervision is always accessible, warm, and supportive (Bogo & Vayda, 1998; Kadushin, 1981, 1992). Students are expected to make mistakes and receive suggestions for improvement. These discrepancies may account for the fact that student supervision can be idealistic but supervision for staff social workers is always realistic.

Implications for Further Research

Research on social work supervision is very difficult to conduct since it involves many sensitive issues relating to the power hierarchy and to the personal relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee. In addition, a study that considers both the supervisor and the supervisee requires a great deal of research. Research on supervision is administratively complicated and emotionally complex. Thus, it is no surprise that only few empirical research studies have been undertaken in the last five decades (Tsui, 1997b, 2004).

Since supervision is a culturally specific and contextually embedded practice, it is worthwhile for researchers to conduct research studies in

specific societies, especially multi-ethnic societies such as Canada and the United States. To create models of social work supervision for different cultures will contribute to theory building. A comparison of supervision models from different cultural contexts will improve the supervisory practice in multi-ethnic societies where it is very common for supervisors and supervisees to belong to different ethnic groups. Research on cross-cultural supervision will refine the existing supervisory practice and facilitate the supervisory process. This effort will help both supervisors and supervisees understand their supervisory practice and improve their delivery of direct service. Eventually, clients will benefit.

If the consent of the supervisor, the supervisee, and the organization is forthcoming, a study of the supervisory dyad would be an extremely interesting and useful source of information on supervisory practice at the micro-practice level. Both the supervisor and the supervisee would receive useful feedback, but of course, the power disparity will remain a problem if the three parties are unable to adopt a very open attitude.

More than 15 years ago, Harkness and Poertner (1989) reviewed the state of research on social work supervision in North America. They proposed that existing social work supervision should be reconceptualized; the new model would include multiple operational definitions of social work supervision that reflect various strategies in supervisory practice. This study is an attempt to define social work supervision practice in the cultural context of Hong Kong. It is a qualitative study and should be succeeded by quantitative investigations of the current state of social work supervision (for example, a large-scale sample survey or a longitudinal day log study) in order to construct a representative profile of the current state of social work supervision in Hong Kong. It would be helpful if scholars in other societies were to conduct similar qualitative research in order to determine the influence of cultural context on the practice of

practice of social work supervision. The contrast created by context would certainly refine our understanding of social work supervision in different cultural contexts. An understanding of the similarities and differences will clarify the nature of social work supervision and help determine its future.

The ultimate objective of social work supervision is to improve service quality. Research on social work supervision should explore the link between supervisory practice and client outcomes in various service settings (Harkness, 1995, 1997; Harkness & Hensley, 1991; Harkness & Poertner, 1989) and, of course, in various cultural contexts. Outcome research on cross-cultural practice (Tsang & George, 1998) may also be applied to evaluate the effectiveness of various supervisory practices and to identify effective supervisory strategies. The assessment of outcome effectiveness must address issues of definition and measurement in addition to the match of the supervisor and the supervisee dyad. The data should be collected from multiple sources, including supervisor's reports, supervisee's reports, and objective measures.

Finally, it is significant that many frontline social workers are impressed by the fieldwork supervision they received at school. Research on student fieldwork supervision is superior to studies of staff supervision in terms of scope and methodologies. It is necessary for us to conduct studies on the feasibility of adopting aspects of the format, strategies, and skills of fieldwork supervision when supervising staff social workers.

Conclusion

Social work supervision has four aspects: the format, the purpose, the nature of supervisory relationship, and the use of supervisory authority. The format of supervision in Hong Kong is characterized by its loose structure: it relies on a verbal agreement; supervision sessions

are infrequent. Regarding the purposes and functions of supervision, the supervisor and the supervisee have the same professional goals. Supervision sessions are also used to address personal matters and encourage team building. The most distinctive feature of the supervisory relationship in Hong Kong is its dual perspective — both personal and professional. The tension inherent in the supervisor-supervisee relationship is mitigated by Chinese cultural values that stress reciprocity: *qing, yuan,* and "face." As a result, the supervisory relationship is maintained without much friction. Supervisory authority reflects the political strategy of the British–Hong Kong government before 1997. Through consultation and co-optation, with the passive consent of supervisees, a consensus is achieved without much conflict.

Four cultural factors influence the four aspects of social work supervision. These factors are the time perspective, the concept of space, value orientations, and attitudes. A past-time orientation encourages social workers in Hong Kong to respect experience, both personal and professional. This includes supervisory experience, practice experience, and life experience. To a certain extent, the behavior of the supervisor and the supervisee is determined by their background and experiences. The space allowed to both supervisors and supervisees to act according to their own discussion has been reduced by the demands of funding sources and agencies. As a result, the flexibility of the supervisor and the autonomy of the supervisee have decreased. However, since Chinese social workers in Hong Kong tend to respect hierarchy and treasure harmony, relationships are maintained by reciprocity and consensus. Finally, there is difference between the attitudes of supervisors and those of supervisees: while supervisors take a professional approach, supervisees want a more personal relationship. The study revealed that supervision in social work is a professional and personal practice embedded in cultural and organizational contexts. The form of

supervisory practice in Hong Kong is a combination of, and compromise between, the North American concept, the British system, and the Chinese culture

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社會工作督導模式

本研究檢視在香港文化裏，社會工作督導的形式、目標、關係、權力運用和理想方式，並運用紮根理論（Grounded Theory）及 7 個焦點小組和 40 個深入面談，探討本地督導者與被導者的經驗和看法，從而建構香港本土的文化模式。

香港的督導方式較北美鬆散，白紙黑字的議程和督導契約很少派上用場。無論督導者及被導者皆視成功疏解案主的問題為督導目標。然而，督導者視督導歷程為理性及有系統的工具，以保證服務質素；被導者則盼望督導能帶來情緒支援，提升團隊協作。

督導關係是既個人又專業的；中國文化價值中的相互關係──包括「情」、「緣」及「面子」，能減輕關係的緊張。督導權力的運用正好反映港英政府「從諮詢和同意中達致共識」的政治策略，藉以減少衝突和增加認受。

香港的督導實踐是北美概念、英式制度和中華文化和衷共濟的結果。本文認定了督導中的四個主要文化課題（包括時間、空間、價值取向、態度），並討論它們對督導實踐、研究和培訓的影響。

Appendix 1: Interview Guide for Supervisors

1. Format and structure of supervision

    a. What is the format of supervision?
        (Is it individual session or group supervision? Or both? Or some other formats?)

    b. Is there a written contract to specify the objectives, expectations, responsibilities, and formats of supervision?
        (If no, why not?)

    c. Is there verbal agreement about supervision?

    d. What is the major content of discussion in the supervision session with your supervisee(s)?

    e. How frequent is the supervision session?
        (Is it regular? Is it enough or not? Who initiates the supervision session?)

    f. How long is each supervision session?

    g. Where is the supervision session held?
        (Interviewing room? Your office? Or your supervisee's office? How do you feel about it?)

    h. Is there any written agenda?
        (Who sets the agenda?)

    i. Is there a written record of the content of the discussion?
        (If no, why? If yes, what is the content?)

2. In your own opinion, what are the major purposes of supervision in your own service unit?
    (Probes: What are the meanings and functions of supervision in your own view? If you could change it, what should be the supervision for?)

3. How do you describe the supervisory relationship between you and your supervisee(s)?

   (Probes: Just like friends (or enemies)? brother and sister? teacher and student? boss and subordinate? uncle and nephew? or father and son? Could you please describe your own experience? What are the factors affecting the supervisory relationship?)

4. How supervisory authority is used in your service unit?

   (Probes: How the decision is made in the supervisory process? Who makes the decision? If there is different view, whose view prevails? Would there be discussion between you and the supervisee(s)? How is the discussion going? In what manner? What is the nature of the communication? Is it equal, or just one way? How do you feel about it?)

Appendix 2: Interview Guide for Supervisees

1. Format and structure of supervision

   a. What is the format of supervision?
      (Is it individual session or group supervision? Or both? Or some other formats?)

   b. Is there a written contract to specify the objectives, expectations, responsibilities, and formats of supervision?
      (If no, why not?)

   c. Is there verbal agreement about supervision?

   d. What is the major content of discussion in the supervision session with your supervisor?

   e. How frequent is the supervision session?
      (Is it regular? Is it enough or not? Who initiates the supervision session?)

   f. How long is each supervision session?

   g. Where is the supervision session held?
      (Interviewing room? Your supervisor's office? Or your office? How do you feel about it?)

   h. Is there any written agenda?
      (Who sets the agenda?)

   i. Is there a written record of the content of the discussion?
      (If no, why? If yes, what is the content?)

   j. How would you describe your supervisor?

2. In your own opinion, what are the major purposes of supervision in your own service unit?
   (Probes: What are the meanings and functions of supervision in your own view? If you could change it, what should be the supervision for?)

3. How do you describe the supervisory relationship between your supervisor and you?

   (Probes: Just like friends (or enemies)? brother and sister? teacher and student? boss and subordinate? uncle and nephew? or father and son? Could you please describe your own experience? What are the factors affecting the supervisory relationship?)

4. How supervisory authority is used in your service unit?

   (Probes: How the decision is made in the supervisory process? Who makes the decision? If there is different view, whose view prevails? Would there be discussion between you and the supervisee(s)? How the discussion is going? In what manner? What is the nature of the communication? Is it equal, or just one way? How do you feel about it?)

Appendix 3: Information About Informants — Supervisors *

(* The names have been changed in order to protect the confidentiality of the identity of informants.)

1. *Mrs. Lam:* a service supervisor (SWO) with 18 years' experience at a family service center

2. *Mr. Au*: the team leader (SWO) of an integrated service team for youth with 12 years' experience

3. *Mr. Hui*: the leader of an outreach team for youth with 8 years' experience

4. *Mr. So*: the service supervisor in a community rehabilitation unit (SSWO) with 16 years' experience

5. *Miss Yin*: a superintendent of a home for the elderly (ASWO) with 6.5 years' experience

6. *Mrs. Lok*: a school social work supervisor (SWO) with 20 years' experience

7. *Mrs. Cheng*: a school social work supervisor (SWO) with 10 years' experience

8. *Mrs. Chui*: the director of a children and youth center (ASWO) with 12 years' experience

9. *Miss Dong*: the service manager of an employee assistance program (SWO) with 16 years' experience

10. *Mr. Choy*: the service supervisor of a residential rehabilitation unit (SWO) with 13 years' experience in mid-sized non-government organizations

11. *Miss Ching*: the director of a children and youth center (ASWO) with 4 years' experience

12. *Mr. Yue*: the superintendent of a residential unit (ASWO) with 16 years' experience

13. *Mr. Chow*: a service supervisor of outreach service for the youth with 10 years' experience

14. *Miss Siu*: the director of a children and youth center with 5 years' experience

15. *Mr. Wong*: the director of a counseling center with 21 years' experience

16. *Mr. Leung*: the director of a children and youth center (ASWO) with 6 years' experience

17. *Miss Lai*: the director of a rehabilitation center (ASWO) with 5 years' experience

18. *Miss Ling*: the service supervisor in rehabilitation field (SWO) with 13 years' experience.

19. *Miss Tsui*: the supervisor providing service for new immigrants (ASWO) with 10 years' experience

20. *Mr. Tung*: the superintendent of a hostel for the elderly with 12 years' experience.

Appendix 4: Information About Informants — Supervisees*

(*   The names have been changed in order to protect the confidentiality of the identity of informants.)

1. *Yvonne*: a school social worker (ASWO) with 4 years' experience

2. *Kevin*: an outreach youth worker (SWA) with 6.5 years' experience

3. *Nancy*: a caseworker (ASWO) with 4 years' experience in a government family service center

4. *Katherine*: a youth worker (SWA) with 1 year's experience at a children and youth center

5. *May*: a school social worker (ASWO) with 4 years' experience

6. *Charles*: a community worker (SWA) with 5.5 years' experience

7. *Karen*: a social worker (SWA) with 7.5 years' experience in a rehabilitation service unit

8. *Kenneth*: a youth worker (SWA) with 4 years' experience in a children and youth center

9. *Sophia*: a social worker (SWA) with 6 years' experience in a government counseling center

10. *Linda*: a social worker (SWA) with 2 years' experience at a children and youth center

11. *Sally*: a social worker (SWA) with 2 years' experience in an integrated service team for the youth

12. *Billy*: an outreach youth worker (SWA) with 2 years' experience

13. *Winnie*: a case worker (SWA) with 1.5 years' experience at a government family service center

14. *Carrie*: a caseworker (SSWA) with 20 years' experience at a government family service center

15. *Matthew:* a social worker (SWA) with 5.5 years' experience at a government residential institution for boys with behavioral problems

16. *Cindy*: a medical social worker (ASWO) with 2 years' experience at a public hospital

17. *Lily:* a youth worker (ASWO) with 6 years' experience at a children and youth center

18. *Olive*: a youth worker (SWA) with 2.5 years' experience at a children and youth center

19. *Mimi*: a community development worker (SWA) with 10 years' experience at a neighborhood community development project

20. *Timothy*: a medical social worker (ASWO) with 20 years' experience at a public hospital