Mentoring in Clinical Supervision: What We can Learn from Erickson’s Relationship with Haley and Weakland

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Objectives of Today’s Presentation

• Participants in this workshop will be able to distinguish between mentoring, supervision, and teaching and will be able to articulate how mentoring relationships can develop from the other two.

• Participants in this workshop will be able to describe Milton Erickson’s influence upon John Weakland and Jay Haley and how this mentoring relationship impacted Weakland and Haley across their lifespans.

• Participants in this workshop will be able to describe the importance of strong mentoring relationships in keeping the field strong and vibrant for the future.
Mentoring, Supervision and Teaching

• As MFTs and AAMFT Approved Supervisors the two presenters have been socialized to draw clear distinctions between these three activities.

• Maybe the distinctions are not quite so clear.....

• Supervision is generally defined as a more senior level clinician taking the responsibility to help a student or newly graduated therapist learn how to assess, diagnose and intervene in clinical situations. Many times it also involves self-of-the-therapist work.

• Teaching is a didactic experience. In the MFT supervision literature there is a distinction drawn between teaching and supervision

• Mentoring is not defined in the supervision literature as a separate practice. It seems to be used as a synonym for supervision in the literature.
Defining Mentorship In More Precise Ways

• We would like to define mentoring/mentorship more precisely, rather than leaving it as a synonym for supervision or saying that it is a part of some teaching relationships.

• We conceptualize mentoring as a process that can occur in supervision, teaching, or other relationships that has qualities of its own.

• We like this definition from the Cambridge Dictionaries Online:

  an **experienced** and **trusted** **person** who gives another **person** **advice** and **help**, esp. **related** to **work** or **school**, over a **period** of **time**
Amplifying the Oxford Dictionaries Online Definition and Its Relevance To Our Context

• Friends are advice givers and therapists do more than this...In fact as supervisors we often work to keep therapists-in-training from becoming just another “advice giving” person in the client’s life.

• Excellent teachers are more than advice givers, as they work with students to help them develop their abilities to think independently, evaluate ideas, to be consumers of research, and so forth.

• However, within some teaching and supervision relationships these mentoring relationships develop. They go beyond the period of instruction or period of supervision. Sometimes, they last a lifetime and at other times they last for just a season.
A Look At The Relationship Between Erickson-Haley-Weakland

• Although it is doubtful any of the three would have labeled it as mentoring, since that term was not in vogue during their time together, it seems their relationship creates a “case study” for mentorship.

• Context of their work together-Weakland and Haley were part of the Bateson Schizophrenic Communication Project in the 1950s in Palo Alto. Erickson consulted with this project.

• Weakland and Haley would make numerous trips to Phoenix to see Erickson.
Haley and Mentoring

• Erickson mentored him

• Haley and Minuchin eventually worked together and it has been reported by Wendel Ray and others that they commuted to Child Guidance together. There seemed to be a reciprocal relationship between them. Maybe a mutual mentoring.

• Many of us were here in Phoenix in 1999 when Haley was honored with the lifetime achievement award.

• Ended his career doing supervision for students in CA.

• Minuchin has been doing supervision for students in FL
Weakland and Mentoring

• Weakland was de Shazer’s supervisor at MRI.
• de Shazer wanted to start the MRI of the Midwest
• de Shazer credited Weakland with introducing him to Erickson’s ideas.
• What may be the most significant part of this relationship is that de Shazer was equipped in such a way that he could deviate from MRI and do what seemed to fit best for him… the creation of Solution Focused Therapy.
• Bateson and Weakland
What We Can Learn From This Case Study About Mentoring

• It seems that being in conversation with people about our careers can be useful long after the mandatory supervision phase finishes.
• Building relationships with people who can help us build our careers and mutually shape thinking is an aspect of mentoring that might be overlooked (e.g., allowing mentees to also influence the mentors’ thinking over time).
• Mentoring often involves “big ideas” or “important work”. We stay in conversation with those who will provoke us to think and grow and expand.
• Staying in conversation with interesting people across the professional lifespan can be helpful.
Practical Application About Developing Mentoring Relationships

• It seems to be useful to conceptualize mentoring as more than supervision or teaching (at minimum an adjunct to these practices).

• It seems these relationships develop naturally with some former supervisees or students and sometimes among colleagues when one is more senior than the other. Trying to force a mentor relationship might be like trying to force a dating relationship that just isn’t going to work.

• It is probably best to define the nature of these relationships, so that they can be understood more clearly (e.g., a mentor is not responsible for the decisions a mentee makes, but offers guidance).
A Huge Idea From The Case Study-Build A Network of Influence and Incorporate Your Mentees into that Network

• Gregory Bateson tribute to Erickson—“Erickson was the Mozart of psychotherapy.” He was a ‘great systemic therapist.’

• Bateson and his Schizophrenic Communication Project Team had studied Erickson and consulted with Erickson before their double bind theory. Wendel Ray has a tape in which the team discusses Haley and Weakland.

• Margaret Mead studied with Erickson for over 40 years.

• We invite you to think about your networks (they don’t have to be famous to be influential)....How can you expand your networks of influence with your supervisees.
When Expanding the Network of Influence It is Okay if The Mentee Finds Someone Else’s Voice To Be More Useful

• An example is Steve de Shazer. Although mentored by Weakland, he wrote this about Erickson (a mentor of Weakland):
  None of these authors (Jackson, Weakland, Watzlawich, Fisch, and Haley) either separately or in combination have mined all the ore in the Ericksonian lode.
These Were Our Objectives of Today’s Presentation

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