IMPLICIT ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE SUPERVISORY CONFERENCE: A REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF LITERATURE

PATRICIA E. HOLLAND, University of Houston

In 1955, Burton and Breukner heralded the age of modern supervision as "the systematic study and analysis of the entire teaching-learning situation utilizing a carefully planned program that has been cooperatively derived from the situation and which is adapted to the needs of those involved in it." Their view foreshadowed the development, little more than a decade later, of clinical supervision. Since then, some version of clinical supervision has influenced the routine practice of direct supervision. Modern supervision has assumed a pattern reflecting the activities described by Burton and Breukner, a pattern in which a supervisor observes a teacher teach and then holds a conference with him to discuss the classroom experience observed. The conference is assumed to provide the appropriate context for considering the data from the classroom observation and to offer the supervisor and teacher the best opportunity to plan how the teacher can improve instruction and learning in the classroom.

This article reviews the literature on the supervisory conference over the roughly 20 years since the advent of clinical supervision and its recognition of the conference as an essential phase of the supervision cycle. My purpose is to provide a representative basis for looking at assumptions about the conference underlying current thought and practice and to consider how these assumptions have historically been incorporated and interpreted in the literature.

COMPONENTS OF THE CONFERENCE

For purposes of organization, the conference has three major components: the perceived purpose, the relationship between the teacher and the
supervisor in the conference situation, and how information and data about
the teacher's performance are used during the conference. Although the
components are common to discussions of the supervisory conference, the
permutations within each component reveal notable differences in how the
conference is conceived and conducted. By examining the emergence of these
differences over time, we allow variations in the assumptions underlying
conferencing as an aspect of supervision to surface.

THE PURPOSE OF THE CONFERENCE

There is generally agreement that the conference is an essential part of
the supervisory process because it provides the context for the teacher and
supervisor to review the teaching observed. There is also generally agreement
on the conference's purpose as part of a strategy intended to examine instruc-
tion and learning in the teacher's classroom. Summarizing these views, Ser-
giovanni and Starratt explain, "The conference is an opportunity and setting
for teacher and supervisor to exchange information about what was intended
in a given lesson or unit and what actually happened."³

Beyond these points of agreement, however, are sometimes clearly but
more often subtly differing views on the conference's purpose. Although we
generally see the conference as an occasion for providing the teacher with
help in instructional matters, much discussion surrounds the question of the
most effective strategies for delivering that help. On one hand, the conference
is an occasion for teaching. Consider, for instance, Glickman's discussion of
the supervisory option of "directive behaviors" that the supervisor appropri-
ately uses (particularly with novice teachers) when "there is an assumption
that the supervisor has greater knowledge and expertise about the issue at
hand" and "knows better than the teacher what needs to be done to improve
instruction."⁴ While Glickman identifies directive behaviors at one end of a
developmental continuum of supervisory strategies, Hunter sees the confer-
ence's purpose as inherently pedagogical:

- The principles of learning that apply to students also apply to teachers If in the
conference the administrator or supervisor uses principles of learning appropriately,
a teacher's learning will be increased.⁵

These views of the conference's teaching purpose are historically rooted
in the clinical supervision model. In one of the first texts on clinical supervi-
sion, Goldhammer directly refers to the model's "didactic component," which

³Thomas J Sergiovanni and Robert J Starratt, Supervision Human Perspectives, 4th ed (New
⁴Carl D. Glickman, Supervision of Instruction A Developmental Approach (Boston Allyn &
Bacon, 1985), p. 143
⁵Madeline Hunter, 'Six Types of Supervisory Conferences," Educational Leadership 37
(February 1980) 409.
reflects its teaching analogues. Mosher and Purpel, part of clinical supervision's second wave, describe the supervisor using evidence from observation as an occasion for "teaching" the teacher alternative and assumedly more effective pedagogical strategies.

Over the years, many studies have also supported the use of directive or teaching behavior in the conference. Kyte describes a supervisor's positive evaluation of a conference in which the supervisor initiates discussion of two specific observed needs of the teacher. In the absence of supporting evidence, he concludes that the discussion significantly affects the needs addressed in subsequent teaching. McNerney and Francis's comparison of pre- and post-observation conferences finds the post-observation conference characterized by supervisors "giving information" to teachers. A study by McInnes makes the case that supervisory strategies should emulate effective-teaching behavior. Young's study of principals' post-observation conferencing also reflects this view and even uses the words teaching and lesson to describe the nature of the conference. In a study of supervisors' preferences, Gordon finds the teaching behaviors of "advising and informing" the highest category of supervisory behavior reported by the supervisors. Further, the supervisors viewed their own behavior as most effective when it was based on teaching. Studies of the perceptions of novice teachers by Copeland, Lorsch, and Zonca support Gordon's supervisors. These studies suggest that directive conferencing is also preferred by the novice teachers themselves.

For the most part, these studies leave wide room for determining what exactly qualifies as teaching behavior, but such ambiguity does not carry over in references to the conference's teaching-related purpose of providing the teacher with evaluative feedback on her teaching. This instinctive evaluative

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thrust of the post-observation conference has long been an aspect of clinical supervision and is historically well documented by Weller's Multidimensional Observational System for the Analysis of Interactions in Clinical Supervision, which is used to study patterns of verbal communication in supervisory interactions. Presuming that evaluation exists against some normative view of effective teaching, the instrument rates the teacher's performance on the standards against which she is being judged. Hunter provides the most outstanding example of this perspective in recent literature; according to her, evaluation is a function of supervisory conferences, and in the conference "a teacher's placement on a continuum from 'unsatisfactory' to 'outstanding' will be established and the teacher will have the opportunity to examine the evidence used." While Hunter sees the conference as an occasion for summative evaluation, Sergiovanni and Starratt express the more common view in the literature, that the conference serves a formative evaluation function: "The success of the conference depends on the extent to which the process of clinical supervision is viewed as formative, focused evaluation intended to help in understanding and improving professional practice." According to another perspective, the conference is an occasion for teaching that serves the purpose of training the teacher in the process of analyzing his own teaching—in the meta-level process of self-supervision. Garman infused this notion with new vitality when she characterized the cycle of supervision as metaphor as well as method and described the conference as an opportunity for open-ended learning in which "the notion of the conference not only means two people meeting before and after classroom visits, but also suggests dynamic forms of collaboration in educational alliances." Garman's position draws on her training and work in clinical supervision with Cogan, who along with his colleague Goldhammer recognized the purpose of the supervisory conference to train teachers in self-supervision. Cogan refers to the supervisor's responsibility for the "didactic introduction [of the teacher] into clinical supervision as a duel objective of clinical supervision." Cogan believes that the conference, while a particular phase of the supervision cycle, is "at one and the same time a constituent and a development of everything that goes on before

and after it... All working contacts between teacher and supervisor are conference."19

This notion that the conference serves a purpose of equipping teachers with skills of self-supervision is a link between empirically limited views of the conference as a special case of teaching and a more phenomenologically expansive view of the conference as an opportunity for the teacher and supervisor to collaboratively analyze the data from the observation. According to this view, the conference's purpose is facilitative. The supervisor works with and helps the teacher as they both seek to develop a better understanding of how pedagogical decisions affect the nature and quality of instruction and learning.

Several theoretical frames of supervision reflect this view. In Glickman's developmental supervision, collaborative conferences and nondirective conferences both seek to facilitate the teacher's analysis and understanding of her teaching and are distinguished only by the supervisor's degree of control in helping the teacher identify problems in her teaching and corresponding instructional changes she needs to make.20

Other theories describe the nature of the understanding to be sought at levels beyond the observation data. According to Eisner's notion of artistic supervision, teacher and supervisor "attempt to understand the kind of experience that pupils and teachers have, and not simply describe or count the behaviors they display."21 Sergiovanni proposes a framework for a theory of supervisory practice that expands supervision beyond classroom observation data to insights into "what ought to be." These insights would come not only from analyzing the events of teaching but from reviewing social science, educational, and humanities literature and from exploring the teacher's stated and unstated goals and objectives and the educational platform they reflect.22 Garman's proposed hierarchy of collegiality at its highest levels also moves beyond the data of classroom observation to attend to the mutual discovery of the meanings and potential of both the supervisor's and teacher's professional practice.23

Again, these views of the conference's purpose have evolved from early conceptualization and study of clinical supervision. Cogan's premise, "All

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19Ibid, p. 196
working contacts between teacher and supervisor are conference," and his charge that the teacher "should understand why he does what he does, and why it is better or worse than other things he might do" express this view.24 Focusing on the instrumental role of the supervisor in fostering such understanding, Blumberg and Cusik say, "The supervisor's objective is to help the teacher make more functional use of his own resources and therefore perform more effectively within the classroom."25 While these conferences may also contain a teaching component, their primary focus is developing a more comprehensive and personal understanding of the teacher's performance than what is contained merely in the sum of teaching and learning behaviors.

Many studies examining actual conferencing behavior have recognized the importance of the conference as an occasion for more open-ended collaborative and nondirective behavior. Kindsvatter and Wilen's analysis of conferencing skills emphasizes the need for supervisors to pose questions that engage teachers in high level thinking skills as they analyze their teaching and develop strategies to improve classroom performance.26 Although some studies have found that novice teachers prefer direct conferencing, other studies of both novice and experienced teachers have shown teachers' desire for a combination of directive with collaborative and nondirective conferencing behavior.27 This pattern supports Blumberg and Amidon's landmark study of teachers' perceptions that a supervisor's indirect behaviors of asking and listening, combined with direct behaviors of telling and criticizing, best enabled them to gain insight into themselves, both as teachers and as persons.28 Because these studies of collaborative and nondirective conferences, as well as the earlier cited studies of directive conferences, mostly consider only teachers' preferences, no conclusions can be drawn as to the relative effectiveness of particular types of conferences in changing teaching behavior. What the studies of teacher preference do consistently show, however, is

teachers' appreciation of conferences that serve multiple directive, collaborative, and nondirective purposes.

One final purpose of the supervisory conference is intertwined in the literature with views of the conference as both a teaching and a facilitating process. This purpose is to provide psychological reinforcement to the teacher. Despite their generally differing views on the supervisory conference, several writers have struck a common chord in their assumptions about the kind of support teachers need to receive in the conference. From Hunter's description of the "Type E (for 'excellent') instructional conference" that is based in praise and specific positive reinforcement of excellent teaching behaviors, back in time to Cogan's recognition of the value of rewarding "successful elements of performance," supporting and encouraging teachers during the conference is similarly described and valued. Thus, Kindsvatter and Wilen speak of the need for praise and sensitivity on the supervisor's part, Blumberg of the "socio-emotional support" that teachers need to feel satisfied with their profession, and Goldhammer of the conference as providing "adult rewards" to teachers.

The distinction between the kind of support teachers receive when the conference is viewed from teaching and facilitating perspectives is in whether the support is directed to the teacher's behavior or to the teacher as a professional person. An essential difference between the assumptions underlying teaching and facilitating purposes of supervision surfaces here. If the teaching view is self-limiting in its objectivist assumption that empirically verifiable behaviors are the basis for assessing the effectiveness of instruction and learning, the view then restricts itself to considering only those behaviors. The facilitating view casts a wider net, seeking not only to analyze the behaviors themselves but to interpret their meanings as choices within a repertoire of possible professional behaviors. Thus, the facilitating purpose of the conference can be considered an example of the constructivist activity Goodman refers to as "world-making."

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUPERVISOR AND TEACHER

On the surface, the assumption is generally made that interactions during the conference between supervisor and teacher are pleasant for both parties and beneficial to the teacher. On closer examination, however, distinctions

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become apparent that reflect differing underlying assumptions about the nature of the relationship between supervisor and teacher, distinctions that affect the likelihood the two will consider the conference a mutually rewarding experience.

Perhaps most obvious are distinctions that center on the issue of who controls the conference. Blumberg and Jonas's recent discussion of the teacher's power to control the supervisor's access to the inner workings of classroom decision making recognizes a latent struggle for power and control in supervisory relationships. Blumberg has been outspoken in acknowledging the conflict and dissension endemic to supervision before. His earlier characterization of relations between supervisors and teachers as "a private cold war" is a dramatic expression of the undercurrent of the struggle for power that manifests itself most clearly in the context of the supervisory conference.

Control has long been a critical issue underlying the practice of clinical supervision, particularly the conduct of the conference. Examining how control has been addressed historically offers insights into assumptions about the nature of the relationship between supervisor and teacher. Goldhammer, for example, offers a compelling early version of how control operates in the conference. "To open his hand and to make himself deliberately vulnerable is one of [the supervisor's] principal purposes in the conference. Therein lie the possibilities for justice or at least for evening the psychological score." Although Goldhammer goes on to argue that in response to this vulnerability, the teacher can take control of the analysis of her teaching, she clearly can do so only at the largesse of the supervisor. Control, in Goldhammer's version, is ultimately the supervisor's to share or retain.

Such contrived vulnerability in a conferencing relationship is an example of a hidden agenda functioning to allow the supervisor's manipulation and paternalistic control of the ratio of power in the conference. Mosher and Purpel's claim of relevance for the theory and method of ego-counseling to the process of supervision also maintains for the supervisor as counselor this kind of superior or relational position. Phipps gives another example of this phenomenon in her view of the conference drawn from the same period: "[Through] the person-to-person relationship, the supervisor is better able to stimulate change because the teacher has confidence to experiment when he knows someone is being supportive."

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Although the objective of supporting changes in teaching expressed may be appropriate, there are unsettling implications that the teacher is viewed as an unwitting subject of the supervisor's manipulation. Even more unsettling is the existence of numerous studies promoting specific strategies that supervisors might use to function more effectively in the conference. Some studies, for instance, propose that supervisors be trained to incorporate an empathic quality into each of their actions, that supervisors emulate a pattern of beginning all verbal responses to teachers with a positive prefix, that supervisors explore using fixed and variable conferencing schedules, and that supervisors use a categorized-conference-analysis system to examine and improve their conferencing behavior.\(^3\) Each of these studies assumes that greater technical proficiency in the conference will afford the supervisor greater control over the process of helping the teacher change his teaching behavior.

With the notable exception of Bryan, who cautions against using his own category system merely at the level of technique and argues that the techniques must be assimilated into the supervisor's own natural style, the studies on conferencing strategies ignore the imbalance of power and control conferred on the supervisor. The studies also ignore assumptions about the nature of the relationship between teacher and supervisor implied by the supervisor's knowledge and use of these strategies. The studies assume that the supervisor holds a position of authority and management in the supervisory process and has the right to unilaterally judge what must be done to improve a teacher's performance. A frequently correlated assumption is that not only does the teacher have no say in what must be done to improve her performance, she has no say in establishing the standards used to judge it. Thus, the control issue is decided with the supervisor clearly in charge of the supervisory relationship.

These assumptions reflect an essentially bureaucratic view of the supervisory process because a hierarchy of power and authority between supervisor and teacher is established. The supervisor is afforded possession and control of knowledge that can—at the supervisor's discretion—be provided to the teacher. This bureaucratic view of supervision is evident in the current wave of research and practice.
of state-mandated teacher-evaluation systems. The format of classroom observation followed by a conference between the evaluating supervisor and teacher traces its lineage from the view of supervision as a supervisor-controlled process in which the supervisor is responsible for helping teachers comply with uniform, systemwide standards and practices.

Some studies also take the other side of the control issue, promoting the kind of collaborative problem solving that Cogan refers to as "collegueship" and Blumberg and Weber call "engagement."8 Through engagement, supervision is assumed to be, as Acheson and Gall say, "a dynamic process of give-and-take in which supervisors and teachers are colleagues in search of mutual educational understanding."9 Viewed in this way, the issue of control becomes moot. The conference is assumed to be a joint venture with both parties engaged in mutual problem solving and equally committed to the process. Garman champions this view of the conference as a collaborative event, urging clinical supervisors to acknowledge the powerful undercurrents of the all-too-common ritualistic conference and to seek its transformation into a collaborative alliance "during which participants learn something about their professional actions."10 Support for collaboration also comes from Smyth, who argues from a critical theorist's perspective for the value of clinical supervision as a process of "collaboration and nonevaluative dialogue" through which teachers can gain critical understanding that empowers them to assume greater control of their profession.11

Several studies of the supervisory conference, focused primarily on describing patterns of conferencing behavior, have implicitly endorsed the notion of collaboration in the conference.12 In these studies, desirable patterns of interaction between supervisors and teachers are identified, and in each

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study the patterns describe supervisory relationships characterized by genuineness and collaboration between the supervisor and teacher.

As Garman suggests, the precedent for seeing supervisory interactions as collaborative comes from Cogan’s original conception of clinical supervision. Cogan describes how supervisor and teacher function collaboratively in the supervisory conference. First, the teacher actively prepares for the conference, just as the supervisor does: "The preparation of the teacher for his role in the conference helps to transform him from an object of supervision into a colleague in it." Also, the supervisor defers to the teacher at points of impasse over what teaching strategies to use to achieve desired outcomes. Cogan explains his position: "It is the teacher who is ultimately responsible for the actual instruction, not the supervisor." In these instances, the supervisor should help the teacher develop a plan for his teaching and for collecting appropriate data on the outcomes of his teaching. Foster argues a similar position, stating that the conference represents a unique professional consulting relationship "in which either of the two persons involved has the right to terminate the consultation at any time." As the literature about the relationship between supervisor and teacher in the supervisory conference reflects differing assumptions depending on whether the issue of control is addressed from bureaucratic or collaborative perspectives, so similar distinctions are made about the issue of responsibility. Although questions about the supervisor’s and the teacher’s responsibilities for what takes place in the conference are generally met rhetorically with an answer similar to Sergiovanni and Starratt’s statement that “supervision is a process for which both supervisors and teachers are responsible,” some studies also assign major responsibility for the conference to the supervisor. Several references, for example, are made to the supervisor’s responsibility for establishing the socio-emotional climate of the conference. Acheson and Gall make a related case that the supervisor must know various techniques for establishing a supportive conference climate. Hunter’s model of super-

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43Morris L. Cogan, Clinical Supervision (Boston Houghton Mifflin, 1973), p. 198
44Ibid., p. 220.
48Keith A. Acheson and Meredith D. Gall, Techniques in the Clinical Supervision of Teachers, 2nd ed. (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1987), pp 171-180 Although Acheson and Gall espouse supervision to be based on a collaborative relationship, their endorsement of a battery of specific techniques to be used by the supervisor suggests the working of more bureaucratic assumptions about the nature of the supervision process
vision provides another instance of responsibility assigned to the supervisor, who is to decide after observing a teacher which of five prescribed conference formats is most appropriate. These examples suggest the operation of bureaucratic assumptions about the nature of the conference; they give greater responsibility—and therefore control over decision making—to the supervisor and assign the teacher to a role of passive compliance with the direction set by the supervisor.

Besides Sergiovanni and Starratt, Garman also claims that teachers and supervisors share responsibility for the conference. She calls for a relationship between supervisor and teacher characterized by a spirit of "genuine participation". In this relationship, both parties are responsible for reaching agreement and common understanding through the collaborative act of language development. Garman's view rests on the assumption that supervision is an essentially interpretive process in which meaning and understanding derive from collaborative effort to describe and understand the events of teaching.

Another aspect of responsibility discussed in the literature is the supervisor's self-knowledge. The supervisor is expected to be aware of the reasons for the choices she makes in planning and participating in the conference and for how her actions influence a working relationship with the teacher being supervised. How the supervisor's self-knowledge is described also reveals distinctions between bureaucratic and collaborative views of the supervisory relationship. On one hand, the supervisor seeks to understand her actions in terms of what they represent as technical strategies for helping the teacher improve his teaching. This view is essentially bureaucratic because it confers on the supervisor both greater authority and greater responsibility for superior knowledge. On the other hand, in Garman's and Smyth's views of supervision as a collaborative process the supervisor's self-knowledge includes awareness of her own needs and motivations and how these influence the conference.

Literature on the relationship between supervisor and teacher also focuses on particular skills that supervisors are responsible for demonstrating in the conference. Much of this discussion follows Blumberg's lead and centers on


describing effective supervisory behavior as a balanced use of directive and nondirective behaviors. Other literature focuses on the skills required of the supervisor in planning the conference, analyzing the observation data, and developing strategies for the teacher to use to improve his teaching. The literature generally recognizes the supervisor's skillful direction of the conference as critically important to the conference's success. According to Acheson and Gall, "When things do not go well in a feedback conference, the difficulties can usually be traced to failure on the part of the supervisor to use an effective clinical supervision technique."52

Differences of opinion exist, however, as to exactly how supervisors should use their skills responsibly in the conference. For instance, Hunter believes that supervisors must be able to "demonstrate conferencing skills that exemplify effective pedagogy."53 The supervisor uses a directive approach that reflects the pattern of his seven-step lesson sequence. the supervisor is responsible for selecting the data, analyzing it, and prescribing changes in the teacher's instruction. The teacher's corresponding responsibility is to carry out the supervisor's directions. Hunter's views are consistent with those of the originators of clinical supervision. the supervisor must have skill in "defining treatable issues" and be capable of "carrying out a full-fledged analysis."54 These early versions of clinical supervision, however, did not advocate that the supervisor use the authority of his position in the conference to impose his agenda or analysis on the teacher. Rather, as Cogan describes the process, the skills of the supervisor are in anticipating the teacher's needs and, in the actual interaction of the conference, encouraging the teacher to assume her own share of responsibility for analyzing her teaching behavior and for planning its improvement.55

A final aspect of the relationship between teacher and supervisor that has not received consideration in recent years is the question of an appropriate balance between bureaucratic and collaborative aspects of the relationship between supervisor and teacher. Harris, for instance, expresses concern about whether we can expect teachers to have the skills required to assume the kind of responsibility for and control over the analysis and direction of their own teaching expected of them in Cogan and Goldhammer's version of clinical supervision.56 Denham echoes this concern and calls for research to help

52Keith A. Acheson and Meredith D Gall, Techniques in the Clinical Supervision of Teachers, 2nd ed. (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1987), p 168
55Morris L Cogan, Clinical Supervision (Boston Houghton Mifflin, 1973), p 209
56Ben M. Harris, "Limits and Supplements to Formal Clinical Procedures," Journal of Research and Development in Education 9 (Winter 1976) 85–89
determine how much teachers can and should be involved in planning the conference. The absence of such research suggests how divergent views on the nature of the supervisory conference have developed and become politicized, as well as the extent to which these views tend to be governed by unexamined assumptions.

THE USE OF DATA IN THE CONFERENCE

As might be expected, the literature on the use of observation data in the conference reflects a pattern of underlying assumptions similar to that characterizing views of the conference's purpose and the relationship between supervisor and teacher. According to one assumption, data can be used to analyze events of teaching and learning in the observed classroom to identify problems in the teacher's instructional strategies. A related assumption says that solutions for these problems are then developed in the course of the conference. On the other hand, an alternative set of assumptions sees data analyzed and used in the conference to provide the supervisor and teacher with descriptive information about the observed events. The teacher and supervisor then use the information in a collaborative effort to explore possible interpretations of the events described by the data. These interpretations are not inherent in the data, however, but are created in thoughtful response to the data. These interpretations, which represent a level of abstraction beyond that of the data, provide the basis for decisions about teaching and learning. Although differing views of data are implicit in the literature, they influence the nature of the discussions about using observation data in the conference.

Much of the discussion about using data in the conference comes from the early years of clinical supervision and focuses on the work done, particularly by the supervisor, to analyze and organize the data into some form that will be useful in the conference. This process needs to focus, according to Goldhammer, on the "treatable issues in the teaching." Cogan says organizing the data is based on anticipating the teacher's needs and probable behavior in the conference. Mosher and Purpel describe the analysis process as "systematic, disciplined, practical thinking about the wide range of factors which affect the process of formal instruction and its outcomes."

Throughout the history of clinical supervision, researchers have generally agreed that supervisors need to know certain strategies for organizing the
data from classroom observations. Generally accepted strategies include selecting only a few key elements of teaching or classroom behavior, organizing the data to illustrate recurring patterns of teacher behavior or classroom occurrences, and considering outstanding or critical incidents. Also, the supervisor must pay attention in the conference to data that illustrate the teacher's pedagogical strengths. It is easier for the teacher and supervisor to build on these strengths, and this strategy serves the teacher's own needs.

Distinctions about using data occur in the literature around the question of what happens after identifying the patterns and critical incidents. Acheson and Gall, in their work stressing the techniques of data collection, imply that merely recognizing a pattern in teaching or classroom behavior can lead to change. Underlying this view is an assumption that the supervisor and teacher hold in common a model of ideal teaching and classroom behavior against which observed behavior can be judged. Certainly, this assumption holds with the current state-legislated forms of teacher evaluation and with the Hunter model of supervision from which they derive.

In contrast, another view involves the supervisor and the teacher in an interpretive process in which they consider possible meanings of the patterns and incidents identified in the data. Garman describes the process when she refers to supervisors and teachers discovering and inventing modes of reality. Eisner, another proponent of the interpretive nature of supervision, says that what is most important in supervision is using the observation data as a means to determining "what the situation means to the people who are in it and how the actions within the situation convey or create such meaning." Sergiovanni argues for a hermeneutic process that considers both descriptive and normative dimensions in the practice of supervision. These views of supervisory data used to inform the supervisor's and teacher's interpretation of classroom events can be traced to Cogan: "The conference is a shared exploration, a search for the meaning of instruction, for choices among alternative diagnoses and for alternative strategies of improvement."

Despite the support in the theoretical literature for viewing the supervisory conference as a process involving mutual interpretation, no research...
studies explore interpretation as an aspect of the conference. The closest research studies advocate an indirect style of conferencing. But these studies are related only insofar as indirect behaviors facilitate and encourage interpretation.

Another aspect about using observation data discussed in literature on the conference is how much the supervisor plans the presentation of her data analysis in the conference. Conferences based on views such as Hunter's use data to assess the teacher's classroom performance against predetermined standards of effective teaching and would allow the supervisor to prepare and deliver a highly structured review of the observation. The evaluation of the teacher's performance is easily incorporated into this type of conference. However, the view that the supervisor should not rigidly structure the conference is more widely expressed in the literature. Sergiovanni and Starratt clearly take this position as they recommend that "supervisors prepare for the conference by setting tentative objectives and planning tentative processes, but in a manner that does not program the course of the conference too much." Their statement reflects Cogan's original position: although the supervisor should prepare for the conference, he should not preplan its course because he cannot predict with enough certainty what issues and agenda the teacher will bring to the conference. Cogan cautions supervisors to keep in mind that the course of the conference is unpredictable.

CONCLUSION

As the literature on the supervisory conference is examined, it becomes clear that assumptions about the supervisory conference have remained quite consistent over the years. How these assumptions derive from an emerging model of clinical supervision also becomes evident. Although the supervisory conference has remained an unchallenged convention of supervisory practice

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throughout the history of clinical supervision, renewed interest in examining the conference is surfacing. In recent years, for instance, the supervisory conference has been the subject of several papers presented at annual meetings of the American Educational Research Association. There is reason, however, to question the availability of access—particularly for the practitioners of supervision—to these papers as opposed to the texts, published articles, and dissertations (at least in abstract form) reviewed here. What and how much evidence about assumptions underlying the supervisory conference do these papers offer? Awaiting specific studies, the supervisory conference will continue to be based on assumptions that bear reexamination and extension.

Perhaps a more important focus than chronology for conclusions about the literature on conferencing is the relative imbalance of theory versus solid research studies on the conference. It is both a tribute to Blumberg and his colleagues and an embarrassment to the field of supervision that the research from the 1960s still offers the best methods for data collection on the conference. Much more and varied research begs to be done. For instance, the use of qualitative methods such as discourse analysis to explore the interpretive aspects of the supervisory conference promises a new understanding of a dimension of conferencing often cited in the theoretical literature but as yet not researched in any thorough, systematic way. These and the other assumptions about the supervisory conference examined in this study of the literature

provide a compelling research agenda and an interesting challenge for scholars and practitioners of clinical supervision.69

PATRICIA E. HOLLAND is Assistant Professor of Education, Department of Educational Leadership and Cultural Studies, College of Education, University of Houston, 401 Farish Hall, Houston, TX 77004.


Local curriculum leaders and teachers will find down-to-earth strategies in this book for reforming their own school's curriculum. Extensive research data from Goodlad's A Study of Schooling illustrate a broad range of studies that can be done locally to foster change and school improvement. Practical questions drawn from a comprehensive conception of curriculum form the core of this inquiry based model of curriculum reform.

69An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, April 1988.