

“Who am I?”

Drawing the 5 Columns of Identity as a Supervisor

■ Magritt Lundestad

Abstract

Supervisors meet various clients with different identities. In establishing a safe relationship between the supervisor and the client, it is of importance that the supervisor knows his or her own identity. This article presents the concept of “identity” in Integrative Therapy and Supervision, and the 5 Columns of Identity. It also describes the use of drawing as a method in supervision, and the ideas behind using creative media. The article is based on a workshop given at the ANSE Summer university in Budapest 2023. In the article the content of the workshop is presented, and some experiences and feedback from the participants.

Introduction

“Who am I?” How well does a supervisor know him/herself in meeting clients with various identities? How can a supervisor work to be more conscious of his/her own identity? This article raises the question if drawing can be a method to gain more knowledge of the identity of the supervisor. In the article theories and methods from Integrative Therapy and Supervision is presented. The question discussed is: “How can drawing the 5 Columns of Identity contribute to supervisors understanding of his/her own identity?”

The concept of Identity in Integrative Therapy and Supervision

In Integrative therapy and supervision “identity” is seen as



something that is “changing permanently» (Petzold, 2008, p.251). The process of the development of identity, is defined in this way: “The images the self creates of the self in context, where it adapts diverse attributions and reflections from the context» (Petzold, 2008, p.251). Developing an identity is a synergy of *external attribution, mental evaluation and self-attribution* (Petzold, 2001). Petzold (1982, p.263) says that “The way I see myself contributes to my identity as well as others see me, how they identify me». Identity is always connected to the social world. As a therapist and supervisor, one also needs to know the «convoy» of a human, the people and the social world each human is surrounded by.

The 5 Identity columns

The 5 columns are the following: 1) Body subject 2) Social network 3) Work, achievement and leisure 4) Material security 5) Values and norms (Cf. Ebert & Könnecke-Ebert, 2007).

The identity columns are a *support system* for the identity (Petzold, 1982, p.265). All columns have an *individual* and a *collective* aspect. They can be used as a diagnostic tool for Integrative therapists and supervisors. A *life crisis*, a *loss* or another *big change* which is connected to one or several of the columns, will to a great extent influence our identity. One can collect *resources* from one column to another to support the identity and handle crisis in life. In all columns there is a *time continuum*: the past – here and now – the idea of the future.

Body subject

This basic column is related to the physical body, like gender, age, health and looks. It also includes the *phenomenal body*, which is how we *experience* our body. Petzold (1982, p.265) says that “One does not have a body, one is his/her body itself”. A vital and healthy body is important for identity. If

the physical reality is *threatened, misused or damaged*, it has a grave impact on the identity. The time continuum in this column is how you see your body/health in the past, how it is today, and your ideas of how it will be in the future.

Social network

Social relationships are vital for human beings. In this column one starts with the core zone of one's social network and social world: family, relatives, close friends. The meso zone relates to meaningful relationships with friends and colleagues. In the peripheral zone one finds all people from everyday life: neighbors, the bus driver, the shop assistant etc. A sudden loss of relevant members of the social world affects the identity gravely.

Work, achievement, leisure

This column is related to work life, achievement, and leisure time. Work can be seen as: "This is what I have accomplished" (Petzold, 1982, p.268). Others also identify us through our work/occupation: "I am identified by my work of others", meaning other people identify us on the basis of our work/occupation. Loss or change of work can have a great impact on identity. In this column the balance between work – leisure (work- life balance) is an important dimension – is there a balance, is there too much/too little work, too much leisure time/too little?

Material security

«Food, clothing, a roof over one's head, land, money, valuables – provide a high degree of identity – feeling for most people» (Petzold, 1982, p.268). Losing money, valuables or property can lead to an identity crisis. A central question in this column is: "How important is material security to you?"

Values and norms

«The column of values is, when well developed, the one that supports identity when the other columns have already

collapsed or broken down» (Petzold, 1982, p.269). Values can stem from religion, political orientation, philosophy of life etc. Values provide orientation, hope and security. Individual values can be shared by a «value community».

5 identity columns: body, social network, work & leisure, material security and values & norms.

Drawing as a method in Supervision

Adults often have different feelings about drawing. Some love it, some like and find it to be ok, while others hate it. Our feeling regarding drawing is often connected to school experiences, where many very clearly remembers pupils who were considered good drawers, and the ones who "could not draw". Many have had their drawings judged and had negative comments from teachers or parents on their drawings. Some might also see drawing as "childish», and don't see it as a part of their adult life. Due to these experiences, adults have a very varied relation to the use of drawing. It is often necessary to comment this theme in introducing drawing to a group. There might be several group members who have a lot of resistance regarding drawing. Others might be really looking forward to the opportunity to draw. The principle of supervision being something that should be voluntary, is important. The supervisor should allow participants to not draw if the resistance is too strong. As a leader of a group one can suggest that the participant just sits with a sheet of paper and pencils available during the time others draw. Then the participant can allow him or herself to see what happens – maybe not to draw, or maybe something will start happening. In supervision/therapy, drawing is not seen as an art expression or a performance, but a way to express yourself. Loris Malaguzzi, an art teacher in the

area of Reggio Emilia, Italy, states that "A human has hundred languages» (Cf. Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1993). Drawing can be seen as one of the languages. Using creative media gives an easier access to feelings, moods and atmospheres, "things which are not available through language" (Höhmman-Kost, 1995, p.21). An important point is that creative media like drawings, are carriers of information. The image will always tell something about the person.

Three levels of work

Höhmman-Kost (1995, p.15) presents three levels of working with expression of oneself through creative media: 1) Functional – «practical procedure-based work». 2) Experience centered – «andragogical work». Andragogy refers to methods and principles used in adult education 3) Conflict centered – «uncovering work». As a supervisor the second level, experience centered, is a recommended level to work on. Drawing the identity columns can lead to new learning and insights for adults. If one is not trained as a therapist, one should avoid the conflict centered level and going into uncovering work.

The workshop

In the workshop I shortly introduced myself and the plan for the workshop. Then there was a round in the group where each participant introduced themselves and the expectation for the workshop. The participants were supervisors from various countries in Europe, with different formal background and experience as a supervisor. The experience with working with creative media was also very varied. Some had used it a lot, but for several it was something new and something they wanted to try out more. I then presented the learning outcomes for the workshop:

- Increased *awareness and knowledge* of the participants identity in their professional role
- A *clearer understanding of each participants identity* to feel safer in living in an incomprehensible world.
- Gaining *knowledge on the use of drawing* in supervision

- Share reflections on *how to work as supervisors on identity with clients*.

I then presented the 5 Columns of Identity and opened for questions. After the presentation, each participant made their own workstation where they could draw after a lunchbreak. Each participant then worked individually with drawing of their 5 Columns of Identity for 40 minutes. The drawings were shared in groups of 3, where each participants had feedback on the drawings from the others. In the last part of the workshop each participant presented their thoughts of: 1) How was your experience of drawing? 2) How can this work contribute to your work as a supervisor on client`s identity?

Experiences and feedback from participants

The illustration is a drawing from one of the participants in the group.



I also share one of my own previous drawings of the 5 columns, to give an example of how different drawings of columns can be.



Further on I will present feedback from two of the participants in the workshop. Both participants are by coincidence trained as Integrative Therapists/Supervisors. They know the 5 Columns and have done this sort of work before. This will of course influence their answers, but I still choose to present their experiences from the workshop:

1. How did the workshop with the 5 Identity Columns influence your identity as a supervisor?

Participant 1: The work strengthened my identity. I did the 5 columns exercise many years ago. I feel integrated, my identity also feels integrated, it feels lively. Picking up the 5 columns, is to pick up five aspects of my professional identity. The picture shows it, and it gives a feeling where the aspects come from, and it is integrated in my identity. It`s nice to have a coherence between the feeling and the picture. And it matches my feeling of identity: professional supervisor, coach and organizational development consultant.

Participant 2: I found this tool quite interesting to use for myself this time – to explore where I am now, compared to where I was before, as a person and as a professional. As a supervisor, I find it to be a relevant tool in communication with clients. There are always needs to explore differences in perspectives and identities. To have a systematic and not too complicated tool for exploration on what is differences in between us, is helpful.

As one can see of the answers, both participants found it useful to draw the identity columns after not doing it for some years. As presented in the theory part – our identity is “changing permanently” (Petzold, 2008, p.251). The participants also found it to be a method to become more aware of where they are today regarding their professional and personal identity. One of them finds the drawing to be in accordance with the present feeling of being an “integrated” professional supervisor and coach. The other one also

sees the identity columns as a tool to explore differences in perspectives and identities with clients.

2. How was the process of drawing for you?

Participant 1: I love drawing, I am drawing and painting myself as a hobby. Drawing the identity columns was as always when I draw a lovely experience for me. I have no fear, I feel free in drawing. I know many people are traumatized and feel wrong by drawing because they have been judged in school, but for me drawing is liberty. I really love it.

Participant 2: It was a good process, as I managed to put away any kind of influences on how a drawing process should be, or how a drawing should look like. I could play freely with the colors, and I let my spontaneous impulses from within, choose colors and movements on the paper while I let my head and brain rest... Afterwards, I was amazed how I could understand and read so much from the drawing, when reflecting on what I did: Confirming some old information, and also giving access to new information or understandings, as well as leaving some questions. This time I was much more able to leave more of the information process to be “movement produced” instead of “head produced”.

From the answers one can see two different experiences of drawing, even if both are positive. The first participant really loves drawing and feels free and liberated doing it. The other try more consciously to let the movement of the hand lead the drawing process, and not the head and the brain. As one can see, the participant managed to do this to a greater extent than earlier. This led to the drawing both confirming some old information, but also some new information and some questions to explore.

3. How was the process of sharing your drawing in groups of 3?

Participant 1: For me the sharing was very interesting. As you know, as professionals, the intimacy of the group is always

good. It is more than good; it is a safe space. And it had also to do with you leading the workshop, creating a safe space from the beginning. The sharing in the group was also very helpful. It was a precious experience. And of course, that also depends on the people in the group. It was a very loving and respectful space.

Participant 2: To share our work in groups of three were interesting and fruitful: We got insight in each other processes, and we could share our own observations of the work of the others. I think some new understandings and perspectives came up for all of us, regarding our own drawings. And of course – each of us could choose to receive the new perspectives or information regarding our own work from the others – or leave it, as irrelevant for us. We had a respectful atmosphere in the group, and I think everyone of us new a little bit more about the others in the group after this work, who they are under the surface. I also think that all of us got some input or impulses that we could use for ourselves – some new information that was not accessible for us when reflecting only on our own...

Both participants found the sharing in the group of 3 interesting and fruitful. They both describe the small groups as a respectful and loving place between professionals. Sharing the drawings gave new insights in both the drawing process and the identity of each participant. The sharing led to more intimacy and seeing what is “under the surface”.

Conclusion

Drawing the 5 Identity Columns as a supervisor can be a tool to gain more insight in one’s own identity as a professional. The use of creative media is “another language” and can lead to new information on oneself. Sharing drawings and being asked questions to the drawing in smaller groups, can also contribute to a clearer understanding of the identity. This demands a safe and friendly atmosphere in the group. As

our identity is changing permanently, drawing the 5 Identity Columns regularly can be a way for professional supervisors to be aware and conscious of their own identity in meeting clients. ■

References:

- Ebert, W. & Könnecke-Ebert, B. (2007). Einführung in die Integrative Beratung und Therapie mit Suchtkranken. In: Petzold, H., Schay, P., Ebert, W. (eds). *Integrative Suchttherapie*. VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften
- Edwards, C., Gandini, L. & Forman, G. (1993) (eds). *The Hundred Languages of Children*. Ablex
- Høhman-Kost, A. (1995). *Bevegelsesterapi*. Tano. Translated from German to Norwegian: «Bewegung is Leben» (1993), Junfermann Verlag, p.15,21
- Petzold, H.G. (1982). *An Integrated Model of Identity and its Impact on the Treatment of the Drug-addict*. Proceedings of the 12 th. Int. Conference of Drugdependency, 22 – 26.03.82, Bangkok. International Council on Alcohol and Addictions, Lausanne/Genf 1982, p. 260-276.
- Petzold, H. G. (2001). Integrative Therapy in a Nutshell. *Polyloge: Materialien aus der Europäischen Akademie für psychosoziale Gesundheit - Ausgabe 01*. Hentet fra <http://www.integrativ-terapi.no/eait/publications.pdf>.



Magritt Lundestad is professor in organization and leadership, Institute of Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Education and International studies, Oslo Metropolitan University. Integrative therapist/supervisor, 2009. Lundestad teaches and does research in the fields of leadership, supervision and organizational development in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) centers. She brings theory and methods from Integrative therapy into her teaching of supervision, and to her research publications. magritt@oslomet.no