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**HOW DO NEW PRACTITIONERS COME TO
UNDERSTAND AND EFFECTIVELY USE
SUPERVISION?**

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of

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ABSTRACT

This project investigated how new practitioners come to understand and effectively use supervision. It was based on a collaborative inquiry with supervisors and new practitioners who had met for supervision, and who volunteered to reflect on their experiences in relation to the research question. In particular the study explored how four participating new practitioners had been inducted into supervision during their studies and in their employment after graduating.

The ways new practitioners induction experiences contributed to an understanding and use of supervision were investigated using a bricolage of narrative, action research and interviewing methods. Participants were invited into a co-research position to meet together in their supervisory pairs and explore their responses to starter questions provided to them. These audiotaped conversations were then witnessed by me and responded to in the form of a letter sent back to participants with further questions for the participating pairs to engage with in a follow up conversation.

The study highlighted the challenges new practitioners experience in developing understandings of what supervision is. Whilst a review of literature found attention by authors to the need to prepare new practitioners for supervision, this research found this was not reflected in the new practitioners' experiences of induction to supervision.

Knowledges produced by this research highlight the important role supervisor's play in assisting the development of understanding and use of supervision and a need for further discussion and professional education about supervision for both supervisors and new practitioners.

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CHAPTER ONE

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INTRODUCTION

This research investigated supervisors' and new practitioners' reflections on how new practitioners come to understand and effectively use supervision. The research used an "invented" bricolage of narrative inquiry and other congruent approaches such as action research and semi-structured interviews. This was intended to engage participants in conversations about their experience in relation to the research question. Supervisor and practitioner pairs were invited to participate in conversations together to discuss starter questions about the new practitioner's induction into supervision. Conversations were recorded, transcribed and reflected on critically by the researcher. This generated a second set of questions intended to explore and unpack the stories emerging in the first conversations. Participants met again to consider these subsequent questions and their second conversations were also recorded, transcribed and used as the focus for a second cycle of critical reflection. The transcripts were fed back to the participants who had the opportunity to make further comments. Chapter Three outlines the research method in greater detail. My reflection on the data was informed by a selective reading of literature on supervision - what is supervision, its goals, methods, theoretic underpinnings and specifically what it says about how new practitioners develop their understanding and use of supervision. While the literature reveals a divergence of views on these questions, there is more agreement on the need to prepare new practitioners by professional education for practitioners and supervisors.

LOCATING THE PROJECT IN MY PROFESSIONAL HISTORY

This project grew from my professional supervision experiences and from my hope to find ways to assist practitioners to understand supervision early on in their careers, so that they are positioned to use supervision in ways that support them

and their practice. My interest in supervision has grown steadily throughout my career in social services. It is now a passion. However, it has only been in the last six years that I gained an understanding of what supervision is and how it can best support practice, even though I was engaged in supervision as a practitioner for many more years than that. Reflecting on how I came to my present understanding of supervision, I recall multiple stories from my experiences as a Social Work student, as a practitioner, as a supervisor and from studying the practices of supervision. The more I came to understand supervision and its purposes, the more I was able to effectively use supervision and also to support other practitioners to do the same.

However, the road to these understandings has not been straightforward. During my undergraduate training as a Social Worker, I remember a lecturer stating emphatically that, “Supervision is important; you should make sure you have supervision” but I also remember that little was said during my four-year degree about what I now think of as supervision. I felt unaware of what it was or what my role was in it. I continue to hold an interest in the role universities and other training bodies play in educating student practitioners about supervision. This investigation into the induction of new practitioners to supervision is intended to contribute to the education of student practitioners about supervision.

My early understanding of supervision was formed by my initial experiences in practice settings. My first experience was as a Social Work student on a field education placement. I remember going to this activity called “supervision”, without any idea what was supposed to happen once I got there and the door closed. I felt ill-prepared for what had been held up as so “important”. The door did close, and the supervisor asked questions which I proceeded to answer. Subsequent supervisors I worked with, before and soon after graduating, proceeded in a similar fashion, with variations only in style and in the sort of questions they preferred asking. None of my supervisors explained what supervision was and I never asked. There were no conversations about the supervision work we engaged in together, our roles, expectations, relationship, and so on. My understanding of supervision developed from doing it, by answering the questions put to me and, over time, coming to anticipate the sort of things the supervisor was interested in. At that time I would have defined supervision in terms of my experience of it. I would have said that supervision

was an opportunity to meet with your manager to tell them about the work you have been doing, to raise areas of your practice where you felt unsure in order to receive direction or advice, and where I would answer questions. These questions were typically designed to inform the manager of what they needed to know for case allocation and other administrative purposes. I saw supervision as a place where demonstrating competence was important and whilst I was positioned in supervision as “not knowing” and as lacking in skills and experience, I believed that I should somehow demonstrate competence and limit my disclosure of not knowing; and that ultimately supervision was for the benefit of the manager and of the organisation, so that they could be sure about what I was doing. These experiences influenced, in turn, my preferences for some supervision practices, and not for others.

Once I was myself in the position of supervisor, I began to reflect more seriously on the practice of supervision. What was I engaging in with this other person, what was my role in it, and what purposes and intentions guided me in the conversations? I wanted a better understanding of this supervision practice I was going to engage in with other practitioners. I wanted to be able to articulate my understandings and preferences so I could negotiate the work we were doing, and support practitioners’ understanding and use of supervision. This led me to search for professional education on supervision for supervisors.

Postgraduate study of supervision contributed greatly to my understanding and use of supervision, and to storying my practice as a supervisor. I am now well prepared to engage in supervision conversations with practitioners and to negotiate supervision working relationships. My current understanding is that supervision supports practitioners to practise ethically, effectively and in line with their hopes and professional expectations. It supports them to review and to reflect on their practice and to continue enriching the story of their preferred professional identity. It supports them to practise in line with the policies and procedures of their employer and with the Code of Ethics of their professional association. It supports the safety and wellbeing of practitioners, their clients and other practitioners they work with. It also takes into account the impacts and possibilities provided by the broader organisational and social contexts of professional practice. Supervision exists ultimately for the benefit of clients. The supervisory relationship is a mechanism to make possible reflective conversations

about practice. In Chapter Two I will elaborate on and reference these understandings more fully.

I have noticed, however, that many practitioners I work with in supervision (newer and more experienced practitioners alike) have not felt well prepared for supervision. For many, I am their first supervisor, or among their first. As with my own experience, it is common for practitioners to report that they know very little about supervision, its purpose and intentions, and even less about their roles and responsibilities in it. I have found it common for practitioners to attend supervision with “nothing to talk about”, uncertain about what they can talk about, or to protest that “everything is fine”, as though they see supervision as just for discussing problems or as a space for proving their competence. Alternatively, I have met with practitioners who come to supervision with a list of their clients, so they can “go through it” and tell me how each of them is going, in a kind of “case management” approach. At times, I have found it difficult to create space for the sort of conversations that fits with my hopes and intentions, which supports a storying of the practitioner’s professional identity, where conversations move beyond reporting or “vicarious counselling” (Carroll, 1996, p. 30), where the supervisor works with the client through the practitioner.

Given the value placed on supervision by some writers (Berger & Buchholz, 1993; Kavanagh, Spence, Wilson & Crow, 2002; Vespia, Heckman-Stone & Delworth, 2002; Wheeler & Richards, 2007), by members of various helping professions (Australian Association of Social Worker Code of Ethics, 2004; Australian Counselling Association Code of Conduct, 2008; Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) Professional Standards, 2006), and by agencies who commit time and money to supervision, I am interested to find ways to support practitioners to use supervision effectively. My passion for these concerns led to the project documented here.

USE OF LANGUAGE

I use the word practitioner throughout this document to refer, equally, to psychologists, social workers and counsellors. I acknowledge there are firm ideas about supervision and the history of supervision within various disciplines

(Cooper, 2002; Grauel, 2002; Hewson, 2002). However it has increasingly been my experience that workplaces recruit workers to positions and roles rather than from particular disciplines. A counsellor position in child protection, for example, can be filled by a practitioner from a range of professions including Social Work, Psychology and often those with “other relevant tertiary qualifications”. For this reason, supervision is increasingly said to be essential across disciplines.

Following Crocket (2002a) I also refer throughout this document to practitioners and not to “supervisees”. This is intended to position the practitioner as having agency, and not as relegated to a position of being acted on by the supervisor, the passive recipient of supervision.

SITUATING MY RESEARCH IN THEORY

When we say “situating ourselves” we refer to the practice of clearly and publicly identifying those aspects of our own experience, imagination, and intentions (White, 1991) that we believe guide our work. (Freedman & Combs, 1996, p. 275).

I am positioned in this research, as much as anything, by the concept of ‘positioning’ itself. Positioning theory (Davies & Harre, 1990; Drewery, 2005) addresses “how different ways of speaking produce more and less preferred subjectivities” (Drewery, 2005, p. 306) – which is also a productive way of speaking. In the terms of this theory, my own preference of “selves-in-representation”, based on ideas of agency and inclusion, which I hope this research will help to produce, is similarly influenced by the theory shared by postmodernism, social constructionism and narrative therapy. In this section I will briefly describe how each of these theories has helped to situate me in this project as a researcher on supervision, taking action to support practitioners to take action themselves within supervision. Theory has helped to form my hope to learn ways that practitioners position themselves as agents in supervision, with a legitimate voice and able to decline invitations to be acted upon.

Postmodernism, has been summarised by Anderson (1997, p. 36) as a rethinking of the modernist, enlightenment view of knowledge as reality,

Toward knowledge as a discursive practice, toward a plurality of narratives that are more local, contextual, and fluid; it moves toward a multiplicity of approaches to the analysis of subjects such as knowledge, truth, language, history, self, and power. It emphasises the relational nature of knowledge and the generative nature of language.

From this perspective, Anderson (1997) has advocated a position for therapists of ‘not-knowing’, characterised by

An attitude and a belief – that a therapist does not have access to privileged information, can never fully understand another person, always needs to be in a state of *being informed* by the other, and always needs to learn more about what has been said or may not have been said. (p. 134)

These values have equally influenced my attitudes and beliefs as a supervisor and as a researcher about supervision. I have particularly been sensitised to the uses of language and its effects. These ideas have influenced my choice of methodological approach in this research: employing a close reading of participants’ spoken language to develop rich accounts of the spoken and unspoken resonances and histories of their words. The wish for ‘being informed by the other’ has influenced my choice of the reflexive process of framing questions, listening and responding to their recorded responses, responding with further questions, reflecting on their responses to these, and sharing those reflections and so on. This recursiveness is intended as a form of collaborative engagement with the texts generated by the semi-structured conversations.

Social constructionism has highlighted the way that knowledge as discursive practice emerges from different social contexts. In the context of supervision, this leads to consideration of how supervision is constructed, and how participants are positioned as they engage in its discursive practices (Crocket, 2001). Gergen (1999, p. 62) stresses that discursive practices include “grand languages of self, truth and morality”, but also “mundane exchanges in families, friendships, and organizations, in the informal comments, funny stories and the remainder of the daily hubbub”. The emancipatory possibility offered by this perspective is that it positions us to ask the question, if our ways of speaking are “injurious how can we change them; what alternatives are available; what can we create together?” (Gergen, 1999, p. 63). These questions have guided me in this research to remain

curious about the social experiences of participants and about their sense of possibilities for preferred change. I have taken care to be open to these domains of possible influence in my questioning and in what I have allowed myself to be alive to in my witnessing and reflection on participants' responses.

Narrative therapy has been recommended for “its respectful attitude to clients (...); for its attention to the power dynamics of therapy; and for its attempted suspension of expertise in the therapeutic relationship” (Morss & Nichterlein, 1999, p. 164). In this sense I see narrative therapy as an application of the concepts and values of postmodernism and social constructionism. I have attempted to bring this same approach to the practice of research, as I describe in Chapter Three. White (1997) described his contribution to narrative therapy as ‘poststructuralist’ in the sense that it was concerned to “break from the pursuit of ‘uncovering’ the ‘truth’ of life, and from the grand narratives of human nature of contemporary culture that incite this pursuit” (p. 218). From a similar perspective, Bird (2006, p. xi) has emphasised the importance of engaging in conversation in ways that “privilege the actual words used by others and by ourselves, while protecting the relationship from the effects of totalisation and certainty”. It has been my hope in this research that I have been sensitive to the limitations that can be imposed by disempowering ways of speaking in order to open up possibilities for new ways of understanding supervision and induction to it. The interest in local knowledge and practice inherent in a narrative approach has oriented my inquiry toward a collaborative approach, reflecting my commitment to co-generation of new knowledges. A consideration of questions of the power at play in professional relationships and in grand narratives is essential for keeping this approach honest.

HOPES FOR THE RESEARCH

I hold hopes both for myself as a supervisor, and for myself as a researcher. I hope that this research will contribute to a growth and development in my own supervision practice with new practitioners. I hope that it will contribute to practitioners being better situated to advocate for their professional needs and hopes in supervision and to supervisors being better able to assist newer practitioners to understand and use supervision. It is hoped this research will

contribute to a greater emphasis on teaching undergraduate students about supervision as part of core curricula in social work, psychology and counselling education.

THESIS OUTLINE

Chapter Two is a selective review of supervision literature, particularly in relation to how new practitioners are supported to understand and use supervision. Chapter Three describes the bricolage method by which the study was undertaken. The results are presented in three chapters, with the first two detailing the knowledges participants generated and shared regarding induction to supervision. The final chapter on results highlights the effects of the research on the participants, on their supervision practice and on their supervisory relationships. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the implications for supervision practice, for new practitioners and supervisors.

CHAPTER TWO

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LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter surveys the literature on supervision practice, theory and research in relation to how new practitioners come to understand and effectively use supervision. It particularly addresses what has been written about what supervision is, what it seeks to achieve, the supervision context which new practitioners currently enter and how supervision is negotiated between new practitioners and supervisors.

THE PURPOSE OF SUPERVISION

There appears to be a consensus about the desired broad outcomes of supervision. Authors generally agree that supervision exists to support the provision of ethical and effective services to clients (Carroll, 1996; Feltham, 2000; Henderson, 2009; Hewson, 2002; Holloway & Carroll 1996, cited in Crocket, 2002a). There is therefore a dual focus on both the welfare of the client and the development of the practitioner (Carroll, 1996). According to Inskipp and Proctor (1993, p. 1), supervision aims “to enable the counsellor to gain in ethical competence, confidence, compassion and creativity in order to give her best possible service to the client”. Hess (1980, cited in Hawkins & Shohet, 2006, p. 57) wrote that the supervisor meets “the supervisee, in an effort to make the latter more effective in helping people”. Loganbill, Hardy and Delworth (1982, cited in Hawkins & Shohet, 2006, p. 57) similarly described supervision as aiming “to facilitate the development of therapeutic competence in the other person”.

There is, however, less agreement on how to describe the activity of supervision. Grauel (2002) suggested there are “multifarious practices commonly called supervision” (p. 4) and that supervision has never been “well understood and practiced” (p. 12). Scaife (2009) concluded that supervision differs across and within professional disciplines and cultural contexts and between individuals.

Carroll (1996), too, noted the richness and variety within supervision and suggested there is not agreement about tasks, roles or procedures in supervision. This lack of agreement on definition and on each parties' role in the process could be expected to add to the degree of difficulty for practitioners who are new to supervision in terms of understanding what supervision is, their role and the role of their supervisor. Despite the lack of a consensual definition, a number of authors view the supervision relationship as centrally important. Inskipp and Proctor (1993, p. 1) broadly defined supervision as "a working alliance between the supervisor and counsellor in which the counsellor can offer an account or recording of her work; reflect on it; receive feedback and where appropriate, guidance". Hess (1980, cited in Hawkins & Shohet, 2006, p. 57) described supervision as "a quintessential interpersonal interaction," in which the supervisor contributes to the practitioner's effective practice. Loganbill, Hardy and Delworth (1982, cited in Hawkins & Shohet, 2006, p. 57), defined supervision as a developmentally facilitative, "intensive, interpersonally focused, one-to-one relationship..."

THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPERVISION

There have been calls for empirical evidence that supervision is responsible for enhancing practitioner competence and effecting better client outcomes (Feltham, 2002; Gonslavez & McLeod, 2008). Feltham (2000) critiques the professions blind faith in supervision and suggests the importance of supervision be considered more critically. Many authors report evidence of positive impacts of supervision on practitioners' growth and development and acquisition of clinical skills, in training and throughout their careers (Berger & Buchholz, 1993; Kavanagh et al., 2002; Vespia et al., 2002; Wheeler & Richards, 2007). Some research on the benefits of supervision identified the significance of new practitioners being assisted to develop their understanding and effective use of supervision early in their professional careers. Wheeler and Richards (2007, p. 54) described supervision as the "cornerstone of continuing professional development". Hawkins and Shohet (2006, p. 3) concluded that "if the value and experience of good supervision are realised at the beginning of one's professional

career, then the ‘habit’ of receiving good supervision will become an integral part of the work life and the continuing development of the worker”.

SUPERVISION: THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Feltham (2002, p. 335) stated that supervision is seen in most countries as “mandatory during training and the early part of one’s career, but optional thereafter”. However while this may be true for the USA, it is not entirely the case for Britain or New Zealand. The American Psychological Association and the American Counselling Association do not require ongoing supervision of counselling post -licensing (Davy, 2002; Feltham, 2000; Grant & Schofield, 2007; King, 2001). In the United Kingdom, the British Psychological Society (BPS) encourages professional development, accountability and regular use of supervision.

However, it is not a requirement (Wheeler, 2007). The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) has placed considerable emphasis on the role of supervision in the practice of counselling, with a code of ethics requiring qualified counsellors to have regular supervision for their work with clients for as long as they are in practice, regardless of their length of experience, as part of ongoing self-care and professional development (Davy, 2002; Townsend et al., 2002, cited in Gonsalvez & McLeod, 2008; Wheeler, 2007; Wheeler & King, 2001). In New Zealand ongoing supervision is viewed as an expected component of developing and maintaining competent and ethical practice (New Zealand Association of Counsellors Code of Ethics) for counsellors, but not for registered psychologists.

SUPERVISION: THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

Noting the variety of supervision practices in Australia, Feltham (2002, p. 327) concluded that “a creative challenge exists to design a framework for supervision in Australia (training and quality control norms, a research and literature base) that is to serve an expanding supervisory profession”. Such a framework does not

yet exist. However, various associations and Registration Boards in Australia do stipulate requirements for practitioners to participate in supervision.

The Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA), the first national body to viably represent the counselling profession in Australia (Schofield & Pelling, 2002, p. 219), is a peak body for member associations which meet standards of practice for counselling and psychotherapy (PACFA Professional Standards, 2006). To become a member, a practitioner must provide evidence of training and supervised practice experience. Practising members are required to engage in ongoing supervision, irrespective of their status or experience (PACFA Professional Standards, 2006). Ongoing clinical supervision is “central to effective practice” and promotes an “enhanced capacity to utilise oneself in the therapeutic endeavour” (PACFA Professional Standards and Ethical Guidelines, 2006, p. 6). PACFA Professional Standards and Ethical Guidelines (2006, p. 11) require that “psychotherapists and counsellors have regular suitable supervision and use such supervision to develop counselling skills, maintain performance and provide accountability for practice”.

The Australian Counselling Association (ACA), an industry-based association, aims to set, monitor, maintain and improve professional standards in counsellor education and practice. It is a self-regulating body that provides for registration of members (ACA Code of Conduct, 2008, p. 2). The ACA Code of Conduct (2008) states that members must be committed to ongoing personal and professional development and undertake regular supervision and debriefing to develop skills, monitor performance and maintain professional accountability. The ACA Code of Practice states “counsellors must have achieved a level of competence before commencing counselling and must maintain continuing professional development as well as regular and ongoing supervision [...] counsellors must actively monitor their own competence through counselling supervision” (p. 12) .

Supervision standards for psychologists in Australia are primarily regulated by the state and territory Psychologist Registration Boards and to a lesser extent by the Australian Psychological Society (APS). To practise as an accredited psychologist in Australia, Board registration is obligatory, while membership of the APS is voluntary (Gonsalvez & McLeod, 2008; Hewson, 2002). The APS Code of Ethics (2007) provides that all psychologists must seek professional supervision or

consultation as required and must provide evidence of supervision to be eligible for full membership of the APS. However after membership is granted it appears supervision is seen as one of many professional development activities which psychologists could choose. There is no indication that supervision is the compulsory mechanism by which fitness to practice is determined. Instead the broader concept of compulsory continuing professional development is used to demonstrate that a psychologist should retain the right to offer psychological services (Gonsalvez & McLeod, 2008). Continuing professional development can include clinical supervision, but can also be demonstrated by attendance at conferences or professional workshops. According to the APS Code of Ethics (2007), psychologists may only provide psychological services within the limits of their professional competence. This includes but is not restricted to working within the limits of their education, training, supervised experience and appropriate professional experience. The Supervision Guidelines (2006) of the NSW Psychologist Registration Board, state that to be registered as a psychologist one must have completed either an approved Supervision Program or a two-year postgraduate degree in psychology recognised by the Board as equivalent to two years' supervised experience. The purpose of a Supervision Program is to ensure that provisionally registered psychologists, or 'Interns', gain the necessary professional competencies from supervised practice to meet the full registration requirement of two years' practical experience in the profession of psychology. Once registered, "psychologists are expected to maintain competence in their area of psychological practice through ongoing supervision and professional development" (NSW Psychologists Registration Board Code of Professional Conduct, 2004, p. 4).

Undergraduate Social Work degrees in Australia include supervised practice experience during field placements (University of New South Wales Handbook, 2009). The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) Code of Ethics (2004, p. 12) emphasises the importance of ongoing supervision for Social Workers after graduation in order to maintain competency. It states "Social Workers will, throughout their professional lifetime, utilise available supervision and consultation, or take active steps to ensure that they receive appropriate supervision, as a means of maintaining and extending practice competence".

Aside from the requirements of Registration Boards and Associations, many employers in Australia, government and non-government, have internal policies regarding supervision. It is my experience from having worked in three large non-government organisations and a government health service in NSW that such organisations are increasingly introducing policies stipulating requirements for participation in supervision and are continuing to develop and revise supervision models.

Supervision requirements within the NSW Department of Health are specified in A Framework for Managing Quality of Health Services in New South Wales (NSW Department of Health, 2005). This policy document identifies a need for “transparent” and “accountable processes” to be in place, including clinical supervision for all clinicians. It states that, whilst there is no system which has been proved to guarantee competence, the best available evidence suggests an appropriate mix of tools should be used and clinical supervision is included in the list of such tools. It states that clinical supervision for clinicians should be provided:

By a competent peer (or group of peers) in order to assess their ability to perform specific tasks. All clinicians should also be involved in assessing their peers. Careful consideration needs to be given to assessing the ability of one clinician to establish the competence of another. Clinical supervision should be a major component of ongoing performance management (p. 68).

With the exception of the APS, there is a common belief in Australia that supervision is essential for all social service practitioners during training and also as an ongoing activity, beyond the completion of training or registration, regardless of how long the practitioner has worked in the field. Given the wide agreement that supervision is an essential lifelong activity, I suggest that it is important that practitioners are supported to understand and effectively use supervision from the outset of their careers.

MODELS OF SUPERVISION

A diversity of models “abound(s)” (Carroll, 1996, p. 11). Models of supervision include psychoanalytic, counselling (Bernard & Goodyear, 1998; Carroll, 1996), developmental (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 1993) and social role models (Carroll, 1996; Holloway, 1995) in addition to generic supervision models (Carroll, 1996; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Holloway, 1995). This diversity of available models raises the question of just how new practitioners can be helped to develop an understanding of supervision.

Supervision models based on the theoretical counselling approach of the supervisor or practitioner, including cognitive behavioural, psychodynamic, and strengths based supervision, are said to have “fallen out of fashion over the past decade...” (Crocket, 2001, p. 47). While such models are still described (Henderson, 2009), supervision is increasingly becoming seen as a profession in its own right (Carroll, 1996; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006), as a generic activity and as a specialist practice with its own set of knowledges and practices. According to Getz (1999), supervision has developed from an extension of counselling practice to a separate specialisation that goes beyond particular models and fields of practice. This suggests that previous models may fail to adequately explain the practice of supervision (Carroll, 1996). Generic supervision models describe what tasks, functions and roles are used in supervision, providing a way to understand and undertake supervision (Carroll, 1996). Feltham (2002, p. 331) noted a growing literature describing supervision models with specific corresponding tasks and functions. Examples of generic supervision models include Hawkins and Shohet (2006), Holloway (1995) and Carroll (1996). Feltham (2002) asserted that most writers agree a conceptual structure should underpin supervisory relationships and sessions. This should address the following factors: formative, developmental aspects; observation and refinement of skills in line with requirements of professional bodies; accountability; practitioner support and stress management; client-therapist relationship; practitioner-supervisor relationship, relationship dimensions; and working context. Generic supervision models which provide clarity regarding the tasks, functions and roles of supervision may make it easier for new practitioners to understand supervision and their role in it.

Supervision models based on models of counselling have become less popular, while developmental models (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 1993) have become dominant in supervision thinking and research in the 1980s (Carroll, 1996), and continue to remain “pervasive in everyday supervision talk... and in the literature” (Crockett, 2001, p. 51). In Australia, this trend has been most apparent since the end of the 1990s (Gonsalvez, 2008). Developmental models of supervision are based on the assumption that practitioners develop and ‘grow’ and that development proceeds through discernable, somewhat predictable and sequenced stages, from less to more developed, with each stage characterised by its own tasks and issues (Carroll, 1996; Schofield & Pelling, 2002). Developmental models emphasise changing needs as practitioners gain experience in the field. New practitioners entering supervision will have specific and different understandings and needs of supervision and of the supervisor than do more experienced practitioners.

Given this assumption that practitioners’ needs change with experience, it has been suggested by Hawkins and Shohet (2006) that supervisors should be aware of the developmental stage and readiness of the individual practitioner to participate in different levels of supervision, and that “supervisors need to have a range of styles and approaches which are modified as the practitioner gains in experience and enters different, definable, developmental stages” (p. 70-71). Supervisors are said to be able to use stage models to help structure and plan what supervision is most beneficial for the practitioner’s current stage (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Schofield & Pelling, 2002). However Carroll (1996) has suggested that supervisors often lack the ability to change their approach to supervision. They may therefore fail to tailor their approach to meet the needs of the practitioner.

Developmental theories have been seen as “meta-theoretical in that they can be applied across therapeutic approaches, and offer broad principles for understanding of supervisee behaviours” (Gonsalvez & McLeod, 2008, p. 82). However, they have also been criticised as merely metaphors offering “broad brushstrokes... lacking in details and specification,... and lacking in a transition theory” (Watkins, 1995). Hawkins and Shohet (2006, p. 74) warned that “there is a danger in using these models too rigidly as a blueprint for prescribing how every supervisee at each stage should be treated, without enough reference to the needs

of the individual, the style of the supervisor and the uniqueness of the supervisor-supervisee relationship”. They advocate for more collaborative negotiation about needs between supervisor and practitioner.

READINESS TO ENGAGE IN SUPERVISION

Despite the common belief that supervision is essential, there is only a limited literature on how to help practitioners to prepare for supervision (Crocket, 2001, 2002; Whitman, 2001) and new practitioners often have little formal preparation for their role in supervision (Vespia et al., 2002). Practitioners usually enter the supervisory situation feeling ill-equipped, with little understanding of what supervision is about, how learning will take place, how to use it effectively, how to prepare for and utilise supervision time, the roles and responsibilities of the participants and how to find a supervisor who will be of best service (Berger & Buchholz, 1993; Carroll, 1996; McMahon, 2002; Vespia et al., 2002). McMahon (2002) found anecdotally that many helping professionals meet in a supervisory relationship for the first time and begin the “business of supervision” with little idea of what it is. Whitman (2001) found that only four of seventeen trainees he interviewed had ever received any education on supervision, “formal or informal, provided [...], or self-study” (p. 143). He warned that a practitioner who “begins their professional journey without knowing how to use supervision is like a person setting out on a trip to an unfamiliar place without knowing how to use a map” (p. 143). McMahon (2002) found that new practitioners are “essentially left to grapple with the complexities of supervision unaided” (p. 17).

Given supervision has been recognised as an essential ingredient of counselling training, support and development, and indeed in many cases is a requirement of professional practice, it is surprising that so much of the supervision literature has focussed on the supervisor, and that preparing counsellors for supervision has been such a “long neglected area” (Crocket, 2002a, p. 19), leaving practitioners “at the margins of accounts of the very activity that is to support them in ethical and effective practice...” (Crocket, 2002a, p. 19). Expecting new practitioners to participate in supervision without the necessary information, is positioning them in the supervisory relationship as being the “done to person” (Crocket, 2002b, p. 165) rather than the “doing person” (Crocket, 2002b, p. 165). Supervision done

this way can become a “one-sided guessing game” (Hess, 1980, cited in Berger et al., 1993, p. 86), with supervision methods reflecting the supervisor’s vision of supervision more than the practitioner’s, particularly in the case of the newer practitioner (Bernard & Goodyear, 1998, p. 90). This practice could be expected to reduce the possibilities for collaborative supervision, where practitioners would be supported to articulate their supervisory needs.

Carroll’s (1996) research on supervision with counselling trainees in Britain, found that trainees had very little understanding of what supervision meant and that their expectations of supervision changed little over the course of their counselling training. He reported that supervisees were “passive” in relation to supervision, that they had few expectations, which made it difficult to negotiate with supervisors. They were prepared to fall in with the supervisor’s ways of setting up and engaging in supervision. As expectations and understandings of supervision are usually based on past experiences of supervision (Webb, 2001), it is difficult for new practitioners, with no experience of supervision, to know what to expect or how to negotiate for their hopes for supervision to be met. This is particularly the case if undergraduate training does not adequately introduce practitioners to supervision.

Some authors highlight that practitioners’ confusion around supervision lingers for considerable time into the supervisory relationship (Cohen, 1980, cited in Webb, 2001), ultimately limiting the effectiveness of supervision. Carroll (1995, cited in Carroll, 1996) found that after two years of regular supervision practitioners still remained uncertain about what to expect from supervision. This finding highlights the importance of adequately inducting new practitioners into supervision.

Despite accounts of practitioners entering supervision without knowing what it is or how to go about it, supervision is viewed by some as “a working alliance” (Inskipp & Proctor, 1993, p. 1) in which both supervisor and practitioner have a role. Implicit in this understanding is the view that practitioners are responsible for actively participating and negotiating, in partnership with the supervisor, the content and structure of the encounter, sharing responsibility for the quality and effectiveness of the supervision (Berger et al., 1993; Carroll & Gilbert, 2006; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; McMahon, 2002; Scaife, 2009). Whitman (2001, p.

144) goes further, saying practitioners must be “proactive and take responsibility for their own learning”. These expectations may be difficult to meet for practitioners who are positioned as not knowing even what supervision is.

Numerous text books on supervision have been written to guide supervisors (for example - Carroll, 1996; Henderson, 2009). However, as Crocket (2001, 2002a) pointed out, a much smaller number of authors have addressed the practitioner in supervision to support them in preparing for supervision before it begins, or to position them to actively take up their role and responsibilities to effectively use supervision and have their needs met (Carroll & Gilbert, 2006; Crocket 2002a; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Inskipp & Proctor, 1988, cited in Scaife, 2009; Inskipp & Proctor, 1993).

Hawkins and Shohet (2006), addressed practitioners in the first section of their book on supervision for the helping profession. Their stated intention was “encouraging them [practitioners] to be proactive in managing to get the support needed to do their work” (p. 5) so they “can find a way of being active in ensuring that they make the most of the relationship” (p. 6). The question of “good enough supervision” was also discussed, providing an invitation for practitioners to reflect on themselves as a “helper”, encouraging them to consider learning an ongoing commitment. The importance of resourcing and self care was also covered, ending with a chapter on the importance of practitioners taking responsibility for actively participating in supervision.

Crocket (2002a) stressed the importance of preparing counsellors to engage in supervision,

not as supervised persons (...), but as counsellors who invite a colleague to stand alongside them, to partner them, as they review their work. This is a supervision that does not produce counsellors at the margins, but that offers them speaking positions as they story their desires for supervision and for their work as counsellors. (p. 20)

Writing about her teaching responsibilities she went on to say, “I do not want them [students] to experience themselves... in a position of not knowing that it was possible to ask, and not knowing what it was they might ask for, if asking were possible” (p. 20).

Crocket (2002a) described the use of a letter to students in a counselling programme, introducing them to knowledges about professional supervision and to the possibility of a collaboratively produced supervision. This letter invited students to consider their experiences and expectations of supervision; their role in relation to their supervisor; the ways they have prepared for supervision; whether they preferred to be seen as “being supervised” or as “co-labouring” (Fine & Turner, 1997, cited in Crocket, 2002a, p. 21); the position calls they want to respond to; and ways they might work towards a collaborative supervisory alliance. Crocket (2002a) recommended that counsellors interview their potential supervisor about their approach to supervision and how they go about engaging in that purpose; what they will bring and what they look for the supervisor to bring; what kind of relationship they understand the supervisory one to be, and how the monitoring of supervision will be managed. By using a letter in this way, counsellors are invited to prepare for supervision, by considering how it might be done and what they might bring to it.

The literature specifically addressing practitioners in supervision has grown with the publication of Carroll and Gilbert (2006) book “On Becoming a Supervisee: Creating Learning Partnerships”. Carroll and Gilbert (2006) argued that supervision is for the practitioner, not the supervisor, and that it is important to empower new practitioners to “take responsibility for their supervision and for their learning” (p. ix), to help them use supervision effectively, and to invite practitioners to be actively involved in supervision. They provided an overview of supervision; the rights, responsibilities and roles of practitioners in supervision; the supervision working agreement; preparing for supervision, developing a supervision agenda and presenting in supervision, including what sorts of things can be discussed. They also explored skills they believed that practitioners should learn for supervision, including skills in learning, giving and receiving feedback, self evaluation, reflective practice, emotional awareness, the skill of using dialogue in supervision and ways of responding to and dealing with problems that may arise in supervision.

PREPARATION FOR SUPERVISION

“Supervision does not just happen” (Carroll, 1996, p. 88) by itself without clear boundaries or agreements, and there is a danger if supervisors and practitioners come together for supervision with the assumption that they share understandings and expectations of supervision and of each other (Atkinson, 1997; Carroll, 1996; Storm, 2002a). Issues involved in supervision should be discussed carefully before starting (Atkinson, 1997; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Storm, 2002a). McMahon (2002, p. 20) concurred, stressing that “it is vital to the future success of the supervision that some important ground work is done” at the beginning.

According to Carroll (1996) it is the role of the supervisor to help prepare practitioners for their experience of supervision. He emphasised that helping practitioners understand supervision, their roles and responsibilities is beneficial to both short- and long-term impacts. Carroll among others (Berger & Buchholz, 1993; Carroll & Gilbert, 2006; McMahon, 2002) have suggested that practitioners should also take a role in preparing themselves for supervision, stressing that planning and preparation contribute to more productive supervision. Berger and Buchholz (1993) suggest pre-supervision preparation should begin during training, and that students be given opportunities to discuss supervision with fellow students. Carroll (1996, p. 91) urged practitioners to prepare “by finding out about supervision before it begins, by thinking through what they want from supervision, and from a supervisor, by reviewing varieties of supervisory contexts”. McMahon (2002) advised that practitioners should reflect on their professional needs, what they are looking for in a supervisor, their learning style, and practical issues such as how often to participate in supervision. Carroll and Gilbert (2006) invited new practitioners to write their own “philosophy of supervision” (p. 9) statement to capture what supervision means to them. They provided a series of questions for practitioners to consider when preparing such a document, which could be given to new or potential supervisors, or could simply assist the practitioner to develop their understandings and hopes before discussing supervision with a supervisor.

Several authors (including Carroll, 1996; Inskipp & Proctor, 1993) have written about the importance of practitioners and supervisors speaking with each other to help them both decide whether they want to proceed together in supervision and if

they do, how they will proceed. Inskipp and Proctor (1993) suggested that supervisors and practitioners might engage in an “exploratory interview,” primarily about what each party wants and expects from supervision and the supervisory relationship. Carroll and Gilbert (2006) agreed that practitioners should interview prospective supervisors.

To assist practitioners to engage in initial conversations with a new supervisor about supervision, several authors (Carroll, 1996; Carroll & Gilbert, 2006; McMahon, 2002) have provided sample questions for them to discuss in their first meeting. For practitioners who have a choice of supervisor, it was suggested such questions could assist them to decide whether or not to work with the supervisor (Carroll, 1996; Carroll & Gilbert, 2006; McMahon, 2002). For practitioners who do not have a choice of supervisor, Carroll and Gilbert (2006) suggested time could be spent discussing the fact that they have not chosen each other and the possible implications of this. The same questions can form the basis for negotiation. Several authors have asserted that supervision works best when both parties have the choice of whether to work together (Carroll, 1996; Ung, 2002). This then places emphasis on the need for a new practitioner to know enough about supervision to know what they are looking for in a supervisor.

There have also been recommendations (Borders & Leddick, 1987; Campbell, 2000, cited in McMahon, 2002; Carroll, 1996) that supervisors should inform practitioners about themselves as supervisors, their qualifications and experience, their philosophy and understanding of supervision and how they set up and maintain a supervisory relationship. This information could be shared with practitioners in the preliminary supervision conversation. It could be presented in the form of a “supervisor resumé”. Such a document can then be shared with practitioners (McMahon, 2002). This document could assist practitioners to develop their understanding of supervision in general and, in particular, of supervision with this supervisor (Carroll, 1996).

SUPERVISION WORKING AGREEMENTS

A number of authors have stressed the value of developing a supervision working agreement” (Inskipp & Proctor, 1993), or a contract between supervisors and

practitioners (Axten, 2002; Berger & Buchholz 1993; Bordin, 1983, cited in Feltham 2000; Carroll 1996; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Henderson, 2009; Inskipp & Proctor, 1993; Scaife, 2009; Storm, 2002a; Whitman, 2001). Supervision working agreements are individually tailored, two-way agreements, developed collaboratively to suit the needs and preferences of each partnership, in order to guide their work in supervision (Carroll & Gilbert, 2006; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Storm, 2002a). Developing the agreement provides a space to discuss and document a range of issues that may affect the supervision, prior to starting work together. Ultimately it helps supervisors and practitioners to clarify their expectations of one another and to outline the responsibilities of each party to the relationship (Storm, 2002a). A working agreement can include, but is not limited to: an understanding of supervision, its aims, objectives and methods; their hopes, fears and expectations of supervision and of each other; the roles and responsibilities of the participants; the nature of the supervisory relationship and the working alliance; issues of compliance with credentialing requirements; the organisational and professional context; evaluation procedures; and logistics and practicalities, such as record keeping, meeting location, frequency, and costs (Atkinson, 1997; Berger & Buchholz, 1993; Carroll, 1996; Carroll & Gilbert, 2006; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Scaife, 2009; Storm, 2002a). Contracts can be renegotiated and reconsidered as circumstances and needs change (Storm, 2002a). Several authors have provided formats for supervision working agreements (Carroll, 1996; Carroll & Gilbert, 2006; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Inskipp & Proctor, 1995, cited in Hawkins & Shohet 2006).

Whilst the contract can be a written document, it is the discussion itself that is said to be crucial (Scaife, 2009). The conversation to develop a supervision working agreement has been recommended to reduce the likelihood of differently positioned supervisors and practitioners talking across each other (Grant, 2005). It also assists practitioners to develop their understanding of supervision and the roles and responsibilities of each party (Berger & Buchholz, 1993; Carroll, 1996). Other benefits of such a conversation (Scaife, 2009, p. 73) are “to clarify the desires and expectations brought to the relationship ... and to agree what is and what is not possible”; “to set a context of openness and candour in which processes in supervision and the supervisory relationship are matters for discussion, negotiation and renegotiation, rather than being left to chance...” ; to

“prompt supervisees to think about how supervision can best support and develop them ... and to share the responsibility for their learning”; and to “... facilitate a sharing of knowledge about the supervisory field”. Such a conversation would assist supervisors and practitioners to become invested in the same supervisory outcomes (Carroll & Gilbert, 2006). It is hoped this would prepare practitioners with an idea of “what might take place in supervision and of the expectations of the supervisor regarding their work” (Scaife, 2009, p. 71). Ultimately this would help practitioners and supervisors to answer the question, “can and will we work together” (Inskipp & Proctor, 1993, p. 41) and, if so, how? Scaife (2009, p. 71) argued that there is “a strong link between the rigour of the contracting process at the outset and the quality of the working alliance which subsequently evolved”.

It has been asserted that it is a practitioner’s right to negotiate the supervision working agreement (Carroll & Gilbert, 2006). However 71% of participants in Whitman’s (2001) study, of a single session introduction to supervision, reported that they had not been previously involved in a supervision agreement, verbal or written. Storm (2002a) highlighted that when working agreements are developed they typically focus more on what the supervisor expects from the practitioner. She suggested it that it would be useful for this to be balanced by more detail about what the practitioner expects from the supervisor. Carroll and Gilbert (2006) invited practitioners to plan what they might do in situations where their supervisor is not interested in negotiating a working agreement. Hawkins and Shohet (2006) suggested to practitioners that to get the supervision they want, they “need to take full responsibility for [their] part in contracting and negotiating how the supervision will operate, what it will focus on and how the process will be monitored and reviewed” (p. 34).

DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN SUPERVISION AND OTHER PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

There has been considerable discussion in the literature about what distinguishes supervision from other professional practices such as personal counselling, line management, case management and academic supervision. It seems that for new practitioners to effectively engage in supervision they will need to know what it is and to consider how it may be different to these other practices.

Many authors stress that supervision is not counselling (Carroll, 1996; Scaife & Walsh, 2009). There is however some support in the literature that there is a role in supervision, to a greater and lesser extent, for reflection of personal reactions arising from the work (Carroll, 1996, Carroll & Gilbert, 2006; Crocket, 2002b). Carroll (1996, p. 13) suggests that the question - “where is the interface between therapy and supervision?” - remains salient. It has been argued that the extent to which it is seen as pertinent for supervision to focus on personal issues is partly determined by professional and theoretical models (Scaife & Walsh, 2009). At the more humanistic end of the theoretic spectrum, more space is allowed for the personal in supervision; while at the scientific end, less space is permitted (Carroll, 1996). Crocket (2002b) suggests that this binary distinction between the personal and professional is not useful in practice - “rich descriptions of our practice cannot support an exclusivity between personal and professional accounts” (p. 159).

Several authors have offered guidance on how to determine the “interface between therapy and supervision”. This may be particularly useful information for new practitioners developing their understanding of what can be usefully brought for discussion in supervision. Carroll and Gilbert (2006) suggest to practitioners that “if an issue is affecting you in the workplace, then it may be important to mention it in supervision” (p. 36). They add that “the more deep-seated personal aspects of the problem would fall into the realm of therapy/counselling but the impact of the issue on your working life can be a supervision issue” (p. 36). Hawkins and Shohet (2006) offered a similar guideline, that “personal material should only come into the session if it is directly affecting, or being affected by, the work discussed; or if it is affecting the supervision relationship” (p. 64). Scaife (2009) suggested that if either party is unsure whether something is relevant for supervision, it may be helpful to ask, “how is this relevant to the work?” (p. 17). It has been recommended that supervisors discuss and clarify these boundaries between supervision and personal therapy when introducing new practitioners to supervision (Feltham & Dryden, 1994, cited in Carroll, 1996) and that the emphasis on the personal is a matter for negotiation in the supervision relationship (Scaife, 2009). Given there is a question about where supervision and personal counselling interface, it appears that negotiations between supervisors and new

practitioners about this would be vitally important at the stage of inducting new practitioners to supervision.

There is little consensus between or within professions as to whether line managers should simultaneously function as clinical supervisors (Scaife, 2009). Some authors suggest that such a dual role can be a source of difficulty as the management role potentially interferes with, restricts and limits the collaborative supervision process due, amongst other things, to the power imbalance between practitioner and line manager (Axten, 2002; Copeland, 2001; Ung, 2002). It has also been suggested that “the roles of manager and supervisor are often conflated” (Scaife, 2009, p. 17), flagging that where the dual role exists the supervision time can become taken up with managerial and administrative issues, leaving limited time for reflection on client work. Others, however, suggest there may be advantages in the overlapping of the roles.

It has been acknowledged, however, that it is common for internal supervisors to hold a dual role as line manager (Axten, 2002; Scaife, 2009). Indeed it is considered a luxury if external supervision is available (Axten, 2002). It is important therefore for new practitioners to understand the differences between line management meetings and supervision in order to ensure their supervision needs are being met. It is also important, for their benefit and for the benefit of their clients, to have ways to negotiate a safe space to speak of difficulties. Understanding the differences between supervision and line management is particularly important for new practitioners who participated in supervision as part of their training, as it is likely that their placement supervisors have held a number of roles in relation to them, including both clinical and administrative responsibility (Carroll, 1996; Scaife, 2009). To remedy problems that may develop from the dual role of supervisor as line manager, Scaife (2009) suggested that the issue should be discussed at the contracting stage and that the parties consider separating the functions into separate meetings.

Because one of the possible routes for psychologists to gain registration with the NSW Psychologist Registration Board is by completion of a two-year postgraduate degree which may include academic supervision of a thesis, new psychologists entering the field may need to be assisted to develop their understanding of the distinctions between academic and professional supervision.

Ladany, Ellis and Friedlander (1999, cited in Cornforth & Claiborne, 2008, p. 156) emphasised that what they call clinical supervision and educational supervision “represent divided practices, drawing on different theoretical positions.” Cornforth and Claiborne (2008) described differences between educational and professional supervisions, including that educational supervision is not founded on the best interests of the client - “the academic supervisor manages the students’ relationships with their own data” (p. 159); and that educational supervisors are not called on to be supervised themselves. Storm and Sprenkle (2002, p. 109) pointed out that “context has a major impact on the supervisory enterprise”. They outlined what they saw as contrasts between supervision in academic and in practice contexts. Grant (2005, p. 337) described the supervision of graduate research students as “an uncertain practice”. Whilst the questions students ask their academic supervisors may resonate with similar questions that practitioners want to ask their professional supervisors - for example, “What can I expect from my supervisor? What does s/he expect from me? How often should we meet? Exactly what is supervision? Is it assisting or directing?” - the answers will have very different meanings and implications in the two contexts.

TRAINING FOR SUPERVISOR COMPETENCE

Despite claims that supervision is a profession in its own right, with its own body of knowledge, there appears to be a lack of consensus in Australia on what constitutes a “qualified or experienced supervisor” (Henderson, 2006, cited in Henderson, 2009, p. 7). The AASW for example requires that those providing supervision, education, training or evaluation “possess and maintain the necessary knowledge, skill and methodology to perform these tasks competently” (Code of Ethics, 2004, p. 19). However, they provide little guidance on what the necessary knowledge, skills and methodology are or how they may be obtained. The Psychology Registration Boards are, however, currently making changes in order to make the competencies of supervisors more uniform across their jurisdiction and to explicitly shape the skills and knowledge of supervisors prior to their taking on supervision work with intern psychologists (Gonsalvez & McLeod, 2008). To be eligible to supervise an intern psychologist in NSW, the supervisor

must be a fully registered psychologist of at least three years in good standing, have participated in a Board-approved, two-day supervision workshop and achieve a satisfactory standard on a test of knowledge about the supervision process, reporting requirements and documentation. To maintain authorisation, a supervisor must complete a one-day workshop or advanced supervision workshop every five years, and demonstrate to the Board that they have successfully supervised interns for the purposes of registration (Gonsalvez & McLeod, 2008; NSW Psychologist Registration Board). While formal training is being introduced to reduce variance in the supervision provided to interns (Gonsalvez & McLeod, 2008), it is not clear if this includes a focus on educating supervisors on how they can best support trainees to understand and use supervision effectively.

While it has been suggested that supervisors should take a role in assisting practitioners to understand and effectively use supervision (Carroll, 1996), this may be difficult given that supervisors themselves have often received little or no training on supervision (Carroll, 1996; Kavanagh et al., 2002; McMahan, 2002) and are themselves in the process of developing their own understanding of supervision and their role in the activity. Historically, the role of supervisor has been “inherited” (Carroll, 1996, p. 4) by the practitioner considered the most senior, or seen by colleagues as a good practitioner, or where it was considered a natural developmental step (Carroll, 1996; Henderson, 2009; Rodenhauser, 1997, cited in Schofield & Pelling, 2002), or when it was simply “assumed that a trained therapist was a good supervisor” (Holloway & Neufeldt, 1995, p. 211). This seems to still be the case for PACFA supervisors, who only need to have been practicing and to meet the criteria for membership of a relevant professional association for a period of time in order to be eligible to practice as a supervisor (PACFA Professional Training Standards, 2007).

With the growing recognition that supervisory competence is not guaranteed by experience or skills as a practitioner alone (Gonsalvez & McLeod, 2008) or by supervisory experience (Watkins, 1997, cited in Schofield & Pelling, 2002), several authors have called for specialised training for supervisors (Akin & Weil, 1981; Bernard & Goodyear, 1998, cited in Schofield & Pelling 2002; Carroll, 1996; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Henderson, 2009; Schofield & Pelling, 2002). Supervision of supervision experience has also been recommended (Axten, 2002; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Schofield & Pelling, 2002). Specialised training is

believed to equip supervisors to carry out their role and functions in a deliberate and effective way (Holloway & Neufeldt, 1995; Kavanagh et al., 2002). Several authors have raised the issue of whether working as a supervisor without training should be deemed unethical (Carroll, 1996; Hoffman, 1994, cited in McMahon & Simons, 2004; Scaife, 2009).

It has been acknowledged there is no single, agreed core curriculum, let alone a consensus about length or style of supervisor training Henderson (2009). Hawkins and Shohet (2006) however urge that “it is grossly inadequate just to send them [supervisors] on a short supervisor training course and then expect them to function well as a supervisor” (p. 129-130). Several authors, including Carroll (1996); Hawkins and Shohet (2006); Inskipp and Proctor (1993, 1995, cited in Henderson, 2009); Page and Wosket (2001) have, nonetheless, contributed ideas about what might be included in supervisor training.

A small number of authors have written about ways supervisor training might address induction of practitioners who are new to supervision. Carroll (1996) suggested supervision training could include a section on supervision for new practitioners. He proposed supervisors “need to deal with how supervisees understand supervision, what has been, if any, their previous experience of it, and need to help supervisees prepare for their forthcoming experience of supervision” (p. 90). Feltham and Dryden (1994, cited in Carroll, 1996, p. 90-91) suggested ways supervisors could introduce new practitioners to supervision. They recommended supervisors explore the new practitioner’s understanding of supervision, create space for explanation, discussion and negotiation of supervision, help the new practitioner to question elements of supervision, describe their own understanding of supervision, their theoretical orientation, clarify assessment procedures, discuss and explore issues in the relevant Code of Ethics and finally discuss the boundaries between supervision, personal therapy and training.

The increasing focus on training for supervisors is demonstrated by the publication of *Supervisor Training: Issues and Approaches* by Henderson (2009). Henderson described this book as a resource for those planning to undertake supervisor training and for those who design or teach training for supervisors of counsellors. The first half of the book addresses issues in supervisor training. The

second half surveys approaches to supervision aligned with what Carroll (1996, p. 4) has described as the “counselling bound” models of supervision.

Interestingly Henderson did not suggest there may be different training needs for supervisors working with new practitioners, other than to say that training curriculum may include developmental stages of learning and that “the needs of the practitioner and the stage of their career may determine which one [educative function, supportive and creative function, managerial function] takes precedence” (p. xix). Likewise, none of the five different types of supervision training course proposed by Hawkins and Shohet (2006) is designed specifically for supervisors working with new practitioners. It appears the content of the five supervision courses may not address the needs of this group.

Despite calls for supervisor training, most supervisors have inadequate or no supervision training (Carroll, 1999; Kavanagh et al., 2002; Kavanagh, Spence, Strong, Wilson, Sturk, & Crow, 2002, cited in Gonsalvez, 2008; McMahon, 2002).

With training and support, supervisors could have a better understanding and framework, themselves, for supervision, and be better positioned to engage in conversations and activities with practitioners to assist them to develop their understanding and use of supervision.

SUPERVISION TRAINING FOR PRACTITIONERS

Discussion of training in supervision has tended to emphasise training for supervisors. There has been little consideration of training for practitioners and little concern expressed that practitioners have generally not participated in training for supervision (Berger & Buchholz, 1993; McMahon & Simons, 2004). Some authors such as Scaife (2009), continue to write about supervision training only in the sense of training for supervisors. This is regardless of the fact that supervision is ultimately for the practitioner and the practitioner’s clients, and that the responsibility for supervision is shared in a working alliance dependent on the contributions of both supervisor and practitioner.

Elsewhere in the supervision literature (Bahrlick, Russell & Salmi, 1991; Berger & Buchholz, 1993; Carroll, 1996; Feltham, 2000; Horton, 1993; McMahon & Simons, 2004), there have been clear calls for practitioners to be offered structured support and training on supervision to prepare them to effectively use supervision. Just as practitioner competence does not ensure competence as a supervisor, Berger and Buchholz (1993) suggested that academic competence as a student does not ensure competence in the active use of supervision. Carroll, (1996, p. 92) proposed that “if supervision is of its very nature supervisee-centred, i.e. for the learning of the supervisees, then it is essential that supervisees have some training in being supervisees”. He added, “supervisees have a right to expect help in taking on the role of supervisee, and be assisted in preparing for supervision” (p. 9). Carroll (1996) and McMahon (2002) suggested that time spent in preparation will reap rewards in a productive supervisory arrangement.

Several authors have outlined areas to include in practitioner training on supervision (Carroll, 1996; Berger & Buchholz, 1993; Inskip & Proctor, 1993). These include: information on what supervision is; supervision forms and supervision methods; major theoretical issues and related research; the roles and responsibilities of each party; negotiating the supervisory relationship and supervision contract; reflecting on themselves as a learner; skills for assessing a supervisor; writing learning objectives; preparing for, and presenting in supervision; transferring from supervision to counselling; receiving feedback; evaluating self and supervisor; resolving of conflicts in the supervisory relationship; and terminating supervision (Berger & Buchholz, 1993; Carroll, 1996; McMahon & Simons, 2004; Whitman, 2001).

McMahon & Simons (2004) did exploratory research in Australia, using questionnaires to gauge the impact on practising professional counsellors of an intensive, four-day supervision training program. Participants completed a pre-training questionnaire and a post-training questionnaire six months after the training. The program was attended by people in supervisory roles as well as practitioners who were not practicing as supervisors. Topics covered included the processes and possibilities of supervision, negotiating supervision relationships and contracts, the roles and functions of supervisors and supervisees, case presentation, processes of group supervision, individual supervision and counsellor development. They found that the training made a positive difference

to counsellors' confidence, self awareness, theoretical knowledge, and skills, regardless of whether they supervised others or not.

In a separate study, Whitman (2001) investigated a single-session, 90-minute introduction to supervision for third year psychiatry residents, clinical psychology interns, practicum students and clinical social work trainees. The session was designed to "help students prepare for their supervision experience" (p. 143). Topics addressed participants' past supervision experience, characteristics of good "supervisees", characteristics of good supervisors, using a supervision agreement/contract, addressing supervision problems, parallel process, professional versus personal issues in supervision and learning to supervise. The evaluation of the single session found the most helpful topics were characteristics of good supervisors, addressing problems in supervision, and supervision agreements and contracts. Whitman found the session helped "trainees feel more comfortable and more open in supervision, and prompted them to try different supervision modalities" (p. 143).

Investigating the effects of role induction on students' perceptions of supervision, Bahrck et al. (1991) found that students evaluated supervision more negatively before the role induction. Following role induction they reported a clearer conceptualisation of supervision, greater willingness to discuss concerns with their supervisor, a greater ability to express their needs to their supervisor, and they viewed the supervisor as providing more structure. This suggests that without training and preparation for supervision, students may experience more difficulty expressing their needs and understanding each party's role in the activity.

Berger and Buchholz (1993) maintained that supporting practitioners to prepare for supervision clarifies expectations and facilitates a more active and productive role for them in their own professional growth.

Schofield and Pelling (2002, p. 220) asserted that the challenge "for the Australian counselling profession at the start of the 21st century is to develop sound supervision training courses". There seems to be broad agreement that such training courses could usefully be developed for both supervisors and practitioners to position them to make effective use of supervision.

CHAPTER THREE

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METHOD

INTRODUCTION

This qualitative study is practitioner research, addressing practitioner questions about how new practitioners come to understand and effectively use supervision. While research has “taken on an aura of mystique” (Lees, 2001, p. 132) amongst some practitioners, my hope was that learning about practitioners’ experiences of induction to supervision from practitioners themselves and also from their supervisors would open up possibilities for my own learnings as a supervisor. I was motivated, as others have been, to do research to “serve practice” (Crocket, 2004, p. 64), to shape and extend my own practice, and hopefully to contribute to that of others. Whilst Speedy (2008) described how she became interested in narrative therapy practices through her interest in inquiry methods, I have had the reverse experience of becoming interested in ways that narrative therapy practices can be transferred to the research enterprise.

Gaddis’s idea that research involves “... any systematic attempt to generate knowledge (...) any plan for inquiry that intended to result in the documentation and dissemination of knowledge for public or professional use” (2004, p. 42) seemed to cast research more as an everyday activity, and somehow more possible. My research questions and my professional interests were both suited to qualitative research. As Polkinghorne (2005, p. 137) has put it, “qualitative research is inquiry aimed at describing and clarifying human experience as it appears in people’s lives.”

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the process of the project to orient the reader to the theoretic discussion that follows. The process of “data generation” is then considered in detail to “show” the reader what happened (Speedy, 2008, p. 61) in the research process. This is followed by an overview of

ethical considerations. In the following chapters, the story of the participants' responses to the research question is laid out.

PROCESS OVERVIEW

I took the following steps to generate data for this project:

1. Requested and obtained ethics approval from University of Waikato school of Education's Research Ethics Committee
2. Recruited and selected participants.
3. Provided participants with questions for individual reflection.
4. A first audiotaped conversation took place between participating supervisor and practitioner pairs, to discuss the questions given and any other reflections. I set up equipment but was not present in the room for these conversations.
5. Transcribed the audiotapes of the first conversations.
6. Provided participant pairs with transcripts of their first conversations and invited them to edit these.
7. Composed letters to respond to the transcript conversations with further questions and sent these to each pair.
8. Second audiotaped conversations took place between participating supervisor and practitioner pairs. Again, I was not present.
9. Transcribed the audiotapes of these second conversations.
10. Provided participant pairs with transcripts of their second and final conversation and again invited them to edit these.

BRICOLAGE

The concept of bricolage was central to the methodology used in this investigation. Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 4) described bricolage as a methodology made up of a various qualitative methodological practices. They refer to the researcher as a bricoleur, "a maker of quilts, or, as in filmmaking, a

person who assembles images into montages” (p. 4). In this process, the researcher uses whatever strategies, methods and materials are available to stitch together the “quilt” - the particular experiences of the participants. Continuing the craft metaphor, they suggested that “if the researcher needs to invent, or piece together new tools or techniques, he or she will do so” (p. 4).

The research practice used here has, in this sense, been “invented” to suit the particular purposes of the study: to generate rich descriptions of relevant experiences. This is congruent with narrative therapy which also fuels my interest in the development of rich descriptions of people’s lives and experiences (White, 2004). Flick (2002, p. 229, cited in Denzin & Lincoln 2005, p. 5) argued that using such a combination of multiple methodological practices can be a “strategy that adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness and depth to any inquiry”.

In line with Polkinghorne’s (2005) dictum that “the area to be studied should determine the inquiry method” (p. 138), I have used bricolage to select methods congruent with my own professional practice that are suitable for generating the sort of information, data, stories and experiences that I am interested in for this research. The methods used drew on elements of narrative therapy ideas such as co-research (Bird 2000; White, 1997), outsider witnessing (White, 1995; 2007), letter writing practices (White & Epston, 1990) and other methodologies such as interview theory (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Polkinghorne, 2005) and action research (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Reason, 2001). I describe each of these elements below.

INFLUENCES ON THE METHOD AND DESIGN OF THIS PROJECT

Narrative practice

I intended my research practice to be congruent with narrative approaches, which have been a major influence on my own practice in supervision and counselling. I hoped to move between research and therapy practice (Speedy, 2008) by approaching all aspects of the research from a narrative perspective, including the framing of the research question, the generation and analysis of data, producing results, and telling the story. This brought the advantage of a coherent approach and the richness that postmodern approaches permit. It also posed the challenge

of finding ways to talk about people's stories as research, as it could be said to be impossible, as Kirkman (2002, p. 30) suggested, to "draw clear boundaries around narrative as data, narrative as method and narrative as theory". I have chosen to see this as a productive tension as well as a potentially limiting contradiction.

Research to benefit the researcher and the research participants

While this is practitioner research, intended to shape my own supervision practice, I wanted to ensure, for ethical reasons, that participants were not "used" solely for purposes of my own learning or for the completion of my thesis. Etherington (2001) wrote of her concerns about doing research with her clients and the potential for exploiting her power and influence for her own ends. Whilst I was not inviting my own clients to participate in the research, I too was concerned to not "use" others, in this case participating supervisors and practitioners, for my own ends. It was important, I felt, for participants to experience their participation in the research as personally relevant and beneficial. Literature recognising the potential therapeutic value for clients who participate in research (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Etherington, 2001; Gaddis, 2004; Speedy, 2008) gave me confidence that it is possible to offer similar possibilities for participants. The narrative practices used were chosen to encourage collaborative review and reflection on supervision practice. This was not looking to find fault or allocate blame, but to explore practitioners' induction to supervision and what contributed to practitioners developing their understanding and effective use of supervision. The overall aim was to enhance practice.

An exciting outcome for me was that participants spoke about benefits for them from participating in the research. They described how it had shaped their own practice and their supervision together. This is discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

In addition to participants benefiting, it was important that participation should not cause harm. Later in this chapter I outline the possible risks of harm involved for participants and the ways I acted to minimise risk.

Data generation

Given my hope that participants benefit from this research, it was important to go beyond simple data “gathering” - collecting up whatever was already available – and to engage in productive “generation” of data (Crocket, 2004). In line with narrative practice, my role as researcher is a “contributor position” (Bird, 2004, p. 181), decentred and influential (White, 2007), as “not-knowing” (Anderson, 1997, p. 134) and curious, in order to support movement from thin accounts to more richly described accounts of experiences; and to support participants to move beyond what is already “known and familiar” (White, 2007, p. 263) towards “what is possible for people to know” (White, 2007, p. 4). It was intended this would support participants to discover new knowledges and experiences yet to be described. As Crocket (2004) noted, the researcher’s role in this is not as “neutral participant.” Rather, this requires active engagement to “dig below the surface to bring up experiential accounts,” (Polkinghorne, 2005); to “scaffold” (White, 2007) the process and to work with participants in co-generation of data. My role is intended to contribute to generation of the data through “embarking on a journey to a destination that cannot be precisely specified, and via routes that cannot be predetermined” (White, 2007, p. 4).

Co-research

Narrative therapy engages with clients in what has been called “co-research” (Bird, 2000; White, 1997, p. 172), or “consulting your consultants” (Epston & White, 1992). Narrative practitioners invite clients to take up the position of consultant or co-researcher to acknowledge the particular special knowledge they have in relation to particular problems or circumstances they experience (Winslade, Crocket & Monk, 1997). Consulting the consultant and co-researching involve a process of “unearthing and recording people’s insider knowledges” (Morgan 2000, p. 116) for the benefit of future clients as well as for the benefit of the clients consulted (Winslade et al., 1997).

This research focussed on “unearthing” the knowledges and experiences of supervisors and new practitioners, as “insiders”. This involved three-way co-research. The research positioned supervisory pairs to co-research their work together through two guided conversations. It positioned me as co-researcher and

“co-constructor” (Freedman & Combs, 1996, p. 89) through producing the initial questions and the subsequent letter and questions that guided participants’ conversations.

In narrative therapy the therapist engages in the work from a position of partnership with the client, assuming that this is “reciprocal in the sense that the counsellor gains knowledge and understanding” for themselves from their work with the client (Monk, 1997, p. 24). The co-research undertaken in this project similarly resulted in multiple effects for me and for my co-researchers. These effects are discussed further in Chapter Six.

Co-research sometimes involves documenting people’s knowledges and skills to share with others (Morgan, 2000). Telling the story of the research in this written form, I am mindful that the participants’ knowledges and stories be positioned centrally. Hopefully publication of these results will make participants’ knowledges and experiences more widely accessible.

Collaborative process honours each distinct voice (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 963) and in telling and retelling, each participant discovers things about themselves. This is a key benefit of co-research practice.

Outsider witnessing/Researcher witnessing

“Definitional ceremony” practices (White, 2007) have influenced this research. Cultural anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff first used the term definitional ceremony to describe how communities of people actively construct their identity. Michael White introduced this idea, and the related idea of “outsider witnessing,” to the realm of therapy (Carey & Russell, 2004). In a definitional ceremony in a therapy setting, audience members are outsider witnesses to conversations between the therapist and those who come to therapy (Russell & Carey, 2004; Morgan, 2000). It aims to “provide a rich context for story development” (White, 2007, p. 165). Definitional ceremonies involve three stages; 1) The person the definitional ceremony is for tells their story. During this stage the outsider witnesses are positioned as audience, listening to the stories told. 2) Those invited to be outsider witnesses retell the story. Witnesses’ retellings are structured by what expressions they were drawn to, the images or

pictures evoked by these expressions, the ways in which these expressions touched them, and how they may influence them in their own lives. During this middle stage the person whose story has been witnessed, takes the position of witness. 3) Finally, there is a retelling of the retelling by the person who the definitional ceremony is for. The people attending as witnesses return to the position of audience to a reflection on their reflections, guided by the same four categories of enquiry followed by the outsider witnesses in the retelling stage (White, 2007).

While the research methodology did not involve definitional ceremony, per se, I did consciously take on a position of outsider witness to the audiotapes and transcripts of participants' conversations. I was listening specifically for what I was "drawn to" (White, 2007, p. 186), the "particularities of expression" and "images" (White, 2007, p. 193) and the "talk that sings" (Bird, 2000, p.30). However, unlike outsider witnessing, I was listening for particular things – words, phrases, expressions that caught my attention or sang to me in relation to the research topic. I did not engage with participants, as in outsider witnessing, in a re telling of what I was drawn to (White, 2007, p. 186), nor of the ways I have been "moved" or "transported" (White, 2007, p. 191) by witnessing their conversation. Instead, I privately reflected on moments I had been drawn to and, based on these reflections, I framed my further questions to participants. The questions were designed to invite them to richly describe and extend their experiences and knowledges in relation to the research topic. In a limited way this played the role served in the outsider witnessing process by the audience sharing about resonance and transport. Participants were invited at this stage to engage in a second dialogue, guided by the questions produced in response to their first conversation. This second dialogue was intended to offer the same benefits as the "retelling of the retelling" in definitional ceremony (White, 2007, p. 196).

Michael White described outsider witnessing as offering "transformative potential" (White, 1995, p. 176). I hoped that inviting participants to engage in a second conversation, based on my questions, would contribute to participants becoming "other than who they were before their participation..." (White, 1995, p. 192).

The witnessing I engaged in is different enough from outsider witnessing that it may be better described as narrative-informed “researcher witnessing.” My role was to pragmatically listen to what caught my attention, specifically in relation to the research topic - witnessing in ways intended to invite a thickening of experiences and knowledges related to the research question. This witnessing has the purpose of richly describing the topic, rather than people’s preferred stories. A contribution of this research is to show the possibilities of purposeful narrative-informed researcher witnessing.

Researching through writing

Another element in the bricolage of this research was using writing as a method of enquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005, p. 959). Richardson suggested that writing as research is a “dynamic creative process” (p. 960), providing a way to learn about oneself as well as the research topic. As a student and practitioner of narrative therapy, I am grounded in its history as a literary practice. Use of letter writing in narrative practice (White & Epston, 1990) is a clear instance of this. Drawing on these ideas, I used writing to serve the purposes of the project, although the writing I engaged in was at an early stage of the project. Richardson’s emphasises writing after data is generated. Writing was a focus in this study during data generation.

The increasing availability of technologies allows numerous possibilities for writing as a method of inquiry. “Virtual interviewing” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 721), is one example. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005, p. 959) characterised the literature on writing as research as vast and varied. While my own literature review confirms this (Egan, Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2006; Kralik, Koch & Brady, 2000), I was unable to find references to writing used for research in the same way as in this project. Mindful that “(d)ifferent forms of writing are appropriate for different audiences and different occasions” (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 975), I used writing in this project to guide and extend conversations between supervisor and practitioner pairs, to re-present them through the process of transcribing, and to tell a story in this document.

My communication as researcher in relation to the audiotaped conversations between participant pairs could be said to have the property of “(a)synchronicity”

(Egan et al., 2006, p. 1285) - it did not occur in “real time” as in face-to-face communication. Instead, I directed the first set of questions to participants in writing (Appendix I). After listening to their first conversations, transcribing and rereading the transcripts, I sent participants a letter with a second set of questions to extend the conversation. Appendix II offers an example.

In narrative practice, letters and other documents are usually used to assist people in the “reauthoring of their lives and relationships through narrative means” (White & Epston, 1990, p. 108). Drawing on the work of Stubbs (1980), White and Epston (1990, p. 35) wrote that “in our culture, recourse to the written tradition in therapy promotes the formalization, legitimation, and continuity of local popular knowledges, the independent authority of persons and the creation of a context for the emergence of new discoveries and possibilities”. White and Epston held that the written tradition contributed an “extra dimension” to their work (1990, p. xvi).

From my researcher witnessing of their conversations, I used narrative therapy letter writing practice, to construct individualised letters to each participating pair in response to the first conversation they had had. I tried to keep as close as possible to the words they used, sometimes quoting them directly (Epston, 1998). My questions were prompted by what stood out during my researcher witnessing, as I transcribed, then read and reread the transcripts. For example, to Polly I wrote, “... you said that supervision was ‘normalised’. Could you describe this process of normalising? How did you move away from a position of thinking that supervision was for those who were ‘not good workers’ to one of thinking of supervision as something that good workers engaged in?” Markham (1998, cited in Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 721) suggested that electronic interviews offer the benefit that the interviewer has “time to phrase and follow up questions or probes properly”. White and Epston (1990) described how their best thoughts and questions came after the session had finished. Similarly, I found my process of writing to participants provided an opportunity to reflect on the questions before asking them.

Whilst my letters were not focussed on reauthoring participants’ lives as in narrative therapy letters, they were, in line with the intention of narrative practice,

designed to be “expanding” of, or “extending” the conversation (Epston, 1998, p. 95, 110) and the ideas and stories raised. Epston (1998) wrote about how the letter and the therapy session are “completely and organically intertwined, the one following on from the other like the drawing in and letting out of breath” (p. 99). My purpose in using letter writing in this project was to extend the initial conversations between participating pairs and invite a thickening of the story told so far, in order generate richer descriptions of the participants’ experiences and knowledge in relation to the research question.

Participants were not invited to write to me, but I encouraged them to engage in writing for themselves as part of data generation. Kralik et al. (2000) found that letter writing between researcher and participants enabled participants to give thought to the questions asked. One participant stated she found herself “in reflection while writing, and recalling events” (p. 912). When I sent participants their first questions and subsequent letters with further questions, I encouraged them to individually reflect on the questions and make notes for their own reference during the audiotaped conversation between practitioner supervisor pairs. I hoped that by providing the questions to participants in advance and inviting them to make personal notes they would be able to read the questions at a convenient time and consider their responses, in a way that may not have been possible in a face-to-face interview.

Epston (1998) emphasised the power of the written word in practice - “the words in a letter don’t fade and disappear the way conversation does; they endure through time and space...” (p. 95). I intended that the experiences and knowledges generated through this research would be captured in writing to support their survival (White & Epston, 1990) in the professional lives of the participants as well as in the research. This was done through transcripts, letters and in this thesis. It was also my hope that research participants could access their knowledges and experiences through these documents so that, as Morgan (2000) recommended, the intricacies of the conversations would not be forgotten, and remain available to contribute to new possibilities.

Richardson and St. Pierre (2005, p. 967) proposed that “writing is thinking, writing is analysis, writing is indeed a seductive and tangled method of

discovery”. In this project, writing was also data generation. The written exchanges between myself and participants contributed to the richness of the data generated. Writing provided a method for analysis of data, through listening for what should go into the next letters, and in telling the research story.

Challenges of the written word

It has been argued that it would be “difficult if not impossible” to develop an interviewer-interviewee relationship doing research through electronic media (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 721). However, Kralik et al. (2000) reported experiences of letter writing to develop research relationships with women living with chronic illness. This was aided by the researcher sending participants a photo of herself so that participants could “see the face of the person they were to correspond with.” (p. 911). White and Epston (1990) described letter writing as a personal experience. They highlighted the significance for some people of receiving mail addressed to them. Whilst I was making use of pre-existing relationships in the participating supervisor-practitioner pairs, I also had planned face-to-face contact with the participants at the beginning and end of each audiotaped conversation to enhance the sense of my presence in the collaboration with participants as co-researchers.

Throughout the project I worked to be sensitive to the ethics of representation and the consequences of the written word (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 966). The written word raises questions of what can be said, with what consequences. The people acknowledged and represented in written form are not people “out there” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 966). I found myself constantly mindful of writing in a way that would acknowledge participants’ experiences and knowledges and be faithful to my experience of the process. It also had to be readable for the participants and not invite them into feeling shame or embarrassment. For example, when I heard from Phoebe and Sally that they thought their conversation had gone “off track,” I found myself joining them in this sentiment and struggling to find a way to invite them to engage in a more on-track conversation.

Researching through guided conversation

This research also drew on interviewing methodology, in a form that Denzin and Lincoln (2005) might refer to as “invented”. In this sense, I “invented” a written interview to guide participants in conversation, similar to an interview approach.

According to Polkinghorne (2005, p. 138), “qualitative data in their oral form are a product of the interaction between participant and researcher.” In this research the data was primarily produced from conversations between new practitioners and their supervisors. The interaction between the participants and me as researcher took several forms, including the initial invitations to participate, written questions that I produced, and the reflexivity of responding to recordings and transcripts. I intended the written questions to guide, and not constrain, the conversations.

Fontana and Frey (2005) suggested that interviewing - the process of asking questions and getting answers - is “one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow humans” (p. 697-698). This research was largely based on asking questions and the generation of “answers”. This fits with the goal in narrative interviewing to “generate detailed accounts rather than brief answers or general statements” (Riessman, 2008, p. 23). I was careful that the questions I asked came from a position of curiosity (Freedman & Combs, 1996; Monk, 1997) and not from an intention to steer participants in a particular direction. I attempted to position myself as “not-knowing” (Anderson, 1997, p.134), “decentred” and “influential” (White, 2007) by asking questions to open up space for development of new ideas and knowledges, and to “generate experience” (Freedman & Combs, 1996, p. 111).

The approach in this project is closely related to semi-structured interviewing, but interviewing participants from a distance through writing.

As in structured interviews, I gave each participant the same standardised list of written questions for their first conversation. However, like unstructured interviews there was significant flexibility in the process, including the pace of the conversation and the questions chosen for discussion. The initial questions were designed to be what Feinsilver, Murphy and Anderson (2007, p. 277) referred to

as “starter questions” - questions designed to introduce my “inquiry interests and indicated their provisional nature” (p. 277). I invited participants to discuss questions of particular interest and any other questions relevant to the topic. As in narrative practice with clients I wanted to create positions for the participants that would allow for “exercising their will over the content and direction of the conversation” (Winslade, Crocket & Monk, 1997, p. 55) within the constraint of the topic. This approach supported the “active emergent process” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 706) associated with unstructured interviews.

Whilst not exactly a group interview or focus group methodology, the data generation processes in this study drew from these practices. Supervisors and practitioners came together for dialogue on the topic under investigation. While I was not physically present during the conversations, as with group interviews, the process was intended to “aid respondents’ recall or to stimulate embellished descriptions of specific events (...) or experiences shared by members of the group” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 704).

I hoped this collaborative co-research would assist in generation of in-depth knowledges of benefit to both participants and me. I also hoped this would support the supervision work of the participating pairs and their ongoing supervisory relationships. This methodological practice was influenced by considerations of power relations. If I had been present as researcher in the room, the practitioner would have been faced with two ‘more senior’ people. Instead, the relationships between supervisors and practitioners were utilised in the research method. I intended to remain as close to supervision practice as possible in the research method. Thus I imagined the research process mirrored, in many respects, a review meeting that supervisors and practitioners might participate in from time to time to collaboratively review their supervision work and supervisory relationship. It was different in that I would later be a witness, and the conversation would come into the public domain through this research project.

Reflexive action research

This project also draws significantly on action research methodology. Action research is a form of inquiry undertaken with people with a shared interest in an issue or problem (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Reason, 2001). Participants in this

project shared an interest in the experiences of new practitioners in supervision, from the position of supervisor, practitioner or both. The position of researcher is rendered visible in action research (Herr & Anderson, 2005) and it explicitly acknowledges that objectivity is not possible (Greenwood & Levin, 2005).

Action research is conceived of as a “collaborative” approach (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. xvi) that positions participants as co-creators of knowledge. It sees data as “context bound” (Greenwood & Levin, 2005, p. 55). This is congruent with the narrative therapy idea that knowledges are situated locally in time and place (White, 2007).

The action research process is comprised of a series of cycles, each cycle containing successive stages of planning, action, observation and reflection. A series of such cycles is described as the “action research spiral” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 5). This project followed such cycles of action research by inviting participants to reflect individually on experiences, then to come together to discuss these experiences and to generate knowledges. They next reflected, again individually, on the transcripts of their first conversations and also on a supplementary letter containing further questions. They came together again for a second and final conversation based on this second set of questions. As researcher, my role mirrored this process. Reflecting on the research topic I developed the initial questions. Reviewing and transcribing the audiotapes, I reflected on the data generated in relation to the research question. This witnessing and reflection informed me in producing second sets of questions, individually addressing each pair. This process led to a weaving and incorporation of new knowledges across successive cycles of the research.

Action research places an emphasis on “change and transformation” (Lees, 2001, p. 134) for both researcher and participant. This contrasts with the focus on “collecting data and generating theory” (Freshwater, 2000, p. 31, cited in Lees, 2001, p. 135) in positivist scientific inquiry. Action research cycles successively increase knowledge about the original issue or problem, but with the intention to “improve practice or develop individuals” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, 9). This has been described as transformative (Lees, 2001, p. 134). The focus in action

research on bringing about change was congruent with my own hopes that participants should benefit from their participation, that my practice would be informed and that the findings and implications for practice could be shared with others. Evidence emerged that the other participants had been shaped by their participation in the process. This fits with the sense that reflexive action research supports continuing professional development that is “cyclical rather than linear” in nature (Lees, 2001, p. 133-134). The ways participants were shaped through their participation in the research is discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

ETHICS

An ethics application was submitted and approval received from the University of Waikato School of Education Ethics Committee. The central ethical considerations for this project are discussed here.

Consent

I identified potential participants from my formal and informal professional and practice networks and contacted them to invite their participation, stressing that they were free to decline. I provided potential participants with information to assist them to make an informed choice about taking part (Letter of Introduction - Appendix III a. and III b.; Questions - Appendix I; and Consent Form - Appendix IV a. and IV b.). People wishing to participate were asked to sign and return the Consent Form. Potential supervisor and practitioner pairs could only be involved if they both consented. I informed participants they were free to withdraw from the research up to the completion of their first audiotaped conversation. To ensure data were available for this research thesis, participants were notified that after the first audiotaped conversation, their right to withdraw would be waived. I informed participants that if one party to a pair wished to withdraw their consent the other party would not be able to continue to participate. (See Appendix III a., III b., IV a. and IV b. for consent information.)

Confidentiality

Safety and non-identifiability were necessary to foster free discussion of issues. It was important for practitioners and supervisors to be confident they would remain

anonymous and that their employing organisation would not be identified. It was equally important that participants were sure the privacy of others – clients, professionals or organisations referred to during the research - would remain protected.

Pseudonyms are used to identify participants and others referred to during the course of the research. A range of features potentially identifying of participants or their workplaces have been de-identified to maintain anonymity and privacy. For ease of reading, practitioners’ pseudonyms start with the letter P and supervisors’ pseudonyms start with S. The allocation of pseudonyms is intended to shift emphasis from the individual worker to the discursive context of professional practice, agency practice and supervision.

	Practitioner	Supervisor
1 st pair	Polly	Sarah
2 nd pair	Phoebe	Sally
3 rd pair	Penny	Susan
4 th pair	Pam	Sophie

Risk of harm

A potential risk was that in the process of the research participants might evaluate their current supervision negatively, and decide it does not meet their needs or that their induction to supervision was inadequate. Whilst it was not my intention to create difficulty or discomfort for participants, if this did occur I hoped it would produce useful learnings for participants about supervision practice and about their hopes and intentions. As discussed later, for one pair participation in this research created the opportunity for the practitioner to voice concern about the infrequency of their supervision and her hope for it to become more regular. I intended that the research practices used would encourage open, collaborative review and reflection on the supervision practice, and support discussion about ways forward. It was not looking to find fault or allocate blame, but to enhance practice. Where a difficult relationship existed between potential participants, I anticipated that one or both parties would not consent to be involved. The results

chapters discuss the ways participants' practice and understandings were shaped by their participation.

A potential for harm existed for new practitioners who may feel coerced by their supervisor to participate. I highlighted to participants that informed consent must be gained from both supervisor and practitioner. I made telephone contact with both supervisor and the practitioner after receiving their consent forms. I invited questions and clarification about the research before proceeding. As outlined above, all participants were provided with my contact details (Appendices III a., III b., IV a. and IV b.) and encouraged to make contact at any point throughout the research if they had questions or concerns.

There was a potential for harm to unwitting participants - those spoken about by participants in the course of the research who had not had the opportunity to consent. These included counselling clients who stand in the background to the research, and other supervisors or employing organisations, mentioned in the course of the research. There was a high probability that participants would speak of previous supervisors, employing organisations and training institutions during their conversations, particularly as the research invited them to speak of ways they had come to understand and use supervision. It is my responsibility to manage the privacy of others spoken about and to ensure their confidentiality and anonymity. The risk of inadvertently identifying others in this research is extremely low, as the focus is on the practice of supervision, and the induction of new practitioners.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Participant selection

The selection of participants was undertaken purposively, on the basis of whether they could contribute to understanding how new practitioners come to understand and effectively use supervision. Recruitment was on the basis of the following criteria:

- Practitioners and supervisors who currently or recently worked together in supervision and were willing to participate together.

- Practitioners (Social Workers or Psychologists) who at the time of the research had been practicing for less than two years since completing their undergraduate studies. This is the definition of a “new practitioner” for the purposes of this research.
- Practitioners and supervisors who had been working together in supervision for between three and twelve months. This was to allow participants to have had enough time to commence their work together, and to establish a working relationship; while being close enough to the start of working together so they are able to reflect on the process and practices of induction to the supervision.
- For participants who had concluded supervision together, the date of starting supervision was twelve months or less at the time of participating in the research. This was so they could remember back to their induction into supervision.

Participant recruitment process

I contacted by phone and email, supervisors I knew, or whose names I was given by others. I asked if they were interested in participating and whether they had recently commenced or concluded working with a new practitioner for supervision. If the supervisor was interested and they were working in supervision with a practitioner who met the eligibility criteria, I gave them further information, including a Letter of Introduction for both the supervisor and the practitioner formally introducing myself, the project and my interest in this research (Appendices III a. and III b.); the questions I would invite them to reflect on (Appendix I); and a Consent Form for both the practitioner and the supervisor (Appendices IV a. and IV b.). I then invited potential participant supervisors to pass on and discuss this information (Appendices I, III b. and IV b.) with eligible practitioners. Potential participants were invited to decide about participation in light of this information and of any additional telephone conversations that we had. Consent to participate was given by return to me of a completed Consent Form (Appendices IV a. and IV b.).

To broaden the pool of potential participants, I asked large nongovernment organisations for permission to approach supervisors and practitioners within their organisations about participating.

Four pairs were selected based on eligibility and the order their consent forms were received. I planned that multiple participant pairs could provide multiple accounts of participants' experience and I hoped this would deepen the understanding of the experience I was investigating.

Participants' characteristics were varied (see Figure 1 below). Three practitioners were Social Workers and one was a Psychologist. For three practitioners, supervision was provided by a person who was also their line manager; and one worked with an external supervisor. All four supervisors were Social Workers with varying amounts of experience as supervisors. All eight participants were female.

Figure 1. Participant characteristics

Participant pairs	Practitioner training	Supervisor status	Supervisor training
Polly (practitioner) Sarah (supervisor)	Social Work	External supervisor	Social Work
Phoebe (practitioner) Sally (supervisor)	Psychologist	Internal supervisor and line manager	Social Work
Penny (practitioner) Susan (supervisor)	Social Work	Internal supervisor and line manager	Social Work
Pam (practitioner) Sophie (supervisor)	Social Work	Supervisor and line manager	Social Work

I was not in a supervision relationship with any of the participants, either as a supervisor or practitioner.

Comment on Recruitment

I experienced unanticipated difficulties recruiting four pairs of participants. I approached more than 30 private practitioners who work as supervisors. Through this process I found only one working in supervision with a “new practitioner”, as defined above. Many expressed interest in participating, but reported that the people they meet for supervision were all “experienced practitioners” with over two years experience in the field. One can speculate on why this is. Most new practitioners might participate in supervision with their line managers. Practitioners may not develop a sense of the importance of supervision or their hopes for it until later in their career. New practitioners may not be aware they can seek external supervision. Employing organisations may not offer alternative internal or other supervisory arrangements. Polly, the practitioner from the first pair, spoke of not knowing that she could source supervision for herself outside of her organisation. This is described further in the results chapter.

Campbell (2006, p. iii) found that “It is completely impossible to obtain money from the various funding agencies in Australia without accepting, and talking, the language of positivist science”. He suggested that knowledge generated by empirical methodologies is most favourably regarded as useful. This is given far greater weight than the personal knowledge of clinicians. In approaching organisations for permission to recruit participants, I experienced similar difficulties to those described by Campbell. I found I needed to give particular consideration to how I language my research and its methodology. I attempted to convey McLeod’s (2001, p. 116) sentiments that “Certainty and authority are seductive, but tolerance of ambiguity and acceptance of the value of local, rather than global knowledge, are also meaningful virtues.”

Keeping in mind Kirkman’s (2002, p. 34) concern that “it is disconcerting to find in so much qualitative research literature, the disclaimer that the results are only preliminary findings, as though the real research will be done with random samples, standardised instruments, statistical tests, and precisely calculated levels of significance”, it was important to me that I not minimise the importance or

validity of this research. To this end I explained that as a qualitative researcher, I was not working to discover empirical truths or present generalisable findings but rather to bring forward the particulars of individuals' experiences and knowledges, and to render practitioners' knowledge visible and valuable (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). As is usual in narrative research, variables were neither measured nor controlled (Kirkman, 2002). Rather, I was interested in the conversations that emerged as data. I made a conscious decision to not have an interviewer physically present, stemming from an intention to allow space for conversations to emerge between supervisor and practitioner. The value of the findings remains to be discovered in terms of how usefully they will be applied in supervision practice. According to Polkinghorne (1992, p. 162, cited in Crocket, 2004, p. 64), "The criterion for acceptability of a knowledge claim is the fruitfulness of its implementation".

RESEARCH PROCESS

Pre-conversation

Having found eligible participant pairs interested in participating, I spoke with them individually about the research questions and the process. Supervisors and practitioners were asked to reflect individually on their work together in supervision, making personal notes if they wished. They were asked to consider how the identified "new practitioner" had come to understand and effectively use supervision, specifically reflecting on 14 questions provided (see Appendix I). I explained to each pair that I would invite them to engage together in an audiotaped dialogue about the practitioner's induction to supervision. I explained I would not be physically present during their conversation and that it was an opportunity for them to reflect on how their supervision together had contributed to the practitioner's understanding and use of supervision. I explained that the questions were not intended to constrain their conversation. I encouraged them to enquire further with each other about anything that came up in response to the questions or the research topic in general. I explained that any personal notes they made were simply to remind them of things they wanted to speak of. They would remain their own property and would not be collected by me.

Participants were asked to arrange a time to meet in supervisor/practitioner pairs and reflect on the questions (Appendix I). Before proceeding with the audiotaped conversations, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions or discuss concerns. They were then asked to complete the Participant Consent Form (Appendices IV a. and IV b.).

First Conversation

I briefly met with each pair, prior to their first conversation, explaining the purpose of the research. I reminded participants they could use the questions provided in whatever way was helpful. This could mean working through each question together, or choosing questions they were interested in, or any other approach that suited them. I reminded them I was interested in the details of their experiences of how the new practitioner had come to understand and use supervision, including the ways the supervisor's practices contributed to this understanding. I encouraged participants to engage in conversation, explaining it was my hope that they engage with the experience and each other from a position of curiosity. I asked again if they had any questions or concerns. Once the participants stated they felt ready to begin, I started the recorder and left the room.

Supervisor and practitioner pairs took part in audiotaped conversations of approximately one to two hours duration. At the end of the conversation they notified me and I turned off the equipment. I checked with participants about how they found the process and answered any questions they had. I reiterated what the process was from that point.

Transcribing

I transcribed the audiotaped conversations to re-present the data in text so it could be used for analysis and also to provide participants with a record of their voiced knowledges and experiences. Morgan (2000, p. 96) noted that families reported that seeing their words in writing "reminds them of the conversation and the ideas that arose during it." It was my hope that participants' generated knowledges and experiences would remain available to them after their memory of the

conversation faded - what Geertz (1973, cited in White, 1997, p. 94) described as “rescuing the said from the saying of it”.

I chose to do the transcribing myself rather than engage an external transcriber. I felt this would assist in familiarising myself with the data and reduce the distance I felt from the participants, given I was not present during their conversations.

I edited the transcripts for clarity, careful not to change participants’ intended meanings. I chose to delete repetition of words such as “um” and “ah”. I reviewed each transcript by listening to and comparing with the audiotape to ensure as much as possible that what was said was represented in the text. Nevertheless, it must be accepted that “perfect transcripts do not exist” (Tilley & Powick, 2002, p. 306), that “transcription is an interpretive act”... that lacks objectivity (Tilley & Powick, 2002, p. 292) and that “information and nuance is lost when oral data are transcribed into written text” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 139). Speedy (2008, p. 86) refers to this as “translation”. However, my intention was not to produce perfect transcripts but rather to produce a written text that could be used for analysis as well as to capture the participants’ conversations for their own purposes.

I sent the transcripts to the participants and asked them to check they were accurate and to ensure they had been de-identified and their confidentiality maintained. Participants were free to add additional material or make other changes to the transcripts. I sent the transcripts with a statement saying I had tried to be accurate, and that while transcripts are “talk written”, quotes used in the thesis will be “smoothed out” to keep the meaning but also to have it make sense in the documentation.

Letter and subsequent questions

In a process based loosely on narrative therapy’s outsider witness practices (White, 2007) described above, I engaged with each audiotaped conversation and transcript separately, listening to the audiotape, reading and re-reading the transcripts, and considering how ideas and text spoke to my research question. As discussed earlier I was positioned in this as something of an “outsider witness” (White, 2007) to the participants’ conversations about their knowledges and

experiences. As a researcher informed by narrative therapy, my role was to look out for the “talk that sings” (Bird, 2000, p. 30), and also for moments of whispering, for dissonance as well as harmony, for expressions, words or phrases that captured my attention in relation to the topic. I made my interests transparent by asking further questions about particular experiences or knowledges discussed in the transcript, offering an opportunity for richer telling of the stories told.

I drew on narrative therapy practices of letter writing to respond to participants’ accounts of their experiences to help to more richly describe their experience. I wrote individually tailored letters to each pair to remain as close as possible to the participants’ experiences, often using the participants’ own words, outlining some of the experiences and expressions that caught my attention and the questions that their conversation had subsequently produced for me. I was mindful that my interest should come from a position of curiosity and not be based on evaluation or interpretation of meaning. I was weaving my own interest into their accounts of their experience in a hope that this would generate new and more richly described knowledges.

I sent letters with follow-up questions to each pair (see Appendix II for an example of one of the letters sent). The “receiving context” (White, 1995, p. 208), that is the discussion and agreement to send a letter, had already been established and participants knew to expect a letter via email. I invited each pair to reflect individually on the questions in their letter and then come together for a second audiotaped conversation around any questions that were of interest to them in the letter or anything else relating to the research that caught their attention.

As an example of such inquiry, in the first conversation between Polly and Sarah, Polly said she would advise new practitioners, “be honest with the supervisor even when you stuff up. Bring up any feelings of hesitancy, judgement, safety with the supervisor and not kind of hold it for a long time”. Addressing Polly in my letter to her and Sarah after their first conversation, I asked “..., you said you would advise new practitioners to be honest with their supervisors, to bring moments of hesitancy and stuff-ups to supervision for discussion. Can you say something about what it is that Sarah did that provided a space for you to bring

these sorts of conversations to supervision. What did Sarah do to create this safe space?”

In their second audiotaped conversation Polly and Sarah discussed this question. They thought of numerous practices that contributed to this safe space. Polly stated that Sarah had “used examples where you had stuffed up before or where you had hesitated. (...) so it felt okay for me to do it”. “You would ask how any idea went. (...) You would refer back to it (something that had been discussed previously in supervision) and check up on how it went (...) but in your question, the question wasn’t assuming that it had gone okay, either. (...) the question sort of put it in a way that you weren’t expecting it to go either way (...)”. Polly said this made it “easier for me to say, “oh it didn’t go that well” ”.

Challenges and reflections in letter writing

Listening to some first conversations between supervisor and practitioner pairs, it appeared that at times some participants became interested in talking about things relevant to their own situation in supervision, but outside the research topic. One participating pair referred to this as going “off track”. Whilst these conversations seemed of particular interest to the participants, these “off track” conversations did not meet my needs so well. Like Etherington (2001), I am also accustomed to thinking of the needs of clients – or in this case participants - but it was important to find a balance between accommodating their preferences and meeting the needs of the project. I had perhaps given too much consideration to finding methodological practices to support participants in benefiting and perhaps not enough to the ways that data necessary for this research project could be generated. I was careful to invite “on track” conversations in the subsequent letter to the pair where this was of concern.

It also became evident that some of what I was asking participants to consider was unclear to them. I wondered if the way I language my original questions had assumed a particular knowledge base. For example, my question, “What do you remember about induction to supervision at the beginning of this supervisory relationship?” left some participants wondering what I meant by induction and whether I was referring to simply the very first supervision conversation or

whether they could speak about practices and experiences that assisted in the understanding and use of supervision outside of the first supervision conversation.

The letters containing the second series of questions provided me with a second opportunity to clarify misunderstandings and invite participants to consider questions related to the research topic. I was also particularly careful to language these questions in ways that were answerable, were likely to make sense to the participants and were as unambiguous as possible.

Second conversation

As with the first conversations, I introduced the second conversations by reminding each pair that the purpose of the research was to learn more about ways new practitioners were inducted to supervision and how they came to understand and use it. I followed much the same process as with the first conversation. I invited participants to use the questions in their letters to guide their conversation in whatever way was helpful and to discuss anything of interest that was relevant to the research topic. I encouraged participants to engage in conversation and ask each other questions. I explained it was my hope that they engage from a position of curiosity. I offered another opportunity to ask questions or raise concerns. Once participants were ready to begin, I started the recorder to audiotape the conversation and left the room.

Supervisor and practitioner pairs then engaged in this second and final audiotaped conversation, lasting between one and two hours. At the end of the conversation they notified me and I turned off the equipment. I asked about their experience of participating in the research, then reminded them what the process was from that point.

Polkinghorne (2005, p. 142) suggested that “Often the initial descriptions offered by the participants are restrained” and that “in order to obtain interview data of sufficient quality to produce worthwhile findings, researchers need to engage with participants in more than a one-shot, 1-hr session...” This fits with my experience that the second conversation gave an opportunity for me to ask follow-up questions, to explore the experience in greater depth, enquire about things that were said in the first conversation, and invite an expansion of what had been

discussed to gain a rich account of the participants' experience. It was my experience that the second conversations allowed a further development of participant and supervisor ideas.

Transcription

The audiotapes of the second conversations between supervisor and practitioner pairs were transcribed in the same way as the first. My involvement in the process of transcribing the conversations again helped me familiarise myself with the data and reduce the distance between myself and the participants. As with the first transcripts, I reviewed them to ensure what was said was presented in the text. I sent participants a copy of their transcript with an invitation to check the content was accurate and ensure they felt they had again been de-identified and their confidentiality maintained.

Data Analysis

My research was not a search to uncover truths. Rather, it was an endeavour to "exoticise the domestic" (White, 2004, p. vi), to hear about particular experiences of how the participating practitioners had come to understand supervision and of how supervisors had contributed to new practitioners' induction to the practice of supervision to learn from the multiple ways new practitioners come to understand and effectively use supervision.

The approach I adopted in the analysis of the data could be described as narrative analysis. The researcher witnessing position I took up provided me with another way to analyse the data. My analysis was conducted from a position of curiosity based on what came out of the conversation between supervisors and practitioners and specifically on what story the data was telling me in response to the research questions. This narrative analysis was a reading of the data from a position of interest in what I could learn for practice and in the broader implications of the experiences and the knowledges generated.

The analysis process was ongoing throughout the project, drawing on action research methodology. This involved alternating stages of action, reflection and analysis inherent in the action research cycles (Herr & Anderson, 2005). The first

transcripts could be understood as the first level of analysis; reviewing transcripts and letter writing were the second level; and the documenting in the Results chapter, the third level; and finally, the documentation of the Discussion chapter is the fourth level.

Earlier levels of analysis involved listening to voices, “talk that sings” (Bird, 2000, p. 30) and stories “within” each conversation, rather than looking for themes emerging between the supervisory pairs (Chase, 2005, p. 663). Only in the final levels of data analysis did I engage in comparing stories between pairs, in order to recognise similarities and differences across experiences described by the participants.

Telling a story/Sewing the quilt

I take responsibility, as researcher, for sewing together the knowledges and experiences generated and shared by participants in a way that tells the research story in the process I have described as bricolage. The foreground of this is the knowledge and experience of the research participants; the background is knowledge from my own experiences, training and from consulting the literature. This quilt is the one I have sewn. It would look very different if sewn by another hand.

Drawing from the data, my intention was to select and represent it as faithfully as I could, in ways that maintain the participants’ meanings and contribute to understanding. Whilst there are issues of translation between the spoken and the written word, I am reassured by the knowledge that participants were given opportunities to make changes to their transcripts. I am also cognisant that the data represented here were selected by me to support the purposes of this research. The participants should recognise themselves, and while they would see the story as told by me, I hope they would have a sense of having been represented in respectful ways.

My intention in producing this research report is to contribute to my own growth and development in practice as a supervisor, to the practices of those who participated in the research, and more broadly, to make a contribution to those

interested in the practices of supervision and the professional education of practitioners and supervisors in doing and using supervision.

SUMMARY

Using a range of research practices drawn from narrative practice, action research and interviewing, participant supervisors and practitioners were engaged with to more richly document and understand how new practitioners have developed their understanding of what supervision is and how they use it. Like Richardson & St. Pierre (2005), I do not feel as though the research story is complete, but that I have reflected fairly and honestly what my research experience has been.

In Chapters Four and Five, I present the story of the results of the conversations between new practitioners and their supervisors in relation to the research question. In Chapter Six, I present an account of how participants spoke of being shaped by their participation in this research.

CHAPTER FOUR

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RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

The results are presented in three chapters. This first chapter focuses on what I learned about these practitioners' initial understandings of supervision, pre-employment and post-graduation, their experiences of induction to supervision; and the positions that were created for them in supervision through their induction.

To assist in the reading of this and the subsequent results chapters, it may be useful to refer to page 51 for the names of participating practitioner and supervisor pairs.

PRACTITIONERS' INITIAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF SUPERVISION

Polly, Penny and Pam indicated that supervision had been given little attention in their undergraduate training in Social Work, with the effect that on commencing work in the field, they experienced themselves as having little understanding of supervision.

I don't think it [supervision] was covered very well. Whether anyone actually sat down and talked about what the purpose of the supervision was or, um, really inducted you into that process, probably not. (Pam)

(...) I don't remember much from uni at all (...) I think that supervision came up during the topics of ethics in social work or something like that, where, if there was any confusion or anything you didn't know, the first point of call would be the supervisor. (Polly)

I didn't know really what supervision was. (Polly)

I left university thinking, 'Oh, it's just something you do with the manager.' (Polly)

(...)I was still a bit unsure of what supervision is actually meant for.
(Penny)

It would seem that these preparation gaps may have left Polly, Pam and Penny poorly positioned to participate actively in supervision. As Phoebe presented her experience, she entered the field as a psychologist with knowledge of supervision because of two other direct experiences of supervision:

(...) being in a job where..., just a part-time, crappy job that I had to get through uni, I had a supervisor who, you know, looked out for my work. If we had any problems or anything, we just went to her. So I just assumed that a supervisor meant someone who looked over your work, looked at what you were doing, helped you if you had problems, jumped in if.... So I sort of assumed that supervisor/supervision would be something quite similar, but obviously in a completely different job.

And I suppose all through my Masters, I was supervised through my thesis. It was the same sort of thing, so we just went and talked about it, what I was doing, where I was up to, future directions, what areas I could improve on and things like that.

It would appear that neither Phoebe's preparation for professional practice nor her early supervision experiences had distinguished professional supervision from line management or from academic supervision. The question arises then how well positioned she was to make effective use of professional supervision as a new practitioner.

Three of the participating practitioners spoke of their initial understanding, after graduation, of supervision as a forum to meet with a supervisor in order to be guided in the work; and of the supervisor as a person with expertise, to ask for direction and assistance with practice. It seems there was a strong sense that supervision, at least for new graduates, is a process of up-skilling based on the premise that new practitioners have knowledge gaps that need filling.

(...) if there was any confusion or anything you didn't know, the first point of call would be the supervisor... Approach your supervisor, or discuss with your supervisor, if you need further clarification about something. So it was the person you would go to only when you are stuck, or only when you don't know something, so they can tell you. (Polly)

If I am stuck with a case, or stuck with something, what do I do here? (Phoebe)

(...) where do I go, and what do I do? You can't know everything. (Phoebe)

The practitioners expressed various understandings of who participates in supervision and why, including the idea that supervision was for those select people who were identified as being in need of additional support, as not yet "good enough" or "independent enough" workers - those not yet able to "deal with things well enough".

I initially thought I needed supervision because I wasn't a good worker... So that's initially how supervision was thought of, that I needed it because I wasn't doing good work with my clients. (Polly)

I like to think I am fairly independent and just deal with things. Like, obviously I don't know the answer to everything and still need a lot of your [supervisor] expertise and stuff on the kind of work I do but, yeah, I don't know. For the most part, I feel like I can handle things and that our job isn't really stressful compared to other people's, like working with domestic violence or child abuse. (Penny)

I feel like I deal with things like well enough without supervision. (Penny)

By these accounts supervision is constructed as a remedy to practitioner deficits, directed at those lacking independence or expertise. Further, it is not integral to induction into professional practice in the field:

When you start a job, your focus is on doing the job, not on the little..., like the side things, like supervision. Like, I know it is part of the job obviously, but it's more like, you know, in the role description that I would focus on, like liaising with clients or with other agencies and

working in a team. Those are the things I would be focussed on, not supervision with your supervisor. (Penny)

There was reference, too, to the often debated question of what positions or roles should be provided with supervision:

So when I came here, um, when you said 'I will be supervising you' I didn't realise I would have supervision. I had always associated supervision with Psychology and not necessarily with Social Work, so I didn't realise. But now coming into Social Work and Family Support you do a lot of counselling work, so I do see it now as a necessary thing. But, yeah, so coming into the job, I didn't realise I would be getting supervision. (Phoebe)

Sarah, too, spoke to this debate, from a position of supervisor knowledge:

It depends on what kind of job it is. There are some social work jobs that are very case-focussed and you might not have [supervision] (...)

By these accounts supervision is constructed as a process done, primarily with or to practitioners new to counselling, to fill predicted gaps in knowledge and skills. The process is constructed as involving elements similar to guidance, training, performance management, monitoring and quality control. Supervisors are positioned to hold and apply expertise in terms of the required knowledges and skills. They are positioned as knowing how to determine gaps and how to remedy them, and they are positioned as agentive in discharging this responsibility. Practitioners on the other hand are positioned as required to submit to this regime in order to fulfil what is required of them for their work and their professional identity. Some of the practitioners' accounts can be read as grateful or even agentive submission, in the sense that supervision offers them something to relieve the discomfort of doubt and not knowing associated with the position available to them.

SUPERVISION INDUCTION AND THE POSITIONING OF THE PRACTITIONER

The practitioners' accounts of their supervision induction experiences after graduating suggest they were positioned with varying degrees of agency in the supervisory relationship. Their positioning in the induction process itself ranged from being invited to collaborate with the supervisor in negotiating and writing a supervision "contract", to being told what supervision is. These experiences were influenced by various constructions of supervision, its purposes, their own role and the role of their supervisor.

Polly and Sarah

Polly and Sarah were the only pair of participants who had an external supervision arrangement, where the supervisor did not hold line management responsibility for the practitioner. Unlike the other participants, Polly chose her supervisor after finding supervision with her line manager was not meeting her professional learning and support needs.

Sarah described an exploratory first meeting where both she and Polly spoke about their experiences, hopes and expectations for supervision and for the supervisory relationship.

We had conversations about what your expectations were, what you were hoping for, my responsibility as a supervisor professionally, what the limitations were, how my previous experience and my interest might inform the kind of talking that we did, and something about being a Social Worker (...) (Sarah)

What have been your previous experiences of supervision, what do you want to bring with you from those previous experiences of supervision and what would you like not to be part of this,' and then 'how do we negotiate when it might become part of this (...) (Sarah)

We talked about whether or not we would talk about how outside work stuff might impact on work and how work might impact on the way you see yourself in the world. (Sarah)

I remember, too, we had a conversation about the power relationship. (...) something around, maybe, because I am the supervisor, that there could be a chance or that there might be an imposition of meaning from me. If I ever asked you anything or said anything that didn't fit for you if you could clarify or let me know because based on my experience of being supervised by people who have inadvertently or harmlessly said things that thought, oh, maybe I should be thinking that way or..., you know. (Sarah)

You asked me how you would know if I couldn't say something or if I wanted to say something. Yeah, I remember that, that was the first conversation. (Polly)

From this initial conversation Polly and Sarah co-produced a written supervision contract. Polly described this process as challenging her initial understanding of a contract as something that is "given to you and then you just sign at the end of it, you have no say". Instead, Polly was invited into a position where her knowledges and hopes were valued, and her own words were included in the contract.

What stood out to me was you reading the notes back to me of what I said, because no one had ever actually used my words. Supervision was always someone else's words and for the first time I was actually hearing my words and that was a big deal for me that first time. Like hearing it back is just completely different to saying it and somebody actually hearing it and reading it out in a way that it is clear that they understood what you said it's not just a one-way street, but it's both ways. (Polly)

In contrast to Polly's previous experiences where supervision had not been negotiated, she described her experience of participating in the contract writing process as being conspicuously collaborative.

(...) a bit like a jigsaw puzzle because I say things and you say things and we change them around if we need to play around with them a bit until they fit and I guess that's how I see our supervision. It's not just you putting things on the board, but it's both of us and we can play around with that until it feels right or until it's connected.

Polly stressed the importance of being asked by Sarah what she wanted from supervision. She said this inquiry supported her to see supervision as being “not just a one-way street, but it was both ways,” and that “supervision wasn’t used to simply tell me how I should do things”. “It was more like a conversation you would have with another worker, not ... really a student/lecturer sort of conversation,” more like a “two-way street” where “I would get to bring in my own stuff and have it being used” which “you would add on to, or make clearer for me”.

It would seem that Sarah’s inquiries about Polly’s knowledge and ideas in supervision contributed to Polly feeling “more confident” and “more knowledgeable.” In Polly’s account she described supervision as a facilitated process of sharing of experiences that generated discoveries which drew on her own ideas. She did not find herself positioned as in a process of just being given advice or answers to her questions.

I would come thinking, saying, I don’t know how to do this, or what should I do with this, um, not knowing that I had ideas of what I should do, but they had never been spoken. (Polly)

Having conversations and swapping ideas made me walk away feeling more knowledgeable, more confident because I could see my own ideas being used. I was feeling more like a peer that had a lot to contribute. This improved the quality of my work. (Polly)

From Polly’s account, it seems Sarah’s belief that “people do what they do because they think it’s the right thing to do at the time” and that there is always “a story behind an action” served to open up space for Polly to speak about difficult aspects of her practice, including moments of “hesitancy” and “stuff ups”. Polly said she found it helpful when Sarah would inquire about “the intention behind it,” not simply “focussing on the stuff-up”. Polly said that Sarah’s practice of sharing her own “stuff-ups” and moments of “hesitancy” “normalised stuff-ups,” and contributed to a sense that it was “okay for me to do it [share stuff ups]” and positioned her to feel that she would not be judged by Sarah for experiencing such moments or reflecting on them in supervision.

It appears that Sarah's mindfulness of the relations of power and the "weight of her words" has informed her practice in a way that contributed to Polly's agentic positioning in the supervisory relationship. Sarah described practising from a position of "respect" and "admiration" for Polly's work and with a commitment to "genuine curiosity". Sarah appears to have related to Polly in a way that supported her position as someone who knows her own experience and needs and who has valuable skills, knowledges and experiences that are relevant to the work.

Sarah described how she practised in a way that was intended to avoid an "imposition" of her own ideas of what supervision "should be". Rather, she stated that her hope as supervisor is to create "room and space and permission to negotiate what it [supervision] would look like..." She said it was important to render power relations visible and to avoid practices that would "silence" Polly or limit her access to her own skills, knowledges or preferences. She wanted Polly to be able to speak up in supervision if "I ever asked you anything or said anything that didn't fit for you". She spoke of having a "sense of respect and admiration" for the work of practitioners. She stressed her commitment to genuine curiosity and to remaining interested in what Polly "is doing," how she is "doing it" and "what informed those ideas". She said she is "genuinely curious about what you [Polly] were bringing to the conversations" and also about how Polly was "experiencing yourself as a person in that job..."

You weren't coming like this vacuum, like this person with no skills and knowledges and experiences into a job, and I didn't see you that way, so I was curious about what you did contribute.

Through the induction to supervision, it appears Polly developed an understanding of supervision as "a two-way street" – a partnership that could "support" and "stimulate" her. Polly was offered a position in the relationship as already holding valued knowledges and experiences that would be "welcome and wouldn't be brushed off or minimised". The structural context, of Sarah as external supervisor, raises the question in what ways did this external supervision contribute to what appeared to be a collaborative and less hierarchical relationship.

Phoebe and Sally

Phoebe described a significantly different experience of induction to supervision. Working with her line manager as supervisor, Phoebe appears to have had less discussion about supervision, or about her experiences and hopes for supervision and for the supervisory relationship. Sally began their supervision with an assumption that they already shared an understanding of what supervision was and what their roles were in it. Supervision was not negotiated but rather proceeded in line with the supervisor's preferences and practices, following the same agenda she used with other internal staff whom she met for supervision.

As noted earlier, Phoebe said she understood what supervision is from participating previously in academic and line management supervision. Whilst they did not discuss Phoebe's earlier supervision experiences in their induction conversation, Sally described in the research how she had developed a sense from their supervision conversations that Phoebe "had had some sort of supervision before," "seemed to understand the idea of supervision" and "didn't appear to be a new graduate". This seemed to have contributed to Sally's assumption that they shared an understanding and were "on the same page". This assumption seems to have influenced Sally's sense of not needing to negotiate the relationship or to generate a shared understanding of supervision and what would be its purposes.

Phoebe appeared to have the understanding that supervision is a single unchanging activity that does not need to be negotiated. This understanding was possibly supported by the absence of discussion at any stage near the beginning of their supervision. Phoebe said she knew what supervision is and that if Sally had engaged her in a conversation about what supervision is she would have said:

(...) yeah, I've had supervision before, I know what it is all about. I don't know where the conversation would have gone from there (...)

The first part of this comment may serve as an invitation for supervisors to consider taking a lead in proactively engaging new practitioners in conversations, to contribute to a shaping of understanding of supervision.

Like Sally, Phoebe seemed to propose a kind of reactive approach to supervision induction, where the supervisor spends time negotiating their supervision work together only when a difficulty occurs. This might be discussed, for example, if it

became clear that the practitioner did not understand supervision or use it effectively.

If you found you had somebody come in [for supervision], perhaps they weren't utilising their time, your time together, as effectively as you think, you might think they don't know what supervision is and (...) then that way, you would know where they are thinking and you would be able to say supervision is blah, blah, blah. (Phoebe)

Sally described the induction process as introducing Phoebe to “who I was and how supervision runs”; “this is what we will do, this is how we will do things, these are the expectations”. She spoke of her role as setting the parameters, including making it “clear as to how we do things and I suppose each fortnight the setup is pretty much the same”. This included “strength, highlight or something difficult and just running through the cases”.

Sally proposed that her hopes and intentions for Phoebe's experience of supervision would become evident to Phoebe through the use of her “personality” and a “strengths-based way of being and engaging” in the supervision. Referring to her own previous experiences of supervision, Sally said she “never want[ed] to make somebody feel as though they weren't doing well in what they were doing.” Drawing on the partnership metaphor, Sally said she did not want practitioners to feel they were “in this work alone”. Rather, she hoped to create a “consistent, predictable, relaxed, friendly, warm kind of environment,” where one can feel able to “bring to the table what you felt you needed support with” and which would not be experienced as “intimidating”. She spoke of holding the hope for the practitioner “to have a positive experience” of supervision with her and for supervision “to be a helpful space, not one people dreaded to come to”.

It appears Sally and Phoebe have both developed an understanding of supervision as a process of “mentoring” and “coaching”, where the supervisor is someone to “come back to and say, what should I have said, or something like that”. In their first research conversation, Sally related a “positive” experience she had had of being “coached” and instructed by her supervisor about what to do and what questions to ask in her work with a young boy.

My supervisor had said, ‘Take him out for dinner at Pizza Express ...there is paper table mats’, and he said, ‘Make sure you ask them for crayons and ask him to draw his ideal home for you’. So this was my supervisor’s idea in one of my first supervision sessions... He [the young boy] drew his ideal home and then my supervisor said, ‘When he draws the home, ask him, ‘Who is that, who’s that, what else would you put in there?’, just those kind of unpacking questions...’ But at the time I had absolutely no idea and I said to him, “Are you sure I should do this? And what happens if he won’t talk to me?” And he did and my supervisor said to me, “The next time, take him out to Pizza Express and do the same thing and, “So the sharks, there is an island, a good island and a bad island, and who would you put on the good island, and who would you put on the bad island and what else would you draw around?”

It seems from this account that this “positive” supervision experience influenced Sally’s ideas about supervision and supervisory practice. Phoebe described supervision in similar terms to those used by Sally in her account. She spoke of supervision as a process where the practitioner speaks with “the more experienced practitioner” - the supervisor - who “gives feedback” on “what went well” and offers suggestions on “what you could do next time”, “helping me with bits that I was stuck with, things like that, offering future directions.” Phoebe went on to say this is done because, “I suppose we can’t all know everything right from the get go”. I have the impression Phoebe has an understanding of professional supervision as a process of “pass[ing] on “ideas” and “ways of working” with Sally positioned as an expert trainer. Sally acknowledged that she does not “know all the answers,” but still suggested that Phoebe participates in supervision to “learn.” She said, “It is important if you feel that you need more guidance with it [the work] then please bring it to me and I will do my best to answer it”. Through this construction of supervision, Phoebe appears to be positioned as a practitioner who is not yet competent, knowledgeable or skilled enough to practise without supervision - “without supervision it [the work] would just be impossible”. Phoebe said that without supervision, she would be “worrying, have I helped that person enough, where do I go, and what do I do? You can’t know everything”. This highlights the question of the purpose of supervision. Interestingly, Phoebe also said to Sally, “maybe your way of working may not fit for everybody... But

it's just lucky that I do like all your ideas. I think they are great". This raises the question of how Phoebe would be positioned in the supervisory relationship if she had different ideas or ways of approaching the work.

Unlike Polly, Phoebe seemed to be positioned as the 'not yet knowing' practitioner who was "getting supervision" in order to "learn" from her supervisor. Interestingly, Phoebe said she liked the question Sally asked in supervision - "so have you had a highlight?" She said this helped to focus on "something positive that has happened, rather than just dumping all the problems and saying 'I don't know what to do'... I'm having a problem with... or I don't know what to do here, or what to do there;" and being able to say "...as a worker, okay, I have done something good, or I have helped somebody".

As they reviewed supervision, Sally added that her own busy-ness and also her growth in confidence as a supervisor might have contributed to her spending less time negotiating and discussing supervision. She said that, on reflection, perhaps she had "made too many assumptions" about a shared understanding and experience of supervision. Throughout the research process, Sally expressed increasing interest in introducing space for future practitioners to speak about their hopes and experiences of supervision, what they "would like to get out of our time together, and how you would find the time useful". This development is discussed further in Chapter Six, in relation to the effects of the research.

Overall, the story Sally and Phoebe told was of an approach to supervision where the supervisor determined and maintained its boundaries and functions based on the assumption that the practitioner already knew what supervision was and that they shared this understanding. The practitioner does not appear to have been positioned to inform or shape the supervision process. Nor was she encouraged to consider that supervision may be worth discussing before commencing.

Penny and Susan

Penny described her first supervision conversation with Susan as her induction to supervision. Susan had spoken about "guidelines and some expectations and a structure to it [supervision]". She described these guidelines as including:

How are we going to work in supervision, you know, what's my role, what's your role, that's what I was hoping to establish. (...) And things like we might discuss admin things, we might discuss your practice, what might be in supervision, the whole range of things that can be in supervision.

Susan described Penny as relatively new to the field and to supervision. She said this was a barrier to engaging with her in a conversation about their respective ideas and preferences for supervision. Susan said it “was a bit difficult for you [Penny] to explain or to really say” what Penny wanted supervision to look like, “because you hadn't been in the workforce that long, and you hadn't probably even considered a lot about supervision at that stage”. This raises the question of how new practitioners can be positioned in supervision to discuss their hopes or perhaps to begin to develop possible hopes for supervision.

Susan refers to an understanding of supervision as potentially producing fear and concern for new practitioners. She spoke of her intention for the initial conversation to “put at ease, maybe, any fears” or “worry” Penny had about supervision, including the idea of “being watched”. Susan said it was important that induction to supervision serve to “demystify supervision”, to “bring openness for the supervision” and to assist practitioners to see supervision as “helping them to build what they need to do for their work.” It is a “guiding” and “encouraging” process in which practitioners should be able to feel “comfortable and not afraid to come to supervision”.

In her account of her hope to alleviate potential fears, Susan suggested that discussing supervision and introducing supervision guidelines would provide Penny with “the security of knowing, well, this is how it is going to work, so you would know what to expect, be prepared and what to expect, so far as how the basic process of how supervision was going to work” so she “didn't have to worry”. Whilst Susan identified “a wealth of information” that as supervisor she “could say to someone that this is how I see supervision, this is what I think we need to do, this is what I..., the way it's meant to be,” she also spoke of wanting to find a balance between providing Penny with enough information and clarity about supervision whilst “not wanting to be too forceful, not pushy, too directive”. She described a hope that she and Penny would discuss supervision in order to

develop a shared understanding of “what is expected to happen or have expectations” and to have a “clear understanding of what was, of how we both fitted into supervision”. She wanted to give Penny “an idea of how I see supervision working” so both had “a contract of, ‘this is what I will do and this is what you will do and this is how’”.

Penny described her first supervision conversation with Susan as having put her “mind at ease”. She said she came away from it with an understanding of supervision as “not having so strict guidelines,” but rather as being “pretty open”, “pretty flexible” and a place where “we would do the formalities of work and any personal stuff I wanted to bring we could talk about in supervision”. She said that the agreement was that in supervision she could talk about “whatever I wanted” and that supervision would not be about her “being monitored too heavily in a negative way or anything like that”. This account perhaps raises the question of how Penny came to understand the purpose of supervision and how it contributed to her practice and to the wellbeing of her clients as well as the ways in which supervision serves to monitor practice. A further question is how supervisors support practitioners to develop their understanding of supervision without overwhelming them with the “wealth of information” available.

In an attempt to balance not giving too much information, Susan said that because Penny had not had much experience of supervision, she was “waiting to see” how supervision went, whilst also wanting to have “guidelines” but not to “confuse” Penny with them. Trying to avoid positioning herself as “directive,” Susan was “waiting to see” how supervision went before she spoke much about the purpose and process of supervision or about each party’s role in the relationship.

Susan spoke of her belief in the importance of building the supervisory relationship. She said she gave consideration to this when thinking about how much information on supervision to provide to Penny.

But I get the impression that when someone is starting off with supervision, when they are new at supervision, whether they have an understanding of it or not, they are with a new supervisor. So it’s that whole relationship needs to be built and it’s just about how much information do you start with at the beginning. What do you do, do you

give information, build the relationship, or how do you work the two together?

It seems important for supervisors to consider how to build the supervisory relationship while sharing information and discussing supervision. Penny suggested that if Susan had been more “prescriptive” or more active in saying, “these are the rules,” it is possible it “might have caused some strain” in their supervisory relationship. Penny said, “having not-so-strict guidelines to our supervision, means that we can be more comfortable with each other”. Penny said she had come to believe that “the supervisory relationship is going to contribute to how well our supervision goes”.

Penny was positioned in their supervision relationship as “new” and as not knowing the purpose of supervision or what she may want from it. During their research conversations, it became evident to both Penny and Susan that Penny’s understanding of supervision and the value she gave supervision remained limited. It may be that Susan’s intention for a “good supervision relationship”, her hope “not to be too pushy or forceful” or “confusing,” and her concern that supervision might be “fear[ed]”, led her to share less information about supervision. Her hopes for it to be “comfortable” might have led her to share a thin description of supervision and its functions. These discoveries that the participants spoke of are discussed further in the final Results chapter which explores the effect of the research on participants.

Pam and Sophie

Pam described her induction to supervision with Sophie as a “gentle” process. Sophie asked about her previous supervision experience, and gave her “some information about supervision”, advised her of its “frequency,” and introduced her to the supervision “tool”. Pam described her experience of being “walked through” the supervision tool and of being supported to “find her feet in that process”.

Sophie explained that the supervision tool was a template she developed which was used in supervision with all staff across the site. The tool was intended to be completed by the practitioner then brought to supervision, to be given to the supervisor and discussed. The tool captured information about:

How many clients the worker is meeting with, how often they are meeting with them, what the key issues that are being worked on, what are practice issues that are coming up, and I guess that is around for yourself as a worker to be thinking about when you meet with a client. Are there particular worries or concerns or challenges or delights which come up there? (...) And asking about therapeutic models which people are using, what the outcome of the sessions are, so I guess the direction that the session is going (...), ... and whether there has been a review done of the work.

(...) the actual emphasis (...) is on the therapeutic interactions and about really inviting workers to reflect upon their work practice and so that's in terms of their one-to-one work, groups and projects as well.

Pam said that while she did not recall having a discussion about the purpose of supervision, talking about the supervision "tool" had given her "a clear expectation" of "what we are going to talk about", what "to expect from you(...)" and what I was supposed to offer as part of that relationship". She found it useful as it helped to "develop mutual understanding and expectations about what this [supervision] was going to be about" and to "have that framework in supervision rather than just sort of going in [to supervision] and talking willy-nilly".

Sophie said she thought it is "incumbent upon the senior worker to actually provide that [clarity about the role of supervision] and to then provide space to have some discussions about that". However, she also said she is "willing to share the power base" and for the practitioner to "take a lead in progressing" other discussions outside the supervision tool structure. Sophie said she would "hope that this would give the new practitioner the understanding that they certainly do have input into the supervision" and that while using the supervision tool, she remains

(...) open to discussing issues that the practitioner may wish to explore, you know, maybe there are other areas of work they want to do, or they have an idea for a different program, or there is training they would like to do, or perhaps they have consulted with a worker from a different agency (...)

As with Susan's sense of Penny, Sophie's understanding was that Pam had not participated in much supervision previously and she therefore felt "a bit cautious" and mindful of "not wanting to overwhelm" or "intimidate" Pam with "the expectations and (...) the whole supervision process". She hoped to "decrease any worries" Pam may have had about supervision. She wanted to "engender an idea that the process could actually be helpful" and for Pam "to feel supported in this process by me". At the same time, Sophie said she was "wanting to establish boundaries and expectations" for supervision. She said she achieved this by "going through the processes and the forms [supervision tool and the counselling review form] that are being used, again reiterating that it's not an optional process". She qualified this by saying that while supervision was "not optional", she did not want to "bulldoze the supervision process in".

This account implies that Sophie held a belief that the boundaries and expectations for supervision are set by the supervisor, more so perhaps in the case of new practitioners. In advocating for an agentic position, Pam added that there could nonetheless be ways for supervision to be a negotiated process, even when practitioners are new to supervision.

I guess it is about, then, letting them [new practitioners] negotiate within what their own knowledge and experience is but also giving them knowledge and, with that knowledge, I guess some power so that they do feel they can negotiate because, obviously little knowledge can often mean people don't have a lot of power in certain circumstances. Not just professionally but with clients ... If they are given more knowledge and they know what they are allowed to negotiate or, you know, you're talking about for them to go out and explore different projects or talking with different workers from different agencies, that they can bring that back in and that they can initiate discussions about that.

Pam offered a nuanced perspective on the positioning which Sophie associates with newness. Pam suggested that newness does not necessarily mean practitioners are without power, or a speaking position or the capacity to co-construct supervision.

Sophie spoke of her hope to create a "respectful and trusting place", a "safe space," where practitioners can be curious about their work, discuss "what is

giving them enjoyment” and also the “challenges”. She repeated throughout the research conversations that she believes it is “in the really difficult places in our work where we have our greatest learnings”. Sophie shared some of the statements she makes to new practitioners with the intention of creating space for reflection on practice.

The intention is to critique the staff member’s work, not to be critical of the worker nor of their work practice.

None of us know all the answers to the complexity of the work we do.

Supervision is a two-way learning process.

If a worker did not name this [the challenge] in supervision, I would be concerned about their level of understanding of the issues

All workers continue to learn throughout their work life and that if they didn’t, there would be something wrong.

It seems from Sophie’s accounts of these statements that they construct the practitioner as incomplete or not knowing, but with the hope that this will protect the practitioner from the weight of expectation.

(...) expecting that there will be challenges in the work, um, and I guess as a new worker, acknowledging that they are new to this work and that they are not going to know everything and no one can and that even when we have been in this work for years (...)

Sophie also framed this idea in terms of the boundaries of the skills attributed to the practitioner.

If a worker does seek help it shows they are willing to show the limits of their learnings and they are also willing to seek further information or resources to both assist their client and themselves as well.

In the research conversation, Sophie recounted an experience from her own practice that she had previously shared with Pam in their supervision. This concerned a situation in which she did not know what to do next. She described how she had asked her manager for help.

I said to her that I did feel embarrassed to have asked her. She said that she was pleased that I had because it was an indication that I knew the limitations of what I was capable of, but also that I wasn't scared to actually ask either. That for me was very powerful because I did feel dumb having asked her. But I was just stuck. I didn't know what to do and, um..., but I was really very thankful for that feedback that she gave me.

Sophie acknowledged the "risk" involved in a worker raising difficulties and challenges in the work. However she said she sees it as a "compliment" if a practitioner comes to supervision and says 'I'm a bit stumped here' or 'I don't think I did that very well'. She takes this to mean "the worker is feeling safe enough to be able to raise those issues". She believes it is important to lay the groundwork for such reflection on difficulties.

In these early discussions as well, I would be asking the worker what would they need from me to make this feel safe and a respectful space. And it would be really important for me to really listen to what they were saying and to incorporate that into the session.

Pam reflected that "it can be a hard thing, to have to raise things like that with our supervisor or with someone who is in a perceived position of power". It was her experience that "all of us, (...) sit there and think about something that we might want to say but don't say it because we are worried about, you know, 'is that going to sound very stupid, am I even on the right track, or...'" She added that "sometimes I can lack confidence around aspects of my work and that can sometimes makes me hesitant to talk about certain bits because I don't want to seem stupid or seem like I don't know and having other people think that".

Pam suggested that supervisors should think about how they open up space for practitioners to speak of difficulties. She said it is important for supervisors to say that supervision is a place to “talk about difficult things” and to explicitly reassure practitioners that supervision is “not to make you look dumb, it’s not to make you feel guilty or bad. It’s about your development and helping you to grow as a worker and to support you, not to criticise you”. Pam cautioned that supervisors should be “careful about the language” they use. If a practitioner raises a difficulty, the supervisor should be careful not to convey “that you could have done it better”. She also suggested it is important for supervisors to respond, when practitioners raise “difficult things,” by saying “that was really useful and that it was okay that you brought that up”. This would be “encouragement, so they know it is safe to do it again next time”. She added, “I think that for new workers, or younger workers with not as much experience, to hear that the person sitting opposite them had struggles as well in their early stages or even now, that it does help to make them feel more confident about opening up about those challenges”. She suggested, “it just depends on the two people engaged in that supervisory relationship, whether it’s intimidating or helpful or whatever”. She said she thought “that sort of stuff builds the relationship”, the “supportive environment”.

On the question of the supervisory relationship, Sophie said it is “incumbent on the supervisor to really lay those [relationship] foundations early”. Pam responded that the practitioner is also responsible for using their power in the relationship.

The worker has as much responsibility in building that relationship as the supervisor does. I think that any relationship, and anything that we do in life needs to be a two-way process and that relationship needs to be mutually beneficial and I think that each worker involved in the relationship needs to contribute equally and take equal responsibility (...)

I think that for a new worker it is often the case that the supervisor will take on the lead role in initiating and leading that relationship building as they are in the position of leadership. However, I think it’s also important that the worker engages in this at some point, ideally early on. I don’t think..., you know, that relationship’s not going to build to be a strong and trusting relationship if the worker just sits back. I think yeah, if the worker

takes no responsibility in building that relationship then that could have quite a detrimental effect on the relationship and then what is that going to mean for supervision. I don't think that would be very effective.

I guess it is actively participating in the relationship, so it's, you know, questioning and it's reflecting and its being an active participant in whatever is happening in that relationship.

Pam's account of an effective supervisory relationship positions the practitioner as a partner in the supervision. The practitioner is agentively positioned as active and influential in both the relationship and the supervision process.

Similarly to Sarah, Sophie expressed "genuine interest" in Pam "as a person and as a practitioner". This interest applied to Pam's practice, her thinking, and the therapeutic models she used. Her interest proceeded from the belief that Pam brought "lots of skills and knowledges" with her from previous work and life experiences. This reflected her intention to create space for an acknowledgment of skills and experiences. Sophie said she hoped to convey that she had "faith in the skills and knowledges of staff". The ultimate goal of this was "to engender the idea that through supervision, this is of benefit also to the clients and the community they are working with".

Pam recommended a proactive approach to supervision induction. She said she would advise other supervisors to enquire at the very beginning of a new supervision relationship about the worker's previous experiences of supervision, their understanding of the purpose of supervision and what supervision means to them. Sophie described how, at induction, she had explored how Pam saw supervision and what it might have been like to be commencing supervision. Pam added that she had found it helpful that Sophie valued her "previous experiences of supervision and how (...) that may impact on (...) [her] current idea and relationship with supervision".

ISSUES OF INTERNAL AND/OR EXTERNAL SUPERVISION AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SUPERVISION, LINE MANAGEMENT AND CASE MANAGEMENT

Three of the four participating practitioners were meeting for professional supervision with an internal supervisor to whom they directly reported regarding their clinical work and administrative matters such as work load allocation. It seems for these participants who had supervision with their line manager, there was a significant case management or line management focus in their supervision together.

Polly, the only participant working with an external supervisor, spoke about difficulties she had experienced in previous supervision with a supervisor who was also her line manager.

I was having internal supervision and I wasn't feeling satisfied with the conversations we were having so it was very... I would say a lot about particular clients and get nothing back sort of thing. So it wasn't very stimulating. It wasn't challenging. I would walk away feeling like, oh okay, I wanted more but wasn't getting it.

Polly described this approach to supervision as "really managerial". "You go through your clients. I didn't really think of it as support or something to stimulate you". She considered her participation in supervision with her line manager as a process of "going through the motions". She described how she could "hardly get a word in". She would walk out of supervision with "instructions" she was "supposed" to implement in her work with clients. Describing her experience of these instructions, Polly said she "had no contribution to [them], [...they] didn't connect with me in any way (...) really I didn't do half the stuff I was supposed to because it didn't suit me or the client".

Polly's account of supervision raises the controversial question of whether a line manager can also provide effective supervision (Axten, 2002; Copeland, 2001; Scaife, 2009; Ung, 2002). When the supervisor occupies the dual role of line manager, are the activities of case management and line management better understood as separate activities?

The gap in undergraduate training left Polly unaware that external supervision “was an option” for her to seek out for herself if she wanted something different to what was available with her internal manager/supervisor.

I didn’t really know what to expect either, because up to meeting you Sarah I had only done internal supervision. When you offered supervision to me I remember thinking, ‘Oh, am I actually allowed to do this?’ I had no idea that I could actually do it. It just wasn’t an option up until you offered it.

Sarah, from a position of supervisor knowledge, suggested the importance of practitioners finding a supervisor who is a “good fit” and someone they can “talk to”.

I guess we just need to reinforce or emphasis that getting really clear on what you want and finding someone who you feel comfortable to talk to with..., like it’s like a counsellor, you don’t go to see someone who you don’t feel like you can talk to.

From their accounts neither Sally nor Susan invited the new practitioners into dialogue about the dual roles they held as supervisor and line manager, or the differences between the purposes and practices of supervision, line management and case management. Neither did they raise the possible impacts of relations of power resulting from their dual roles. On the contrary, they described “supervision” as a single activity which incorporated all of these functions.

Sally described the format of her fortnightly supervision with Phoebe as “strengths, highlight or something difficult and just running through the cases”.

And I feel as though we look at child protection, we look at the children’s issues, we look at the parents and case management. I feel as though we are able to talk through and tease through the whole family plus the administrative side of things.

It’s still my role to make sure that someone is making sure they have got their administrative aspect of the role done, meeting the requirements of the program. It [supervision] still needs to have that.

Sally listed the tasks of supervision as including:

The administrative side of stuff - so that's, um, child protection reports, case plans, strengths and needs, case notes, all of that; educative - so identifying gaps in learning, maybe looking at what resources people didn't know about in the community; and also supportive, in whatever is brought to supervision.

Sally described a previous supervision working agreement with another practitioner as incorporating line management, case management and supervision activities. Though Sally had not developed a written agreement with Phoebe, they agreed their supervision conversations covered the same functions as this earlier working agreement.

The aims and the purpose of supervision were the following three dot points: so the first was to ensure clinical supervision of casework and best practice service provision to clients engaging with our service. The second one was to provide regular time and space for uninterrupted time to clarify tasks, deadlines and address administrative requirements relating to casework. And the third one was to identify at the earliest opportunity any workload, support needs or issues that might arise that have potential to create hazards to the OH&S of workers, clients, staff children, families and visitors. Then we had five standing items, five standing discussions items, which include: joint review of cases and planning of case management and task priorities for the caseworker and opportunities for caseworker and supervisor to discuss, highlight, strengths and challenges being experienced in the role over the week, considerations of the interface between relevant theory and practice, compare schedules for the upcoming week and then issues around OH&S.

From Sally's account of her supervision practice it seems to be largely oriented towards case management, with a focus on the work of the "case" rather than on the worker in the work (Lowe & Guy, 1996). The idea of "running through the cases" that Sally spoke of seems to resonate with Polly's reflection that internal supervision with her manager was where "you go through your clients".

In line with this grouping together of the activities of case management, line management and supervision, it appears Sally may have conflated the induction to supervision with the induction to the practitioner's work role and to the program

she works in. Asked about the ways she inducted Phoebe to supervision, Sally said:

I felt what I did with you, Phoebe, was a much more kind of narrative talking through approach, I guess. This is an introduction, I guess, into the service, this is what we do, this is how we do it, this is what we use. Well maybe here I was assuming so much, that this is how I do supervision.

Penny and Susan both reported that supervision is, in part, “for the supervisor”. Susan described one of the functions of supervision as helping her to understand and identify “where the gaps are in learning” so she can “organise training”. It could be argued that this responsibility would belong more within the role of line management than supervision.

As with Sally, it appears that Susan and Penny also did not discuss distinctions between supervision, line management and case management. When I asked Susan and Penny, by letter, what distinction they saw between supervision conversations and other daily work conversations, Penny responded,

We didn’t exactly formalise any distinction between raising issues in everyday conversation and raising them in supervision. We never talked about that.

Reflecting on why they had only had limited numbers of supervision meetings, Penny said that to Susan that perhaps it was “because you see me every day” and “if I have an issue to bring up then I tell you on the day or something”.

Susan made a single comment during the research conversations about the issue of internal and external supervision - “If you’re having external supervision, it’s much easier than internal supervision, I find”. Unfortunately the research design did not afford me the opportunity to explore the meaning of this comment with Susan.

In contrast to the other two pairs who were involved in line management and supervision, Sophie and Pam did speak explicitly about differences between “line management” and supervision. They described line management as a role the site manager undertakes with the practitioner, “generally once per month” and focused on “organisational aspects”, “more about stats, holidays, how many groups you

are engaged in, relationships within the team, any interagency groups you might be involved in, what training perhaps you had or might be wanting, if there are any issues that have come up within the team that need a bit of work on, those kinds of things". Sophie drew the distinction that line management "doesn't actually make space to have discussions around the therapeutic aspect of our work". On the other hand, supervision is provided by the Senior Social Worker (Sophie). It is held once a month for full-time workers and Sophie described it as "more about digging down deep into the work that you are actually doing and the therapeutic processes you are actually engaging with the people you are working with". She described the emphasis of supervision as being "on the therapeutic interactions and about really inviting workers to reflect upon their work practice". Pam said the difference between the two activities "was quite clearly outlined" during her induction to the site and that "there was no confusion about the difference". She found that "it was easy to grasp that one was more therapeutic and the other wasn't".

While clear differences between line management and supervision were drawn in Pam's induction, it appears some elements of their supervision conversations could still be argued to belong more within the scope of line management or case management. Like Susan, Sophie also described some elements of supervision as serving her own purpose. For example, Sophie spoke about the supervision tool that she used in supervision with Pam as helping her to "get an idea of (...) workload," issues, outcome measurement, review of reviews undertaken and "just to check in on whether they [the practitioner] are actually on track, whether things have changed, whether there needs to be a difference in the direction of the counselling or even, have the goals of the counselling now been met and is there the need to continue on with counselling". Overall she said, "... it is through using the tool that I have a sense of how the practitioner is going, if they are on track with the work".

It also appears that their supervision conversations may have been influenced by organisational prerogatives in a way that might not have been the case with external supervision. Pam said, "different organisations have different views on what supervision is". For her, the purpose of supervision is:

(...) different for each team and each work site, too. So I may have come in from an organisation and viewed supervision as having a completely different purpose as to what it would have in this organisation and what the purpose would be for that team.

Sophie spoke about supervision as a forum to:

(...) make it clear what the organisation's policies and procedures are (...) making it clear about the organisation's stances on key issues, like exactly what is primary health care? And so, how do we expect workers to operate from that point of view?

She suggested that early supervision conversations could include:

Talking about primary health care and about what it really is and the whole social determinants of health and, (...) to get really, really clear about the principles of primary health care, and so that's the premises upon which we are actually working.

Sophie discussed at length the function of supervision as "an accountability mechanism". A supervisor needed to "have an eye over what people are doing in terms of those accountability mechanisms". To this end, she had developed the supervision tool to provide her, as the senior Social Worker in the service, with "what is it that I want to know" in relation to the work of the practitioners she was responsible for supervising. Whilst it is widely agreed that supervision has an accountability function (Carroll, 1996; Grauel, 2002), some might consider that the accountability mechanism Sophie described may fall more into the domain of line management responsibility than of supervision.

Unlike the other supervisors, Sophie did speak about the importance of naming the "position of power" she has within the supervision relationship.

I think it's important for the supervisor to actually name the position of power that she has within this supervision relationship because it is there, it is the elephant in the room.

Acknowledging that "the supervisor certainly is in a greater position of power," Sophie held the supervisor responsible for naming and working to reduce the negative effects of the power imbalance:

Hopefully any unhelpful effects [of the supervisor's positional power] could be decreased through respectful interactions which are initiated by the supervisor ... the onus that I saw on the senior worker to be laying those foundations [for respectful conversation] down.

Instead of using the "position of power to intimidate the worker," Sophie outlined how the supervisor could

(...) endeavour to minimise the sense of intimidation for the worker by trying to create a relaxed atmosphere, acknowledging the worker's skills and accomplishments, um, the supervisor sharing something of their own challenges, sharing what they found helpful at times and, I guess, to be enquiring what the practitioner has done to extend their own knowledges and to deal with particular situations and, so, really validating the developments. So that it would be about acknowledging the power imbalance, but also acknowledging the skills of the worker.

Pam spoke of the potential for negative impacts of the supervisor's positional power:

I think that the supervisor's position of power can be intimidating to know for new practitioners and therefore this may make the worker less available during supervision process, meaning that supervision isn't as effective as it could be.

She suggested that the unhelpful effects of power could be decreased by the supervisor "assist[ing] the worker to have a voice", helping to create "a place for them to voice their opinion and position about supervision but obviously, within the boundaries that are put in place by an organisation". Pam said this could include "ongoing encouragement, that it is okay to talk about negotiate, learn, be wrong or, you know, be worried about what you are doing in practice". She added,

I think that at the core, it comes down to ensuring that the relationship is built with good foundations, based on a mutual understanding about the supervision and a respect for one another. And I think, if those things are there at the core, then that should hopefully go a long way to reducing that power imbalance.

It is not clear from their discussion whether Pam and Sophie were talking about the power a supervisor has in the supervisory relationship, or about the additional positional power of the supervisor as a senior staff member of the organisation, who is also responsible for work allocation and other functions.

The overlap between the role of supervisor and line manager raise significant questions about the definition of supervision, the hopes and intentions of supervision and the potential effects of these complex roles on supervision and the supervisory relationships. Given that line managers frequently do perform dual supervision roles, it would be useful to inquire further into the impact of dual roles on supervision, and on the development of practitioners' professional identity. It would also be useful to have further reflection on the differences between line management, case management and supervision, and of supervisors' understandings of their responsibilities regarding accountability. It may be particularly valuable to discuss these issues in supervision in situations where the practitioner's supervisor is also their line manager. This practice should aim to render visible the power relations at play and to position practitioners as having knowledge that is relevant to what they are engaging in, so they can negotiate for their needs to be met, and prepare to effectively use supervision.

SUMMARY

The accounts of the participants in this research showed varying constructions of what supervision is and what it is for. New practitioners were positioned in these accounts in a range of ways including 'not yet knowing' and 'having valuable skills, knowledges and experiences'. As a result there was also a range of ideas about how to induct practitioners to supervision. Induction processes ranged from being unilaterally determined to being collaboratively co-constructed to being absent in some situations. The impact of dual line management and supervision roles on supervision and induction provides a rich field for future research attention.

CHAPTER FIVE

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RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers discussion of a number of particular practices and processes relevant to inducting new practitioners to supervision. Participants' ideas about the role of the personal in supervision are considered, as are ways to negotiate this issue. The use of formal and informal supervision reviews to assist the practitioner's development of understanding and effective use of supervision is discussed. Ideas raised about the benefits of supervisors providing practitioners with written information on supervision are surveyed. There is a discussion of the participants' suggestion that it is valuable to see induction as an ongoing process, especially in view of the impact of induction on practitioners' developing understanding and use of supervision. The supervisors' recommendation that supervisors should attend training on supervision is also noted.

THE PERSONAL AND THE PROFESSIONAL

The importance of the relationship between the personal and the professional in supervision is flagged by the fact that it was discussed by all four participant pairs. They all recommended that supervision should include space to reflect on the impact of the work on the personal, and of the personal on the work.

Sarah spoke about this interrelationship a number of times in both research conversations with Polly. She stated a belief that "everything that we do comes from who we are and the world we live in". "There isn't an absolute separation between the work that we do with clients and who we are," she said, adding that it is "important in supervision that we don't deny - we are not clinical - that we are not just a practitioner who does things based on theories and models". She said she had negotiated the role of the personal in the professional at the beginning of her supervision work with Polly.

We talked about whether or not we would talk about how outside work stuff might impact on work and how work might impact on the way you see yourself in the world.

Supervision is an opportunity to “express the impact that this work has on me as a person”, Sarah stated, and to explore how “my personal experiences inform the practices, and my values and commitments in the work”.

Responding to this, Polly also spoke of her experience of supervision with Sarah as taking account of the interaction between the personal and the professional,

I, Polly, was in supervision not...it wasn't just Polly, the youth support worker. So it was all of me.

Polly said that prior to her supervision with Sarah, however, she had not understood the role of the personal in supervision in this way.

Supervision isn't just this really kind of clinical idea of, what I went to supervision with [prior to Sarah], that you only speak about “the work”.

Noting the debate in the field about the relationship between the personal and the professional in supervision (Carroll, 1996; Carroll & Gilbert, 2006; Crocket, 2002b; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Scaife & Walsh, 2009), Polly spoke of other conversations she had had with practitioners who had suggested it is “unprofessional” to bring the personal to the professional arena.

There are people out there who still really believe in that - that you separate your ‘work self’ from your ‘personal self’.

So even though I know I was using my own experiences or knowledges from outside, from my own life, to inform some of the things I did, I could never say it because, even at uni, you kind of learn that you don't do that. It's [seen as] unethical or something like that.

Despite these experiences Polly said she would advise other new practitioners to acknowledge the interconnection between the personal and the professional and to speak in supervision about the role of the personal in their work:

(...) and not to be afraid to use it or mention it. I think it would be important for them [practitioners] to see there is no judgement in using your own personal experiences and connecting it to your work.

Sarah agreed with Polly, in principle, but suggested care should be taken giving this advice to new practitioners, cautioning that, “there are supervision contexts where it isn’t okay”. She recommended that practitioners “negotiate” with their supervisors about including the personal in supervision:

Find a supervisor who is willing to bring all of you into the supervision. Because otherwise you will need to go through the motions and protect yourself from people who won’t respect or who will judge you for having made those links.

Sarah referred to specific professional discourses that influence supervisors to judge practitioners negatively for linking the personal and the professional in supervision and in their work. She also highlighted what she believed to be the supervisor’s responsibility to raise this issue of the personal in supervision based on her experience that not all practitioners enter supervision with a sense that the personal and professional are interconnected or relevant in supervision.

I think that [a safe judgement-free space] needs to be negotiated because we could be sitting here and you could have totally resisted [discussing the personal in supervision], based on beliefs or discourses that say that it isn’t appropriate [to discuss the personal in supervision], and then you would have found yourself, perhaps in a place of discomfort. (...)You already brought with you [to supervision] an understanding that all the different aspects of your life are in some way linked. But for people who don’t, that could be very scary [to be asked about the connections between the personal and the professional if that had not been discussed and negotiated].

As for Polly, in her previous experiences of supervision, Pam also had found space was not included for reflection on the personal in the professional.

It [supervision] wasn’t a place to explore the impacts of that work on you as a worker and the issues that it raised

Resonating with Sarah's caveat above, Pam spoke of her sense of difficulty commencing her supervision relationship with Sophie, when she found an expectation that supervision would include the personal:

The way that supervision occurs where we work, that [personal in the professional] is very much on the agenda and very much an important part of the work that we do.

I think it's useful, but it's something I have found challenging because it is something that I haven't... I don't know if "been allowed" is the right words...but it's not something that has been part of my work and my supervision process from my previous position. So for me at my previous organisation, it was very much about what was going on for the client and it was never about how that was impacting on you or what issues came up when you were working with that client. (...) I guess it's been challenging to shift my focus a tiny bit, a tiny bit of the time onto that.

Sally stated a belief that supervision and "personal therapy" are "important and quite different and quite separate" activities. In their second research conversation, she reflected that she and Phoebe had not had a conversation about differences between supervision and "personal therapy," but that this was something she wished to do at induction in future supervision work with practitioners.

It appeared that Phoebe was introduced for the first time to Sally's ideas about the role of the personal in supervision in the course of the first research conversation. Phoebe said:

I suppose it's [supervision] not really an opportunity for me, for example, to sit here and dump my own personal problems.

To which Sally replied:

But sometimes there is an element of that comes up.

Sally went on later in the research conversation to say:

I think, even in supervision, there is a space to not necessarily share all about your personal experiences, but maybe just to have a bit of a think

about what we may be bringing into this work and what, maybe, might touch us and then what to do with those feelings. (...)But I think it's really important to recognise that what might be happening in the work might evoke feelings in us that we don't even know were there... And I think sometimes supervision can be a place where those feelings can just begin to surface and to begin to come up, and looking for alternative and more appropriate space for those feelings to have an opportunity for those feelings to be explored and expressed.

There may be influences in this interaction of the discursive contexts of supervision and of personal therapy. Sally said elsewhere that she had engaged in her own "personal therapy". This may be the "alternative and more appropriate space for those [personal] feelings to be explored and expressed" that she refers to.

Recalling her induction to supervision, Penny spoke of her understanding of the role the personal played in supervision:

I remember you saying that we would do the formalities of work and any personal stuff I wanted to bring we could talk about in supervision.

She added:

I appreciated the option of talking about other things because obviously your personal life affects your work life and vice versa.

If there are things that are bothering me, work-related or un-work-related, I guess supervision has been more useful in terms of getting that off my chest or using my mind about certain things.

I wasn't going to spend the whole time talking about, I don't know, relationship problems or anything like that, but just knowing that I could bring that up. Yeah, still in a professional manner.

The limitations of the research method prevented further exploration of how Penny and Susan understand talking about "personal stuff" in a professional manner. It would be interesting to hear more about their ideas on what distinguishes conversations where the personal also falls into the professional

category and how these conversations can take place in ways that are congruent with the purposes of supervision.

There appear to be varied understandings among practitioners and supervisors about ‘the personal’ and about the ways the personal can be discussed in supervision without crossing into “personal therapy,” as Sally called it. Considering the diversity of opinion about the personal in supervision (Carroll, 1996; Carroll & Gilbert, 2006; Crocket, 2002b; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Scaife & Walsh, 2009), and in light of Polly’s comment that some supervisors see this as an issue of ethics or professional standards, it seems important that supervisors and practitioners have clear conversations about their hopes for the role the personal will play in their supervision. Pam’s comments highlighted how supervisors’ understandings about the role of the personal in supervision can determine how much the practitioner can bring the personal to supervision. This raises a question of what practices can be used to best position practitioners to advocate for their hopes and intentions for supervision.

REVIEWS AND “CHECK-INS”

Polly and Sarah were the only participants to speak of using regular check-ins during supervision conversations. For the other three pairs, the research was, however, catalytic in highlighting the value of regular reviews and check-ins. Some of these findings will be discussed further in the next chapter, exploring the effects of the research on participants.

Sarah described her practice to intentionally “check in” during supervision conversations to ensure the conversation was “on the right track” and “if this was what you [Polly] wanted to talk about”. She said she does this during and at the end of supervision to ensure the “useful[ness]” of the conversation. Polly described experiencing Sarah’s check-ins as helpful as they created “the opportunity for me to say this or that”. She said “it gave that opening to a conversation”. It “created a safe space” to speak of her experience and cued her that “oh yeah, okay, I can say something”. It seems this practice was informed by Sarah’s collaborative approach to supervision. She stated that she intentionally acts to create positions for Polly to have a voice in the relationship.

While Sally and Phoebe had not used or considered using reviews or check-ins, Sally said that as a result of participating in the research conversations she intended to introduce “a kind of checking in after supervision” and a more formal reflection annually.

Susan and Penny also said they had not engaged in reviews or check-ins. It appeared that participating in the research also prompted them to discuss supervision reviews. Susan said that “reflecting on supervision” was something she had done with other practitioners and she would like to do this again “...at least once a year”. Susan described how this “reflection” would be an opportunity to “re-establish what supervision is going to be like”. This would also provide a process to ask Penny what she may “want from supervision” and “so far down the track, how do you see supervision working again now?” Possibly drawing on developmental discourses, Penny responded to Susan’s statement by commenting,

People change and, like, what I wanted supervision to be at the start of the year might not be the same as what I want it to be next year. So yeah, I think that’s a good idea.

Susan replied to this:

Yeah, I like that idea too because, as you said, how you start the year, if you have gone through the year with work, as you come along the way, you might think, yeah, I would like to change something. You do pick up different ideas and thoughts and there might be something happening in supervision that you don’t want to be there, or that you want to add to it. Yeah, I agree with that, too. I like the idea, you know, reflecting on supervision and understanding of it and even how the year’s been and what could be different next time.

These comments suggest the possible influence of developmental discourses that emphasise practitioners’ wants and needs changing as they gain experience in the field.

In the course of their research conversations, Penny and Susan identified that their supervision meetings were not frequent enough. Susan stated, “we might have set something up good in the beginning but we didn’t follow through with it”. Susan

seemed to think that if they had been accustomed to reviewing or reflecting on their supervision, space might have been created to name this need for more regular supervision and the concern could have been addressed in a more timely way.

Whilst Pam had not experienced reviews or check-ins of supervision during her induction to supervision, the research seemed to have produced a belief in the value of these practices. Pam said she considered the use of reviews and check-ins in supervision important and she would advise other new practitioners and their supervisors to use it. She said:

(...)for the supervisor and the worker to check with each other throughout that process [the initial negotiating process] and on into supervision about how that's going and I guess, you know, because you're there reflecting about your work and stuff but also to have some space to reflect about supervision, about how that's going for people.

Pam described a practitioner's understanding of and use of supervision as "an ongoing journey":

It would be nice to make a time or a space in each supervision to reflect on the process and the worker's ongoing journey of understanding supervision, and reflecting on supervision.

Though only one participating pair reported using check-ins in their supervision, all four pairs thought there would be value in incorporating processes for checking in and reviewing the supervision, either informally in each supervision conversation, or more formally on an annual or more frequent basis. All participants suggested that if such processes were incorporated, this would provide opportunities for reflection on and development of understanding of supervision and of its effective use. It seemed that checking in and review processes also served to create a space or position for practitioners to have a voice and take up greater authority in the construction of supervision and in speaking of what their preferences are for supervision.

HANDOUTS AND DISCLOSURES

When Susan asked her, during the research, what might have helped her understand supervision better, Penny responded, “I guess, read literature on supervision”. Penny added she would “probably” read a brief document outlining supervision if it were given to her by her supervisor, but was unlikely to seek this literature out herself.

While none of the four participating supervisors gave practitioners written information on supervision prior to commencing their work together, Susan and Sophie both spoke in their research conversations of intending to write a brief document - a “handout” or “little blurb” about supervision - that they could give to new practitioners to “demystify” supervision and to help develop practitioners’ understanding of and enthusiasm for supervision.

Susan suggested the document should cover the rationale and expected outcomes of supervision. She also said it should make clear that supervision is not about “what are you doing wrong,” but rather should be explained as “an essential developmental activity in which both parties have mutual responsibilities and rights”.

Sophie also advocated that supervision should be explained as a place for “supportive conversations” where it is safe to ask questions and raise concerns. It should also be made clear that no one knows all the answers and that supervision is a space for sharing knowledges. She said that practitioners could be informed by this document that supervision can be a place to discuss practice, and also “therapeutic models (...), challenges (...), learnings”. This list of potential roles for supervision could also include “identify[ing] areas for further training and development”. New practitioners could be informed that supervision can be used to “open up a learning space, to be thinking about our work as part of a team-based approach”. This “team-based approach” can include conversations to invite the practitioner “to be clear about the skills and the knowledges that they bring with them”. Sophie said that the new practitioner should be informed that supervision has a role in ensuring that “the work is on track in their counselling and their group work, that they are providing appropriate services” and that “the worker is also being accountable to the processes and procedures and the

philosophies of the organisation and that the organisation has a duty of care to the staff member to ensure they understand the agency's philosophies and processes". The organisation's expectations about frequency of supervision meetings should also be outlined. It should be explained that supervision has a role as "an accountability mechanism". She said there should be a statement in the document "around what my expectations are of the staff member as well". This would include that,

I would expect them to come to the supervision well prepared, they have filled in all the relevant tools (...) I would also expect that the worker comes with a willingness and an openness to explore their work and that they would be willing to engage in a respectful and thorough discussion around their work.

Sophie also suggested the document should inform new practitioners of her responsibility, as supervisor, to them.

[My] responsibility to the worker is that I am also ready to meet with them... and that I also engage in respectful and thoughtful discussions with the worker and that if I have made a commitment to follow up on certain issues, that I will in fact have done that.

Pam and Penny both said that to be provided with written information about supervision would have been helpful, supporting a more effective use of supervision. Penny suggested that written information about supervision would be "a good starting point" for beginning conversations about supervision. Pam said she thought, "having that [written information] about purpose and intention would really help new workers".

Drawing from the ideas that "each supervisor is different in the way that they supervise workers", that "each and every person is going to have a different idea of what the purpose of supervision is", and considering variations from one organisation to another, Pam suggested such a document would not only be useful for new practitioners, but would even be useful for more experienced practitioners, coming from different organisations or with different experiences of supervision.

Drawing on the idea that supervision is not a standardised activity, Pam advocated for a document that would position her with knowledge about not only the purpose of supervision, but also the position of the supervisor. She said it is useful “if there is that clear understanding of what you see is your..., the purpose of supervision”, about “where you [the supervisor] come from and how you work” - “your own personal position on the purpose of supervision”. This would help new practitioners to be clear about “why the supervisor might be asking that question or what their purpose of that [question] is,” and “what sort of things you could go through in supervision”. Pam suggested that if this information was “clearly outlined” from the start, it would help the supervisory relationship and prevent “misunderstandings” between supervisors and practitioners.

Sophie said the research conversation had highlighted the need to write such a document and she hoped that, after a process of internal consultation with staff, it may become an agency-wide document. This will be discussed further in Chapter Six – The Effects of the Research.

It appears that providing new practitioners with written information about supervision, and the supervisor’s personal position on supervision at the beginning of the supervisory relationship would significantly contribute to the development of understanding of supervision, positioning new practitioners, and in fact all practitioners, with knowledge to better engage with the supervisor and to speak of their hopes and expectations for the supervision.

CONSULTING OTHERS ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE

Penny described her experience that, “When you’ve never had supervision, you’re not sure that what you are getting is supervision”. Recognising the limitations of their understanding of supervision, immediately post-graduation, Polly, Pam and Penny all spoke about the value of talking with other students, before their first job, and then with colleagues and other practitioners in the field about their experiences of supervision. They said this assisted them to develop their understanding and use of supervision and their knowledge of whether what they are participating in is supervision, or some other activity.

Speaking of her undergraduate training and field placements, Penny said:

I think for me personally, it could have been useful to talk more to my peers who were in the same situation, being new to supervision, and then seeing how they went about being inducted.

I vaguely remember speaking to some of them about it but, I think at the time the supervision, like I said the informal supervision I was having wasn't, I didn't feel as though I was benefitting as much as other people were. I guess I could have asked them more, what actually about their supervision made them feel like they were really gaining a lot out of supervision. Because I remember people talking about it, but I guess when you are a student you know you really do what you need to do rather than...

In her second research conversation, Penny went on to say that perhaps there were still opportunities to speak with others about their understandings and experiences of supervision: "I guess, it wouldn't have to be comparing with my uni friends but also in our team as well". She expressed an interest in

See[ing] what other people [colleagues] were getting out of supervision. You know, and then I could ask myself if that is what I would want to be getting and then also, we could share ideas on ways of doing things so if they were, if they had a different sort of way of making an agenda, or if they had a creative way of doing supervision, yeah, that maybe they could share those ideas.

I guess, having that capacity to compare with other people (...)

Whilst Penny spoke about self initiated consultation she also suggested that part of a new practitioner's induction to supervision could include the supervisor "offer[ing] the opportunity to speak with other people who have had supervision". This practice would invite an opening up of supervision from a position of privacy, to create more options for practitioners to find out what other supervisors offer and how other practitioners use supervision.

Considering what advice she might give to other new practitioners, Polly spoke about the value she had found in consulting others to compare experiences and to

develop her own understanding of what supervision can be and to ensure the supervision she participates in is of a high quality.

Some advice would be to do some research about supervision, beforehand, on what supervision should look like and, maybe, I think what helped me was speaking to other people who had already had quality supervision to see what they were benefitting, or what was useful for them. And you know, seeing if it matched my ideas about supervision.

Pam said that whilst she continues to reflect in supervision on her understanding and use of supervision, she also reflects on this with colleagues. She said it has been valuable to consult others about their experiences, not only before commencing supervision, but also after having experience of supervision.

I know I have discussed with a couple of other colleagues about supervision and about understanding and about how..., about what they do in supervision and how they may fill out the tool or..., so I think that happens outside of supervision as well with colleagues.

Asked what advice she would give new practitioners entering the field, Sarah said she would suggest they not only consult others about their supervision experiences and what has been helpful, but also consult themselves about what they would find helpful to be invited to reflect on.

Listen to the questions that they want to be asked of them, and they make sure they are asked in supervision.

(...) I got to the point of, Bloody hell, I don't want to go to supervision because I am not getting my needs met, they are not asking me this and that. So what I started to do was do my own supervision, where I would sit down and pretend I was someone else asking me questions I wanted to know and, through that, formulated some of the ideas about what I wanted out of supervision.

Sarah suggested practitioners give thought to the sorts of questions they would like to be asked in supervision and discuss these with the supervisor when developing a supervision working agreement. Sarah said practitioners may be

interested in being asked questions about “what is my model, what informs my practice, what do I bring as a person to the work that I do, how is this impacting on me as a person (...) and my values and commitments in the work”. Sarah’s suggestion for practitioners to reflect on their own hopes for supervision and their development of professional identity evokes a process of dialogue with self as consultant that seems worthy of further consideration.

Providing practitioners with the opportunity to consult with colleagues appears to have been helpful for all participating practitioners. Whilst they only spoke in this research about experiences of talking with other practitioners, it may also be useful for practitioners to speak with other supervisors about supervision. Consulting themselves, other practitioners and supervisors would contribute to a rich understanding and may better position practitioners to speak of what they want from supervision and from their supervisor.

INDUCTION AS AN ONGOING PROCESS

All the participants reflected on whether induction to supervision is a single conversation at the beginning of the relationship, or an ongoing process throughout the supervision work. Sarah and Polly spoke of induction as “our first session”, whereas Penny, Susan, Pam and Sophie spoke about induction as a more extended process.

For Susan the question of the duration of induction seemed to be her decision, based on her own judgement of how much information it would be possible for Penny to retain. This description of the induction seems to position the supervisor with the knowledge and the practitioner as “supervisee”, being informed about what the supervision process will be. Penny, however, suggested that induction to supervision could “come in stages” and that it was not necessary for supervisors to share “everything [about supervision] all at the first meeting”. She suggested that a discussion about the purposes and “guidelines” of supervision would be a “good place to start” a new practitioner’s induction.

Pam and Sophie, on the other hand, developed an understanding through participating in the current research. They agreed that induction to supervision is

more of a continuous ongoing process throughout the course of the supervisory relationship.

(...) induction to supervision, perhaps, is not just that one solid thing that happens before you start having that relationship, that it's actually a fluid thing that occurs throughout many supervision sessions so, maybe, you know, that I am still being inducted ... (Pam)

So making it [induction to supervision] a fluid process rather than, 'this is your information, now let's start supervision.' You know, talk about it ongoingly. (Pam)

(...) for the supervisor not to just think, 'Oh well, I've done that once, that's it,' but instead to see..., it's a process which continues on over time. (Sophie)

After this development in thinking about induction as more than the initial discussion, Sophie suggested that perhaps "the first couple of [supervision] sessions" could be set aside for a more detailed discussion and induction to supervision. She said she would want to use this initial supervision induction time for a number of purposes: to go through the supervision blurb; to explain the purpose of supervision; to ask the worker about their thoughts on the purpose of supervision; about their previous experiences of supervision; their expectations of themselves and also of the supervisor; for the practitioner to name any worries they may have about supervision; to negotiate ways these concerns can be addressed; to talk about their hopes for the supervision work together and to "make clear the organisation's stance on key issues".

Whilst aware of the relations of power and organisational contexts at play in the supervisory relationship Pam appeared to be advocating for a more negotiated approach to the induction of new practitioners to supervision, going beyond what she had previously known in supervision. She suggested there might be room for what Crocket (2002a) referred to as a bi-laterally produced supervision rather than one unilaterally constructed by the supervisor.

Some negotiation too, in those early stages of supervision. Obviously there are certain things that have to be there and we have to do it within organisational policy and procedure, but some of the stuff you were saying

early on that, it felt that there is that chance for the worker and the supervisor to negotiate their way through that, and so that is good.

Drawing on the postmodern idea that new practitioners will, like everyone else, have valuable knowledge and experiences, Pam advocated for space in the first few conversations to be dedicated to discussions about supervision which include not only the supervisor's knowledges, experiences and curiosities but also the practitioner's.

Discussing the worker's understanding of the process and the purpose of supervision,... allow the worker to then process and reflect on previous introductions they may have had to it and their supervision, and allow the worker to think about and raise any questions to clarify any points they have regarding supervision. (Pam)

To support new practitioners to be positioned as knowledgeable about supervision, and as able to speak from this knowledge and negotiate for their needs to be met, Pam suggested that induction could begin prior to the supervisor and practitioner meeting. The supervisor could provide written material about supervision to practitioners so they are positioned with information about supervision before commencing.

I think providing the worker with as much information as possible about supervision, allowing them time to process and reflect on that. (Pam)

I think that would assist in the worker's induction to supervision and assist in the understanding of the process by enabling a much more effective use of the time if they are given that chance to reflect and process and discuss what supervision is all about for them. (Pam)

Drawing on ideas about power in the supervisory relationship, and the value of practitioners being positioned as having knowledge, Pam seemed to invite supervisors to take up a collaborative role in this shaping process, with induction continuing on throughout the supervision work with new practitioners.

I think that if supervisors did take into account that it [induction] is more fluid, and not just 'here is the information and now we are into it,' it would

definitely be more effective and workers would have a better understanding [of supervision].

I think that over time the supervisor could keep some space in there for continued conversations about supervision and its purpose and continue to assist the worker to shape their meaning of supervision for themselves, as their work progresses and supervision continues to align, complement, support the work the worker's doing with clients.

The hope participants expressed that induction to supervision should be a more fluid, ongoing process, resonates with another expressed preference - that supervision reviews and check-ins should occur regularly. This would seem to offer opportunities for practitioners to experience themselves as knowing and to take more of a speaking position in the supervisory relationship.

REFLECTIVE, INTENTIONAL INDUCTION MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Changes in understanding and use of supervision could be explained as simply being due to a general accumulation of experience of supervision over time. However three of the practitioners in this research spoke about how their understanding of supervision had changed since graduation, specifically as a result of their induction to supervision. They also said that their understanding had changed as a result of taking part in these research interviews. As noted earlier, Chapter Six discusses the effects of the research on participants in more detail.

Polly noticed that discussing supervision with her supervisor helped to significantly shape her ideas about supervision.

I guess it [the conversation about supervision] changed my perspective of what supervision was and became more of a support than a chore or a burden really. I could actually use supervision.

It swept away any previous ideas of what I thought supervision was.

Because I came with ideas of what supervision was and they were slowly being, sort of, broken down by hearing what you were saying about supervision, (...) it [the change in understanding] was happening right in

that moment, anyway, where we were actually speaking to each other (...) so it was happening there in the sharing.

Polly found that, through these initial conversations, “it was clear what our expectations were of how supervision could be used” and what the role of the supervisor was. She said she found this understanding “kept me engaged from that initial induction to supervision” - “it kept me engaged and wanting more supervision”. She suggested that, “If the expectations are not understood then supervision may not be used for the right purpose”.

Pam also thought that conversations about supervision assisted practitioners to develop a shared understanding of what supervision was, and she too suggested this contributes to practitioners using supervision more effectively.

I think that it [induction] absolutely does [make a difference], because I think that, through that induction process, that’s when you are talking about purpose and the expectations of both worker and supervisor, um, what tools you might use in supervision, how you might reflect on your work, what issues you are going to talk about and stuff like that, so, you know, it’s about making informed decisions. If you are informed about something, hopefully you are going to be able to use it more effectively so, I think understanding something helps.

I think, if a worker doesn’t understand and hasn’t been inducted properly to supervision, then you know that time probably won’t be so useful because there is not that shared understanding of what you are there for. So if you don’t have that shared understanding, you know, it might be useful for one worker but might not be for the other.

Several practitioners stated that their early supervision conversations gave them a sense of what future conversations might look like.

So the way the contract was, was established in the first session, or that jigsaw puzzle was put together, gave a flavour or a starting point for the way we were going to negotiate conversations from then on. (Polly)

Penny said that given that a part of a practitioner’s induction to supervision involves “setting guidelines for how supervision will be conducted,” it follows

that how well the guidelines are set will affect how well the practitioner understands and uses supervision.

I think, the first time we had supervision was a good basis for all the proceeding ones.

I think the way the induction is conducted, in terms of my experience, it influenced my approach to supervision...

Penny's belief that her understanding and use of supervision was limited, referred to in Chapter Four, could be understood partly as being influenced by the experience-distant information about supervision that was shared with her in her induction.

Phoebe was the only practitioner who said her understanding of supervision had not been changed by induction. The understanding she had at graduation was the same understanding she had at the time of the research. As noted earlier, Phoebe said she knew what supervision was when she entered the field, based on her experiences of academic supervision and of line management when working in customer service.

I think my understanding of supervision has stayed the same. I had an understanding of what supervision was, anyway, (...) and I just brought that to this work and hopefully used my time effectively.

Whilst Phoebe said her understanding of supervision had stayed the same, she also spoke in the research conversations about developments in her use of supervision. These are referred to in more detail in Chapter Six.

Both Susan and Sophie spoke explicitly about the impact of induction on supervision and their ideas about its contribution to practitioners' understanding and use of supervision. Susan said,

I personally think what sort of induction you have can affect how well you use supervision and how well it's understood. If you are not given any guidelines whatsoever and you haven't had any experience in supervision, haven't had any training in supervision, then a person wouldn't know what supervision is about. It could be approached as, well, "someone is

checking up on my work and making sure I am doing my work right and, maybe, if I am doing it wrong, things might, I might get criticised”, or whatever.

But I think at an induction, if those guidelines are put there and information is given about what supervision is about and what it’s to look like, I really believe it can help, I guess, ease the stress, make it a more relaxed time and a time of learning... if supervision is set up well in the beginning, then I think, as you [Penny] have already said, you are more happy to come to supervision. You are more aware of what to expect, I guess, and what you can contribute as well.

While Sophie said she didn’t think “there is enough thought given to how workers are inducted to supervision,” she also believes that “the induction process is very important”. She suggested:

The induction process is important because it kind of sets the platform, the expectation of the process, hopefully clarifies any uncertainties, um, get clear about what we each expect of each other. Also getting clear what preparation is needed as well. (...) If it doesn’t go so well it could cause concern for a number of reasons. So yeah, I can imagine if it didn’t go well it could have people worried, um, could have them reluctant to engage, feeling a bit checked up on. There could also be a sense of no enthusiasm – like, ‘Well, why bother with it?’ And also, if it doesn’t go well, there could be a sense from the worker’s point of view that they are not being listened to and so therefore, I think it does really indicate clearly that the process needs to be done well and carefully so that it does create a space, hopefully, where people will actually enjoy the space to discuss and explore and deconstruct ideas. (...) easy flow of discussions between both the worker and the supervisor.

In summary, the process of inducting new practitioners to supervision seems to make a significant difference to how they come to understand and use supervision. It is not time and accumulated experience alone that assist this development, but also the collaborative and reflective conversations with supervisors. It seems crucially important for supervisors to give careful consideration to the ways they induct new practitioners to supervision so

practitioners are positioned as understanding supervision and able to effectively use it to support their practice.

SUPERVISOR TRAINING

Two of the four participating supervisors referred in their research conversations to training for supervisors. Drawing on the idea that supervision is a profession or discipline in its own right, with particular skills and knowledges (Carroll, 1996; Getz; 1999; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006), Susan said “supervision training is important” in order to produce “good quality” supervisors. She said she would advise all supervisors to “do some training”. Supervision training is important she said, because:

It up-skills you, it gives you more knowledge ... you can get an understanding of different theoretical frameworks of supervision but also different stages of a supervisory life, ... an understanding of supervision

It reminds us that there is a process, I believe, a developmental process, in supervision and, um, we need to know that. We need to remember that. We need to remember and recognise and be sensitive to where each practitioner is in their work.

Susan suggested that training for supervisors assists them to be “sensitive to a supervisee” and “what it is like for them” entering the field and commencing supervision.

I think it’s really important to continue to remember what it’s like to be in that position as a practitioner when you are being supervised.

Susan also said that training should highlight the need for supervisors to “continue to reflect on their own practice”, with both clinical and supervisory practice, and for them to participate in their own supervision. She said training reinforced that “we need good supervision, so we can offer good supervision”.

Sally spoke about her own experience of starting in her current role. She said she had been a new supervisor and did not want to supervise staff because she had “never done it before” and was concerned she wouldn’t “be any good at it”. She ended up accepting the role as she was told she would be “mentored” and would

be able to attend supervision training. She said she attended a one or two-day training course and had a number of discussions with her own supervisor about “what does it look like to supervise someone, what was my experiences of supervision, what did I like, what didn’t I”. In her research conversation, Sally retrieved the notes she took during the supervision training she attended three years earlier. She said:

The first point that I wrote [in her notes on the supervision training] is, “the culture of supervision needs to be inspirational, re-energising, challenging in a safe environment, offer clear boundaries, meet learning goals, motivate, enlighten, educate, if we want staff to be active, focussed and intentional and participate in supervision.” Um, and then the three areas, like the tasks of supervision, which I learnt about and I tried to take on board, were [1] the administrative side of stuff - so that’s, um, child protection reports, case plans, strengths and needs, case notes, all of that; [2] educative - so identifying gaps in learning, maybe looking at what resources people didn’t know about in the community; and also [3] supportive, in whatever is brought to supervision.

Sally spoke of how she had integrated her learning from the supervision training with her own experiences to produce her own style of supervision:

I took this training on board and said, right, for my own experience, I’m going to take my own personal experience of supervision, of what I enjoyed and what I got out of it and then adapt, add to it what I learnt in this training.

She said that on the basis of attending the training and speaking with her supervisor she put together “a kind of checklist” of things she would go through and discuss in supervision. She said she found that this checklist had served to guide her in supervision conversations and aided her “confidence” in the role. This checklist included some initial prompting questions:

(...) people’s past experience of supervision, to take time to reflect on what they liked or disliked about supervision, their feelings around supervision, what would you like to get out of our time together and how would you find the time useful?

There is a significant variation between the four supervisors in this study, not only in their understanding and approach to supervision but also in the supervision training they have attended. Some had not attended any training before starting as a supervisor. From Sally's and Susan's comments it seems there are significant differences in what is taught in supervision training courses. In the course that Sally did, it was taught that a primary function of supervision is "administrative". Susan described how she was taught a developmental model of supervision with a strong focus on the importance of continuous reflection and supervision of supervision.

SUMMARY

In documenting the participants' ideas and practices around how new practitioners come to understand and use supervision, this chapter has highlighted some areas of significant agreement and diversity. Supervision is not a universal, homogeneous activity. Rather it is influenced by many factors including the supervisor's experience and understanding of supervision and the context in which supervision is undertaken. These factors draw on a variety of discursively based knowledges from contexts that are theoretic, professional, practice-based, managerial and common sense deriving from various levels of culture. The value of reviews and check-ins throughout supervision was highlighted as a way to create speaking positions for practitioners and to address concerns or difficulties that arise. It was also found that participants felt it would be beneficial for supervisors to provide practitioners with written information about supervision. Induction was seen as something more than an initial conversation. The collaborative, conversational practices of reflection and negotiation seem to be equally applicable in the ongoing production and review of the supervision relationship. It is recommended that supervisors give consideration to the ways they work to position new practitioners as holding knowledge and a speaking voice, to ensure that supervision is authentically co-constructed. The strong belief that this research found in the importance of induction to supervision, and its role in supporting new practitioners to understand and effectively use supervision highlights the importance of training in supervision, including supervision of supervision.

CHAPTER SIX

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RESULTS: EFFECTS OF THE RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

The research methods used in this project were chosen both to contribute to better understandings of how new practitioners come to understand and effectively use supervision, and also to directly benefit participants. While I did have a virtual presence, in the form of written initial and unpacking questions, my physical absence from the research conversations was intended to invite participants into positions of co-researcher, both with me and with each other. Participants were invited to engage in dialogue with each other from positions of inquiry and curiosity. It was hoped this would support the development of knowledges and experiences that participants would find useful for them personally, for their supervisory work together and for future supervision work. In this chapter excerpts from participants' transcripts demonstrate where participants took up positions as co-researchers, consultants and inquirers and some of the ways that participants spoke of being affected and transported by the research.

PARTICIPANTS AS CO-RESEARCHERS

Each participating pair entered into conversation from a position as interested and curious co-researchers. Whilst I provided the initial "starter questions" (Feinsilver et al., 2007, p.277), the participants were asked to engage with whatever captured their interest in the conversation that related to the research topic. They were briefed to not feel constrained by the initial questions I provided. By listening to each other and responding to what caught their interest, participants moved the conversations beyond simply answering the initial "starter questions" given and in so doing, extended their understandings and experience of the research topic.

In the letter I wrote to Polly and Sarah following their first conversation, I picked up on Polly's comment that supervision had become "normalised" for her as something "good workers" engage in. I asked Polly about how this view of supervision had developed. Responding to this Polly said:

It (supervision) was more like a conversation you would have with another worker, (...) it wasn't really a student/lecturer sort of conversations.

Picking up on the phrase, "wasn't really a student/ lecturer sort of conversation," Sarah took up a co-researching position and asked what practices she had used that supported a positioning in the supervision for Polly other than that of "student". Sarah asked:

What was useful for you in the conversation that took it away from the lecture/student conversation?

With this invitation into a speaking position Polly responded,

I think I came to you with a lot of questions that I had but that you wouldn't necessarily answer them. So you'd force me to answer them, but then, in doing that, I'd realise I had some idea on what the answers were, but I didn't think to go there. So, you know, I would come thinking, saying, I don't know how to do this, or what should I do with this, um, not knowing that I had ideas of what I should do, but they had never been spoken.

So now I come to supervision with ideas of what I could possibly do and then ask for, to add on or to edit or to change around, but I would come with something, not just the questions.

The inquiry opened a conversational space that made more visible the effects of supervision practices that had contributed to Polly's sense of professionalism and competence as a practitioner. Sarah's co-researching inquiry simultaneously contributed to the research, to her own supervision practice, and to Polly's understanding of supervision.

Another instance of Sarah taking up a co-researcher position is seen in the second research conversation, following Polly's response to my written question about how writing a supervision contract had contributed to her understanding of and effective use of supervision. Polly had replied:

Writing it clarified more of what Sarah's role was. It swept away any previous ideas of what I thought supervision was. For example, it was made clear to me that supervision wasn't used simply to tell me how I should do things, (...)

Responding to Polly's use of the words "swept away", Sarah seemed to invite Polly into a collaborative reflection on possible impacts of power relations at play in the supervisory relationship. Sarah offered Polly a position to speak of her experience of this, inquiring:

So, can I just ask, 'you said it [writing a supervision contract] swept away previous notions of supervision,' did you experience that as a collaborative sweeping away or as a... I am wondering, who was doing the sweeping away and whether or not that was done together, or how you experienced that?

Polly's response offered Sarah her experience of the way their initial contracting conversation had created space for sharing and ultimately generation of ideas about supervision.

I think it was happening in that first..., when we were, um, putting the contract together. I felt it happening then. Because I came with ideas of what supervision was and they were slowly being, sort of, broken down by hearing what you were saying about supervision, and I will talk about it later as well, but it was being like, it was happening right in that moment, anyway, where we were actually speaking to each other and I was saying things that I knew and things that I wanted to use, so it was happening there in the sharing.

Sarah's co-researching with Polly about her experience of forming a supervision contract contributed significantly to this research as well as to Polly's and Sarah's

understandings of how supervision contracting conversations can shape practitioners' understandings of supervision and of the impact of power relations on the speaking positions available to both practitioners and supervisors.

Through the research process Pam and Sophie engaged in a two-way sharing and dialogue that co-generated ideas about practices that could support new practitioners to better understand and more effectively use supervision. For instance, speaking about the value of reviews of supervision, Pam initially suggested such a review “could be officially structured as part of the supervision process or it could be something that just occurs more freely throughout the conversations that take place”. However during their conversation Pam went on to express concern that, unless reviews are scheduled in, it “could be lost at times, given the nature of the work and how many clients you are carrying. That [reflection on supervision] may get pushed aside”. As she continued developing this idea she added, “it might be helpful to have those types of conversations (...) every few sessions”. Supervisors needed to “give time for the worker to reflect and process and to continue to learn”. She suggested that structured reflection conversations could provide practitioners an opportunity for “giving voice to concerns or difficulties” in both their work and in the supervision. She said that providing the practitioner an opportunity to talk about “how they are finding supervision, what’s useful and what’s not” can “only help to make it all [supervision] more effective”.

Sophie responded to Pam’s suggestion with her own ideas about how regular informal reviews could be structured into each supervision conversation, with more formal reviews scheduled less frequently, as part of a new practitioner’s induction to supervision. Sophie said:

So, I was thinking about maybe halfway through each of the sessions, to be asking how this particular session is actually going, and for the practitioner to have the ability to state throughout the session if something wasn’t going well, whether there were other issues they want to be discussing, etcetera. And again maybe, I was thinking every three sessions or so, it would be good to have a discussion about the whole process, whether there were things that needed to be changed or reviewed or

explored further, if there are any problems. So I guess again I would be wanting to invite the new worker to talk about their experiences and their understandings.

This research conversation between Sophie and Pam supported Pam to develop her ideas and to speak of what she believes may be helpful for the induction of new practitioners and also contributed to Sophie's supervision practice with new practitioners.

CONSULTING YOUR CONSULTANTS

In this co-research I hoped that the supervisors would draw on their positional power to lead the inquiry somewhat, to “unearth” practitioners’ particular “insider” knowledges (Morgan, 2000, p. 116) in relation to the research question. In line with Epston's (Epston & White, 1992) practice of “consulting your consultants”, Susan and Sophie invited Penny and Pam to take up positions as consultants in the research. Susan and Sophie both used the research conversational space to inquire about the practitioners’ ideas about how they, as supervisors, could enhance or develop their supervision practice with new practitioners.

When Penny said during her first research conversation that her advice to new practitioners would be to spend time reflecting on what they would like from supervision, Susan worked to better understand what this meant and how she as a supervisor could support such reflection with new practitioners. She inquired:

How do you think that might happen? How do you think a supervisor might encourage a new practitioner to do that, to be able to reflect?

Penny shared her belief that “the relationship between the two [supervisor and practitioner]” makes a difference to the sort of reflection a practitioner could do with a supervisor regarding her hopes for supervision.

Seeking to further her understanding of how a supervisor could support a new practitioner to reflect on what they want from supervision, Susan asked:

Reflecting on what they want out of supervision - how does that happen, how does a supervisor do that with a new practitioner, do you think? Do you have any ideas on how that could work?

Penny responded that supervisors could ask practitioners “to reflect in their own time” and invited Susan to consider how she could provide new practitioners information to position them to speak of their preferences and hopes for supervision and to produce an agentic position for them in the supervisory relationship.

Maybe, like how you said, giving them a handout of what supervision is or could be and then saying, ‘here is a description of different kinds of supervision,’ or one kind or, um, ‘do you agree with that’, sort of, what’s being said in that or, like, ‘we could think about other ways that you might like supervision to be conducted’.

At the end of the first research conversation, Susan invited Penny into the role of a consultant with valuable insider knowledge, asking Penny’s advice on what a useful induction to supervision would look like:

So from your perspective, um, you know, if we talk about going back to what do you think, what, if you were able to design an induction of some sort for a new practitioner, what do you think you would have in it? I know it’s not in here but it’s kind of like, what do you think would be the best, would be really helpful?

Drawing on her knowledges and experiences, Penny responded to this by suggesting that Susan consider ways she could support new practitioners to prepare for supervision before commencing.

I think there would have to be some preparation before the induction. Um, maybe beginning with, like, what you said - just the information and what supervision is - and then the practitioner being asked to reflect personally on what they want from supervision; and also, um, maybe offered the opportunity to speak with other people who have had supervision; um, and then coming to the induction with proposed guidelines and then, together

the supervisor and the practitioner, could establish what the guidelines were going to be.

As for Susan, Sophie also worked to expand her supervision practice and create a space for the sharing and generation of knowledge by hearing Pam's ideas, even where they may differ from her own ideas. For example, discussing a "blurb" about supervision that Sophie said she wanted to write, Pam suggested this sounded like a good idea and could be included in an orientation folder and given to new staff. She suggested this would give new practitioners the opportunity to process and reflect on the blurb before talking about it in the first supervision session. Sophie, noticing this was different to what she was thinking, asked Pam:

So do you think it would be good to actually give it to them to read? Because I guess I was imagining that we would meet together and go through it.

Holding on to her speaking position, Pam continued to reiterate the value of her idea but, perhaps influenced by discourses about the supervisor as expert, she suggested that Sophie's idea was also valuable, concluding that ultimately the decision was hers, as supervisor.

It would probably work both ways. It is up to you, but...

Perhaps deferring to Pam's insider knowledge and acknowledging its potential to generate new knowledge for her as a supervisor, Sophie spoke of the value she saw in Pam's idea of giving practitioners a chance to think about the document by themselves without being on the spot with the supervisor present.

But that makes sense, to give people a bit of a chance to have a read through so when we do meet, hopefully they have got a, they've had a chance to think about it. Okay.

In another example of Sophie consulting Pam to extend her own knowledge, Sophie picked up on Pam's comment that her use of supervision had grown as she developed a better understanding of where Sophie was "coming from" as a supervisor, and of her "purpose" in asking the questions she asked. Curious about how she could assist new practitioners to better understand what influences her supervision practice Sophie asked:

And I guess, as you're saying that, I am thinking again, I wonder what I could do in those early days to make it clear about the intention behind what I am asking.

Sophie's question created space for Pam to share her ideas about how this information could be made available to practitioners entering supervision. Sophie could, she said, include something in the supervision "blurb" about herself as a supervisor and about what informs her supervision practice. This was something that Sophie had not previously spoken about including in her supervision document.

In my letter to Sophie and Pam following their first research conversation I asked Sophie how she engenders in new practitioners a sense that supervision can be helpful. After responding to this question, Sophie drew on Pam's recent experiences of working for an organisation that did not deem supervision important, to invite Pam to share her thoughts on what would be useful in promoting the value of supervision to new practitioners.

I am wondering whether you had any further thoughts about, like, because you were saying that, perhaps coming from a different organisation where it wasn't deemed to be that appropriate, what do you feel is important then, in terms of from me, to be able to say, yes, this is actually a very good use of this time?

Responding to this invitation, Pam shared her ideas, adding that it was not just what the supervisor said at the beginning but also the developing supervisory relationship that could impact on new practitioners' willingness to share the more challenging elements of their work.

I guess it is having you tell the worker that [that supervision can be helpful and that it is important to bring any concerns or challenges in one's practice, that in fact it would be a concern if there were no challenges], whether it's in the blurb or verbally and maybe reinforcing that to them. Um, to let them know that it is a safe place to talk about the challenges and what maybe hasn't gone so well. Because as you said, yes, some organisations don't have space for that [reflective supervision conversations], it's just about what's happening [case management

discussions]. But, I think the biggest thing is developing the relationship. The relationship is at the core of people being willing to share. And that if that is developed properly, and there is trust and respect there, and give it a bit of time, and people will feel more comfortable about sharing some of that stuff.

As in narrative therapy where the therapist works from the position of a partnership with the client, assuming that this is “reciprocal” work in which the therapist also gains knowledge and understanding for themselves (Monk, 1997, p. 24), the same could be the case for the supervisors and practitioners participating in this research. This seemed to happen particularly when supervisors invited practitioners into the position of consultants with particular and valuable knowledges to offer. Penny and Pam were able to more richly engage with their knowledges and experiences of how they came to understand and effectively use supervision. Susan and Sophie for their part were privileged to hear insider knowledges that may shape their supervision practice. The research benefitted from their dialogic exploration.

PRACTITIONERS AS INQUIRERS

The research process made positions of inquiry available which were taken up by the practitioners. Whilst it cannot be said with certainty what made this possible, I believe my physical absence from the conversations avoided the power differentials that would have been at play if the practitioner had been meeting two more “senior” professionals and not just one, as in this research design. My physical absence allowed the existing relationship between supervisors and practitioners to contextualise the research conversations. I also believe my physical absence was congruent with the written and verbal invitations for participant pairs to engage in dialogue about what was of interest to them, both in relation to my questions and to what the other party said in the conversation. Further, my physical absence may have assisted practitioners to take up positions of inquiry of and with each other rather than just answering the questions posed.

The transcripts can be read as offering several examples of participating practitioners taking up inquiry positions. Discussing how Sarah had supported

Polly to take a different position in supervision to the one available with her line manager, Sarah said she approached supervision from a position of genuine curiosity rather than of asking questions she felt either she or Polly already knew the answers to. Polly responded to this:

Can I just ask, when you said ‘genuine curiosity,’ how do you ‘be’ genuinely curious?

Given the opportunity to ask Sarah this, Polly developed a richer understanding of what influences Sarah’s supervision practice, what she chooses to enquire about and what she does not. This in turn extended Polly’s own practice with clients.

Whilst Sally had not used a supervision agreement in her work with Phoebe, she said she had used them previously. Reflecting on Sally’s statement that she would consider using them with new staff in the future, Phoebe asked:

So why would you do it with somebody like a new caseworker next year and not me, for example? What would make it different?

Phoebe’s position of inquiry invited Sally to account for her stated positions. This in turn encouraged Sally to further consider and to ultimately refine her ideas.

Penny took up an inquiry position in the research to help her develop her understanding of practices of inducting both new and more experienced practitioners to supervision. She and Susan spoke about how they had used their first supervision conversation to set up “guidelines”. Curious about whether this was a standard practice Susan used with all new staff, Penny took an inquiry position in the research by asking:

Can I just ask; did you do the same thing with the other coordinators?

Using this position as inquirer, Penny asked Susan about her experience of their supervision induction process. She asked what differences Susan experienced inducting new practitioners compared to more experienced practitioners.

Was it more difficult having an induction with someone who hasn’t had that much supervision experience?

Penny also used this position to inquire about the supervisory relationship. When Susan spoke of seeing supervision as a two-way relationship and process, Penny asked what she meant - "Two-way in what way?" Through this inquiry, Penny developed her understanding of what a two-way supervision relationship meant and of her role as one party to the supervision.

In these ways, the practitioners were positioned in the research as co-researchers, making collaborative inquiry of each other. It is possible that the research practices used opened up conversation space for some risk-taking inquiries from the practitioners.

Despite saying she already knew what supervision was at the beginning of their supervision work together, Phoebe used the research conversation to consider feedback from her supervisor and to check whether her understanding and use of supervision matched her supervisor's expectations.

Another thing I was just wondering was, I suppose maybe your experience supervising me when I first came in, from your perspective, did it seem like I understood what supervision was and what was going on or was it, I don't know... From my perspective I thought I understood supervision, but I suppose maybe, from somebody more experienced, was that the case?

Polly spoke in the research conversation about the challenges she experienced working with Sarah externally in supervision without her manager's support and about the difficulty she experienced having to maintain a silence in the workplace about supervision. Polly said it would have been helpful if they spoke in supervision about how her manager was not supportive of the supervision and about how to respond to this.

SUPERVISION UNDER REVIEW

As discussed in Chapter Three, the research process aimed in some ways to replicate a review meeting (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; McMahon, 2002; Scaife, 2009), of the type that supervisors and practitioners may engage in at regular intervals throughout their supervision work. A supervision review provides

supervisors and practitioners an opportunity to reflect on their work. This may include a review of the supervision contract and the supervisory relationship with a view to rendering visible, through conversation, what is working well and what could be different, what supervision has been used for and what else they would like to create space for in future conversations. The research process was designed to invite participants into a reflection and review of their supervision work together and specifically of how the new practitioner came to understand and effectively use supervision through the induction process and the supervision.

Sophie's reflections highlight the value of such an opportunity for research participants to take time to review and reflect on how new practitioners come to understand and effectively use supervision:

I think it has been a really good process actually, really thinking about it, for a number of reasons. One is that, in the rush of everything that we do at work, there often is just not the time to be able to reflect upon the supervisory process and so, to actually have made this time to do that has been good.

CONTINUING EFFECTS OF THE RESEARCH ON THE SUPERVISION RELATIONSHIPS OF PARTICIPANTS

Susan and Penny

The research experience shaped the supervision of the three participating pairs who were still working together at the time of the research. This was perhaps most evident in the conversations of Susan and Penny. Throughout the research, they identified areas of their supervision work which they felt required further attention. As discussed earlier, this perhaps risky conversation may have been made possible by the research practices used and the positions these created for both supervisors and practitioners to engage in curious reflection, without invitations for blame or shame.

In their first audio-taped research conversation, Penny somewhat cautiously named as a concern the infrequency of their supervision meetings.

We haven't been having much supervision.

We don't really meet consistently so, I guess that's, I don't know, a bit of an issue.

There appeared to be tone of caution as Penny qualified her reflection with "I guess" "I don't know" and "a bit of an issue". This could suggest Penny found it difficult to express these reflections. She went on to speak about her supervision induction and what it could have involved:

Maybe part of the induction should have been, oh, how often are we going to meet and then even if we set tentative times already, then and there, because you know you can plan way ahead and then everything could..., if we needed to reschedule then we would.

The research may have opened up a speaking space for Penny to make this tentative request for more regular and frequent supervision. The research itself may have supported Penny to take an agentive position to identify and ask for what she wants in supervision, a position that Crocket (2002a) suggested may not always be readily available to practitioners. Penny used language that positioned her as "not too demanding" (Crocket, 2002a, p. 20) – "I guess", "I don't know" "a bit" - but still advocated for what she wanted. This agentive position was evident when, a little later in the same conversation, Penny went on to request what she would like for her own supervision:

We could even start that now [making appointments ahead] so that we are booked in to the end of the year or mid next year.

Noting this feedback, Susan took up her invitation and acted to address the concern.

Okay, we'll do that when we have finished discussing the rest of this, we'll work it out.

This demonstrates the study working as action research, shaping participants' practice through processes of reflection, planning and action.

In their second research conversation, both Susan and Penny reflected that the frequency of supervision had improved since their first conversation. They attributed this to identifying the issue in their first conversation.

I think it's good that we've done this [research] because, obviously, we have had two supervision meetings since then, where prior to that we probably hadn't had any for a long time. (Penny)

In her responses to the research starter questions, Penny described supervision as "a side thing" she did not "really feel the need too much for" because her job is not "really stressful", she is "fairly independent" and "able to deal with things, like, well enough without supervision". Hearing this, Susan appears to have formed a view that Penny had a limited understanding of what supervision is, and she identified this as an area to have a future conversation about. Penny said:

We can talk about it later, about how you see what supervision is meant to be. Maybe that is something that is coming out of this that we can talk about, a bit later (long pause).

Reflecting on Penny's understanding of supervision and the limited value she placed on it, Susan remembered times she had asked whether Penny wanted supervision and she had declined the offer.

I know I tried to make a time to catch up with you (...) (Susan)

Reflecting on those occasions, Susan said:

They are the times I should have said, we haven't had supervision, how about we make an appointment.

Susan went on to say, addressing me through the audiotape,

I have probably done her [Penny] an injustice but it's on the table now. We can work with that. I think it's [these research conversations] done wonders. I think it's been really good to have these conversations. It's probably..., from a work practice point of view, it has opened a whole lot of things up. You know, I think it's good.

In their second research conversation, Susan and Penny spoke about the impact of participating in the research on themselves and on their work together. Penny said:

I think it's good that we've had this discussion. I think, personally, I haven't spent too much time reflecting on what supervision actually is, first of all, and also what I actually want from it ... I guess we will reinvigorate our supervision.

In their second research conversation Susan wondered whether the research conversations had made a difference to Penny's understanding and use of supervision:

After having done this first session for Rachel and talked about supervision and then our next supervision session that we had, I was actually wondering whether you had different ideas, or changed your ideas on what supervision was meant to be, and felt... Because my sense was you seemed to be more comfortable.

What I noticed was, um, I had a sense that you were more comfortable in supervision. I think before the sessions we had had before, I must admit I felt there was some sort of something there, like a barrier or something. Like you didn't want to be there, or... And after reading the transcript back, it said, well, you didn't think it was as important. Is that..., no that wasn't the word that was in there, but, maybe you didn't see the necessity of it. I know they are not the words you used, but you didn't see it as important as you can now.

I suppose I, I did notice that I think you were wanting more out of supervision.

As the literature on supervision predicts (Carroll, 1996; Carroll & Gilbert, 2006; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Storm, 2002), Penny identified value in reviewing and reflecting on their supervision work together.

Talking about supervision, realising actually you can get a lot out of supervision, sort of made me want to get something more from supervision.

Because of talking about supervision, it's helped me want to utilise it better.

I had engaged, as researcher, from a position of curiosity, inviting participants to reflect on their supervision work from this same position. This approach may have contributed to participants producing changes in their own practice in an organic way that supported them to take credit for the changes, and not feel invited into a position of shame or blame.

Overall, Penny and Susan said that the invitation to reflect on their supervision work inspired them to talk further together about what supervision is, how it can be used, and what Penny would like to get from it. It also led to them scheduling supervision times in advance to ensure they took place. They expressed a commitment to supporting Penny to build her understanding and use of supervision. They both said the process had increased their comfort in supervision and reinvigorated their work together. Penny said it made her want to get more from supervision.

Sophie and Pam

When Sophie and Pam reflected on the impact of participating in the research on their supervision work, they spoke of how engaging in conversation about each other's understandings of the purpose of supervision had been helpful for Pam. In particular Sophie wondered if these research conversations had led Pam to feel less intimidated and more comfortable in supervision. By expressing this in tentative language and acknowledging the sense of difficulty for Pam, the research questions seemed to position Sophie to be able to ask:

So, I think it has been a really useful process ... And from your point of view, I am just wondering, and I know it is a difficult question for me to ask, but do you think it has helped to take away, a bit, any intimidation around supervision, at all?

To this Pam responded:

Yeah, I think it has. Because I think it's involved a lot of conversations about purpose and where you are coming from as a supervisor and all that sort of stuff. I think it breaks down that intimidation and that power and,

yeah, I certainly feel much more comfortable now, in engaging in that process. I think it has been a very positive thing for our relationship, in terms of supervision, going through this process together and being able to hear each other's point of views and ideas about supervision.

Pam's use of collaborative and relational language - "positive thing for our relationship", "process together", "hear each other's point of views and ideas" – suggests the value of the research in fostering collaboration in supervision.

Sophie went on to comment on her experience of a strengthening of their supervisory relationship.

Yes, I would agree with that. It has, I think, um, just given a deeper understanding for the both of us about the whole supervisory process and so, hopefully, that is a kind of clarity and a strengthening around our particular relationship with it. So thank you, Rachel.

Sophie's comments highlight what has been referred to (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; McMahon, 2002; Scaife, 2009; Storm, 1997) as the value of "contracting" or allocating time near the beginning of supervision to discuss each party's understanding of supervision and of its purposes, the roles and expectations of the supervisor and the practitioner and the hopes each person holds for the supervision work and the supervisory relationship. Sophie's experience confirms that talking about supervision serves to demystify it and better positions practitioners to participate actively and to use supervision effectively. This is consistent with the conclusions of Carroll (1996) and McMahon (2002).

FUTURE IMPACTS OF THE RESEARCH IN SHAPING SUPERVISION PRACTICES

In their research conversations, all four supervisors reflected on their work with the practitioners and generated new practices to use in future supervision work with new practitioners.

Sarah

Sarah became interested in other words that could be used to refer to a “supervision contract” with the intention that supervision should be a collaborative, two-way process, produced and developed by both parties and not created and enforced by her as the supervisor.

I am wondering if there is a different, better description than or a..., of that document, other than a contract. You know, is there, because of the connotations of what a contract is, can you think of a word that would better describe the kind of document that it was?

Sarah invited Polly to join her in thinking about the name of such a document and also about the means of producing it through mutual inquiry.

Sally

Sally spoke of reconnecting with previous supervision knowledges and experiences as a result of participating in the research. She thought it might be useful to revisit and reincorporate these into her current and future supervision practice.

Probably [I will] re-look at introducing, um, an agreement of some sort and discussing a supervision checklist, probably amended with some other stuff - questions I have got into supervision induction, and probably also start incorporating some of the scaling questions more into existing supervision and revisiting some of that early stuff I did, the solution focussed supervision training. I am really impressed with myself. I took great notes with some really good examples which have been sitting on my computer, so I am going to have a read of that.

That was great, to go back and revisit some of that [training]. Um, and there is a whole heap of questions that they suggested using in supervision. So, I think I am probably going to keep this nearby and use it a little bit more.

Sally also reconnected with practice skills she is not currently using in supervision which she hoped to bring to future supervision sessions.

And I also did a lot of the, I suppose, strength-based and exceptions to the rules. So, looking a lot at the miracle questions and exceptions, some of that stuff we do with families, and scaling, and using some of those techniques with staff. And it's something I haven't done as much... I think that's something I will incorporate a little bit more into supervision.

On reflection, Sally went on speak of returning to the practice of developing written supervision agreements with practitioners.

In the future, because we are going to get another caseworker in the new year, hopefully, I probably might look at using another supervision agreement ...and then attach some of these checklist questions as to, these are the type of the things we might be discussing in supervision, just to give someone a heads up on...

Sally became aware, during her participation in this research, of the role that assumptions had played in her supervision work. She became interested in working more from a position of curiosity and questioning, to create more space for conversation. Responding to my question about how Sally had introduced Phoebe to supervision, Sally reflected,

Well, (pause) maybe here I was assuming so much, that this is how I do supervision. This is making me think a lot.

Listening to the first research conversation between Sally and Phoebe, I became interested in how Sally had come to know that her own ideas about supervision matched Phoebe's ideas. Sally responded by wondering whether in fact supervision had proceeded just on the basis of her own ideas and expectations:

So, did you have the same ideas of supervision as I did, or did I come in here as the kind of "right this is how we do things?"

I suppose I don't know [how she came to know that her ideas about supervision matched with Phoebe's ideas]. ... Did I ask you what your expectations were? Good point, not to assume, is what I have written. So yeah, great learning out of this.

This is reminiscent of the view of some authors that supervision is generally based on supervisors' ideas about what supervision is.

Responding to my curiosity about how Sally had worked with Phoebe to develop a shared understanding of the distinction between “personal therapy and supervision”, mentioned in the first interview, Sally reflected,

I don't think we have ever had that conversation.

In their second research conversation, Sally said several times that her intention was to provide opportunities for practitioners to discuss ideas, experiences and hopes for supervision before commencing, and not to proceed with an assumption that these are shared.

I think what I would also do, and this has been really valuable for me, coming out of this, is before..., that I don't want to be sitting here doing another research interview and saying to someone, ‘did I ask you to reflect on your personal experience?’ Like, I want to know that that's something that I just automatically do, because I think that's really important to get someone to reflect on what they liked and disliked about supervision and then be able to have that as a starting point and a discussion point. I think that would be the first thing I would start with and then looking at a bit of an agreement with the supervision (...)

I guess it's about having a brainstorm, what does supervision look like to you, or how would you like it to look? Give the supervisee the opportunity to have that reflection, even before we even start the process. So I will definitely incorporate that.

This is a good learning for me that has come out of this experience is maybe having that discussion with someone before we start the process.

I would definitely make sure I had the space for the supervisee to reflect on what their experiences of supervision have been, good and bad, and what they would hope to get out of our supervision, probably clarify a bit as to what is personal therapy as opposed to supervision.

Sally and Phoebe said they had not used reviews or check-ins or discussed the possibility of them. Sally said, however, that as a result of participating in the research conversations she had formed an intention to introduce “a kind of checking in after supervision”. This practice would include inquiring “was that

[supervision conversation] helpful, what could have been different, what could I have done different to make that hour or two hours more supportive of your casework?" She also said she would do a more formal reflection with Phoebe, similar to the annual reflection she had previously done with other practitioners. This would include questions such as: "How is supervision going?": "What do you like, what's working for you, what's not, what might you like to see different?"

Sally reflected on a range of supervision practices she would like to bring to future work. These included using reviews; supervision "working agreements" - opening up space early in the supervisory relationship to discuss understandings and hopes for the supervision; and revisiting her own notes from training on supervision and solution focussed approaches to see what she could integrate into her practice. It seemed these were practices that Sally wanted to take into all future supervision, not just supervision with new practitioners.

Susan

Susan said spending time talking about supervision and ensuring it occurred could have contributed to a greater development of Penny's understanding and effective use of supervision.

My ideas about what could have helped in developing your understanding a bit more of supervision or the use of supervision possibly would have to have made sure those appointments were there, to even, um, talk to you a bit more about what your understanding of supervision is...

Through participating in the research, Susan came to wonder about the idea of providing new practitioners with written information on supervision before starting.

I think what I would have liked to have done, that I didn't do, was even just to have a little bit of information, as in a one- or two-page..., that you could read on supervision to say, 'this is a little bit of information on supervision' and 'this is why we do it and what it is useful for' and that sort of stuff.

Susan said practitioners should be told that supervision is a two-way process and a relationship which both parties are responsible for and actively contribute to.

For me supervision is a two-way thing. It's not just a one-way thing. It may not have come across well when I did the first meeting with you, but that's one of the things I would have liked to have brought across - that supervision is a two-way thing as well.

As mentioned earlier, Susan took note of Penny's feedback about preferring to know the frequency, dates and times for supervision. Susan said it was now her intention in future supervision relationships to allocate times in advance in order to ensure supervision occurred:

Yeah. And that's a good point, for me to look at for future inductions.

It could be concluded that this co-research approach opened up reflection and learning positions, producing change that was initiated by the participants themselves.

Sophie

Sophie said that through participating in this research project, she had become interested in thinking more broadly about practitioners' induction to supervision. She seemed taken by Pam's comments about coming to understand supervision:

I think that over time the supervisor could keep some space in there for continued conversations about supervision and its purpose and continue to assist the worker to shape their meaning of supervision for themselves (...)

Sophie responded that this led her to think of induction as something that occurs over time, beyond the initial discussion, in order to support the continuing development of the practitioner's practices and knowledges about supervision:

I think that is a really good point around continuing to have those discussions from time to time about the role and the purpose of supervision.

Yes. I guess, thinking about this, I think yes, the induction process is very important, um, and as we have said, maybe the first couple of sessions, if it

were more about the process and the purpose, I think would be quite useful.

Sophie said it was important to have continuing, rather than one-off, conversations about supervision, and to be aware that the development of understanding takes “time”.

It’s also important to know that it still takes time to really understand. And look, at the moment, being in the manager’s job, just trying to get my head around the processes which are there, even though somebody may have explained it very clearly, until you actually put them into practice and then have that really detailed overview of how they fit and how they work, it does take time, I think.

This leads me to wonder about other factors, in addition to time, that contribute to understanding and effective practice. As discussed above, Pam, Sophie and Susan suggested that reflection and review about supervision and the supervisory relationship also bring about change in understanding and use of supervision. Sophie spoke of the value of conversations about supervision in bringing about changes in people’s experience of supervision. She wondered whether further conversations with the team she leads would assist them to develop their understanding of supervision and its uses.

I guess it has me thinking, maybe at [client] allocation sometime, it would be good to have these kind of discussions about supervision so that there could be that peer education of people like yourself saying, well, ‘look this is actually a worthwhile process’ and for those who maybe are not quite as enthusiastic...(laughs).

Like Susan, Sophie discussed developing a written document about what supervision is to give to practitioners before starting supervision. Additionally, she had thought, before participating in this research, about writing and providing material on supervision to practitioners. The research process appeared to strengthen her resolve to write something for this purpose and extended her thinking on what it could include.

(...) it's important I do make that (the purpose of supervision) very clear for the future. I had always intended to write a little blurb but I just hadn't got around to it and this highlights the fact that I need to do that..."

(...) it has really made me..., I must get this blurb done. But again, just really thinking about the kind of detail to go into that.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Sophie took on Pam's suggestion to include in the document something about the supervisor and what informs her practice. She said that, considering what she now thought should be included in this document, it had become a "mini-thesis". She said the research questions had led her to want to include a discussion about the "difference between line management and therapeutic supervision". This distinction would be along the lines that it is the manager's role is to supervise the practitioner's contributions to "the running of the agency" while the role of clinical supervision is about "the therapeutic aspects of your counselling".

In her second research conversation, Sophie returned to this idea of producing a document about supervision. She said she wanted to progress this and share it with other supervisors in the hope that it may become an agency wide document.

We have a Senior Social Workers' meeting this week and I thought I would bring the content of that [blurb] to that meeting because I think it would be good if the other Seniors had some input into that as well and be encouraging us all then to be using that blurb. So I think to actually have this would be really helpful.

PREFERRED SUPERVISORY PRACTICES

The research methods used also provided the supervisors an opportunity to hear from practitioners about what they had found helpful in their supervision work together.

Sarah and Polly

A number of times in both research conversations, Sarah said “cool” in response to Polly’s evaluation of elements of their supervision and of Sarah’s contribution to it. Sarah found it reinforcing of her practice to receive positive feedback from Polly about her practices of documenting and reading back the practitioner’s words during the supervision. Polly said:

What stood out to me was you reading the notes back to me of what I said, because no one had ever actually used my words. Supervision was always someone else’s words and for the first time I was actually hearing my words and that was a big deal for me that first time.

Sarah responded, saying:

Hmm, that’s good. It reinforces why I do it. Okay, cool.

I guess it is good to hear the effectiveness of those..., the contract and the way the contract is negotiated and the use of words.

Polly said she found it valuable in supervision to be invited by Sarah to think about her own ideas. Sarah said she felt this reinforced her practice. Reflecting on this, she added,

Cool. Okay. Yeah, I think it’s good that you identified that because I do do that when someone asks me something I am conscious of how I have been asked as a therapist or as a supervisor or a coordinator, um, how much weight will be given to my answers and how if that weight..., if the answer doesn’t actually fit for that person, how does that person then negotiate their knowledges and what I have contributed as my knowledges and what..., does it silence their knowledges and/or does it confuse things, how useful is the conversation?

Sarah said she found the reflective conversation about their supervision work helpful, particularly as it was coming at a time when she was experiencing invitations from elsewhere to question her supervision practice.

Sally and Phoebe

Throughout their two research conversations, Phoebe provided Sally with much general positive feedback about her supervision practice:

Well, in my experience being supervised by you, as I have said to you, I hang out for supervision. I think it's great, if I didn't have it I don't think I would be where I am now, in this job... trust me.

(...) perhaps you are just one of those people who is just very good at supervision.

I wonder if in, say a few years time, I am ever in a position to be supervising anybody, I don't know if that would be the case but...I imagine that I would like to replicate the type of supervisory relationship that we have had because I have found it quite,... so helpful, um,... A lot of the ideas I have got from you and ways of working I would like to pass on to someone else because I think they are very helpful.

Sally also seemed to find it helpful to hear that Phoebe experienced consistency in her use of questions in supervision.

So what you are saying is that almost, the fact that I, there is the consistent, the routine of supervision coming back to the same question and that strength-based stuff has been quite useful.

Susan and Penny

Penny gave Susan feedback that she had found it particularly helpful to discuss the role of the personal in the professional in their early supervision discussions, and to have space to say what she wanted from the supervision.

Definitely I appreciated the option of talking about other things [than only client practice] because obviously your personal life affects your work life and vice versa. So, yeah, I think they were good guidelines [the guidelines that said you could talk about your personal life].

Susan seemed pleased to receive this feedback that there had been congruence between her intentions and Penny's experience of their work together.

You said you have had the freedom to know, to be able to say what you want and that's, um, that's the effect that I wanted to have as well.

Both Penny and Pam said they appreciated the way their supervisors attended to their needs in their inductions to supervision. Penny said to Susan,

I appreciated your openness and your consideration of how I was feeling, coming to supervision and that was definitely..., and I was very aware that you wanted me to feel comfortable.

Pam and Sophie

Pam spoke about the style or tone of approach that Sophie used to help guide her and develop her understanding of what supervision is and how it could be used:

I think just your gentleness about, you know, easing me into it and, you know, I guess, it's not something that we have talked about before, but in this session it has brought up that you were thinking about how it would be for me and how did I see it and I imagine that, because you were thinking those things, that that would have influenced the way that you were being gentle with me and being understanding and helping me through that process.

Sophie reflected on the value to her of the feedback she had received from Pam during the research conversations. She appeared to particularly value the acknowledgement of her values and intentions to promote reflection and reflectiveness. She also heard this as validation that she had acted on her intentions for thoroughness, care and helpfulness.

But I think to actually spend the time to think it through has been really good and it has had me thinking about my practice in this role and being thorough, I guess, or needing to be thorough, and careful in the introductory relationship that then happens. So I was pleased to hear that you had said that the processes had been explained to you... I value the comments which you have made about it being helpful.

PRACTITIONERS' TRANSPORT

The participating practitioners contributed to their supervisors' learnings and practice developments, but their participation in the research also provided opportunities to speak of their experiences and knowledges and in some cases led them to describe experiences of 'transport' (White, 2007) in relation to their own practice as participants in supervision. Transport in this sense refers to a *katharsis* experience, where witnessing and reflection can lead to a sense of being taken to another place in terms of understandings, feelings, sense of self, or ideas about future action or possibility.

Polly

For Polly, participating in the research rendered visible the effects of supervision practices on the ways she sees herself as a practitioner.

In looking back, I notice a pattern in, um, walking away from supervision noticing different things and thinking different things about myself but not linking it to supervision,... So looking back, I find it easier to see that because I never..., I mean I don't think I connected it to supervision, the way I felt after supervision.

Phoebe

Phoebe also noted developments in her use of supervision.

Becoming more confident in being able to bring things to supervision that perhaps, um, earlier on I was being more guided by you, but now I feel like I can be more reflective in my own work ... It's just, I suppose, my growth as a practitioner, that I have brought more things into supervision than I would have before.

(...) growing as a practitioner, being able to pick up things on your own and bring them back to supervision. Yeah, I have noticed a few things where I have gone, okay, I picked that out myself and I would like to work on that area more. Something's changing.

Phoebe also identified new ways to use supervision that she wanted to put into practice in the future.

Sometimes when I am doing like the creative therapies or something like that, I sort of feel a bit lost in questioning and which way to go and sometimes I stop short and then think I really should have asked more questions about that to explore or unpack that more and I didn't do it and sometimes I don't bring it back to supervision and say what could I have said. I just sort of leave it and I think, 'no, I really should have brought it back to supervision' and said, 'well, I stopped here. What should I have asked further?' And that is something I would like to do more.

Penny

Penny spoke about her sense of increased reflexivity in relation to supervision and her changed understanding and use of supervision as a result of participating in the research conversations.

I guess I have a more concrete understanding because we have talked about what it is and how we go about it.

I think it's good that we've had this discussion. I think personally, I haven't spent too much time reflecting on what supervision actually is, first of all, and also what I actually want from it.

Talking about supervision, realising actually you can get a lot out of supervision, um yeah, sort of made me want to get something more from supervision.

Yeah, because of talking about supervision, it's helped me want to utilise it better.

Penny said she had become aware of changes in her hopes for supervision.

I guess, just to get the most out of it because, you know, being in this role for so long, I can realise now that there is a lot that we deal with and that, you know, I am going to have to take supervision seriously if I don't want to be overburdened with people's problems.

Pam

Pam reported experiencing development in her thinking about the positioning of new practitioners in the supervisory relationship. She spoke about the practitioner taking up a speaking position in order to ask questions and negotiate the supervision arrangements rather than see it solely as the role and responsibility of the supervisor.

You know, maybe there is the space for a worker to, coming into a new organisation, ...to maybe step forward and say, 'How does supervision go here, what do you see is the purpose,' and to also initiate some of those discussions. Why, does it necessarily always have to be the supervisor to do that? I think, you know, maybe it's about the worker doing some enquiry around supervision and what that means for that work site and stuff. And if they are not understanding stuff then the onus is definitely on them to speak up and ask questions.

SUMMARY

This chapter looked at evidence of the value of the research methods for the participants. A number of examples of ways their practices and understandings have been shaped and influenced through their participation in this research project were discussed.

My literary presence in the conversations between participating pairs, through the medium of written questions and letters, and my position witnessing the conversations as an outsider researcher could be argued to have supported and guided participants' reflection on their practice. This led to further shaping of the supervision practices of the participants. Through the research process, some supervision practices were evaluated as useful and a commitment to their use was reinforced. Some supervisory pairs made the decision to change some practices after reviewing them in this way. Participants also generated new practice ideas through the conversations. This included ideas of potential value for general supervision practice as well as for induction of practitioners who are new to the field.

CHAPTER SEVEN

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DISCUSSION

This chapter explores the range of responses to the question investigated in this study of how new practitioners come to understand and effectively use supervision. Possible implications of these responses are considered, for new practitioners, for supervisors and for supervision practice in general. Further questions arising from these reflections are also noted. Gaps were identified between what the literature recommends in terms of inducting new practitioners to supervision and the lived experience of the participants in this study. This raises the question of how to translate the recommendations in the literature into actual practice for the benefit of new practitioners, their clients and supervisors. This chapter considers some solutions that have been produced by this research for addressing these gaps.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SUPERVISION PRACTICE

Preparing for and negotiating supervision

The lack of a common understanding of supervision and variations in supervision practice, seen in the participants' accounts, and also among authors surveying supervision practice (Bernard & Goodyear, 1992; Carroll, 1996; Graul, 2002; Ung, 2002), suggests the value of detailed discussions between all supervisors and practitioners, new or otherwise, about their hopes and expectations for supervision. It appears that early, detailed discussions could provide an important opportunity for supervisors to help new practitioners prepare for supervision.

The participants' accounts suggest that for new practitioners to be positioned to understand, negotiate for, and effectively use supervision in order to support their practice, it may be useful to give them written information about supervision and about the supervisor, before starting. It may also be beneficial to create an

opportunity to talk with their supervisor about this information, and also about both parties' past experiences, and their ideas and hopes for supervision. These conversations could be then documented in a supervision working agreement that can be used to guide their supervision work together.

Written information about supervision and the supervisor

Carroll and Gilbert (2006, p. x) found “there is little literature to which supervisees can turn to help them make sense of, understand and be, a collaborative partner in supervisory arrangements”. They concluded that “unless [written material is] taken out and given [to] them by supervisors, [it] would scarcely find its way into supervisee hands”. Penny, a participant in this research, held a similar view. She said that while reading supervision literature may have helped her understand and feel more prepared for supervision, she would not, as a new practitioner, have sought it out. She said she would, however, probably read a brief document on supervision if it was given to her by her supervisor. It may be beneficial if supervisors made such written material available to new practitioners.

Such a document could outline what the supervisor understands supervision is, and give information about the supervisor and their approach to the role, about the assumptions they work from and what guides their inquiry in supervision. Several authors (Atkinson, 1997; Storm, 2002a) have argued for the benefits of supervisors discussing the assumptions they work from and their philosophical underpinnings. As an experienced practitioner who participates in supervision myself, I am particularly interested in the approach any potential supervisor takes and in what informs and shapes their practice. It seems only right that as a supervisor, I also should make this information visible to practitioners who may be about to start working with me in supervision. Such a document would better position new practitioners to speak of their hopes for supervision. I would see this written document primarily as a starting point designed to open up conversation, rather than as the last word on what supervision is. It may be helpful if supervisors offered new practitioners this type of written material before inviting them to speak about their own ideas, hopes and preferences for supervision.

A number of authors have described using similar approaches to opening conversational space and being transparent about the supervisor's position before

beginning. Atkinson (1997) developed an approach to gaining “informed consent for supervision” which he has used to initiate discussions about supervision in a similar way to that described above. McMahon (2002, p. 19) suggested the supervisor could provide the practitioner with “a brief written description of themselves, their qualifications, and experience...” Borders and Leddick (1987) and Campbell (2000, cited in McMahon, 2002, p. 19) described how supervisors could prepare a “supervisor resume”. I have developed my own document of this sort to give to practitioners, new or otherwise, who may be considering or about to start working with me in supervision. I call this my Supervision Position Statement. It is intended to give practitioners an idea of how I see supervision, how I position myself as supervisor and the positions I would like to make available for practitioners in supervision. It addresses the commitments, beliefs and intentions that influence how I work. It also invites practitioners to think about their hopes for supervision. This is a way to encourage curiosity and open up discussion about supervision. I believe it is my responsibility to provide this information to new practitioners who may not initially be aware that they can ask questions about these things. I have developed two Supervision Position Statements - one for practitioners I work with where I am also their line manager (see below); the other for practitioners who choose to work with me in my private practice, where I am not their line manager. For reasons of space this second position description is not included. Although I had previously used such a statement, the version presented here has been further informed by this research.

Supervision Position Statement

This statement is addressed to practitioners who are about to start working with me in supervision and for whom I am also their line manager. It is intended to let you know what I stand for - my ethical concerns, assumptions, intentions and the knowledges I bring to supervisory relationships.

My hope is that, once you have read this, we will be able to meet to discuss this statement, and also to consider what you stand for in your work - the values, commitments and intentions that guide you in your practice. We would also reflect on your experiences of

supervision and your hopes for how supervision will support, develop and monitor your practice. I am interested to talk about the possible impacts of my overlapping roles and the measures we can take to render power relations visible and, where possible, reduce the impact of the overlapping and complex roles. This includes findings ways to separate supervision conversations from line management conversations. This position statement is also an invitation for you to inquire further about me and my practice.

It is my intention that this position statement and the initial conversation we will have will help us both decide how we would like to proceed with supervision work together.

Introduction

I am a Social Worker and currently a student in the Master of Counselling degree at the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand. I am committed to ethical practice and as a member of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) adhere to the AASW Code of Ethics. As you are aware I am employed by Sydney West Area Health Service as the Clinical Senior of the Child Protection Counselling Service. You may be interested to know that I also work with practitioners in supervision as part of a small private practice. My practice experience has primarily been in the fields of child protection and adolescent and family counselling where I have worked in clinical and management positions.

What I stand for

You may be particularly interested in working with me in supervision if you share my interest in postmodern therapies, especially narrative therapy approaches.

I view supervision as a support for the practitioner to practise ethically, effectively and in line with their hopes and professional expectations. Supervision supports practitioners to review and reflect on their practice and to continue to enrich the story of their preferred professional identity. It supports them to practise in line

with the policies and procedures of their employer and the Code of Ethics of their professional association. Supervision supports the safety and wellbeing of the practitioner, their clients and other practitioners they work with. Supervision also takes into account the impacts and possibilities provided by the broader organisational and societal contexts of professional practice.

I am passionate about supervision. As I see it, supervision conversations are based on the narrative idea that selves are storied and meaning is created through dialogue. As a supervisor, I am interested to engage with you to research the ideas and practices that produce you as an ethical and effective practitioner. I am interested in supporting you to story your professional identity.

I am passionate about social justice and taking action to redress imbalances of power and opportunity. I stand for ethical and respectful professional practice. I value openness, inclusion and collaboration. I am particularly concerned to challenge practices of blaming and pathologising which unintentionally practitioners can be called into. In line with narrative approaches, I prefer to talk about problems as 'in relation to', not 'inside of' the person experiencing the problem.

I find it helpful to clearly distinguish supervision from other professional activities such as line management, case management, training and consultation. I believe this can be more of a challenge when I hold overlapping roles of both line manager and supervisor. We could discuss these distinctions and how we will work to reduce the impact of my overlapping roles when we meet for an introductory supervision conversation.

Assumptions I bring to supervision

I see supervision as a regular part of the ongoing practice of all ethical and responsible counselling practitioners. I assume that practitioners have valuable skills, knowledges and experiences which they bring to their work. Supervision aims to co-produce new

knowledge by valuing and rendering visible these skills and knowledges.

I believe in the narrative perspective that 'the personal is the professional'. This is not meant to imply that supervision is therapy, but to acknowledge that personal factors influence professional practice, and vice versa. For this reason, effective ethical practice takes account of this. I understand there are various opinions about the role of the personal in professional supervision. I would be interested to talk about what this means to you and about how we would distinguish which personal things are important and appropriate for consideration in supervision.

Relations of power are always present in supervision. The supervisory relationship itself is in a sense hierarchical. The practitioner is positioned to share and reflect on their work. This power relation is enhanced by my line management role. The supervision will involve open reflection on the operations of these forms of power and the ways relations of power continue to be produced.

I believe we engage in counselling and supervision conversations within the context of society and culture. Ideas and beliefs always sit behind what is said and done and issues of power will also be a feature of these landscapes of meaning and action. Again, supervision will be open to a reflection on the operations of these forms of power.

Knowledges I lay claim to

As a supervisor, I have knowledges and competencies for supporting you as a practitioner to draw on and extend your own knowledges and skills.

I work from a position of curiosity. Supervision is a place to share ideas and knowledges, to explore and to wonder. I hold the hope that supervision extends and generates ideas. Supervision

conversations will take both our practices forward in ways we cannot yet fully anticipate.

I will bring my ideas in a spirit of tentative sharing and collaboration, and not as if I have the “right” answer or know what needs to be done. This is different to the point of view some people hold that supervision is a forum for the supervisor to engage in work with the client through the practitioner.

An exception to this would be if there were serious issues or safety concerns. In such a case, I would draw on the position offered in the power relation to ask about actions and meaning, invite evaluation and, lead any necessary action.

Because I am interested in notions of community, I will share in supervision the discoveries, experiences and ideas that others have shared with me, if you are interested, and with their prior permission.

The supervisory relationship

The supervisory relationship is a collaborative partnership between the supervisor and the practitioner. I think of this as standing beside you in reflection on your practice. This is intended to build a working alliance that is productive of your authority and which stories your professional identity.

It is my hope that the supervisory relationship provides support and allows open, reflective conversations about all sorts of practice issues, which can include difficulties and challenges. I consider challenges and uncertainty a part of the work. To speak about them in supervision is a valuable reflective practice. I am interested in your ideas about how we might create a space together to support reflective conversation.

It is my role as supervisor to engage with you from a position of curiosity and rigour, to facilitate exploratory conversations to create

space for the reflection which opens up new possibilities and discoveries.

You, as practitioner, remain responsible for your own practice. The responsibility for monitoring and evaluating practice is shared. By agreeing to work together in supervision, you invite me to join you in the process of reflection and review of the work you bring for discussion.

Supervision depends as much on your contributions as it does on mine. We are both responsible for attending to and developing the supervisory relationship.

I consider it a privilege to be able to join you on your professional journey.

What to bring to supervision

Supervision can explore a wide range of practice experiences, including those that call forth your excitement, appreciation or a sense of competence as well as those that arouse concern, uncertainty or separate you from a sense of competence in the work. Supervision can focus on your skills and knowledges. It can address organisational practices and their effects. You may wish to speak about your work with a particular client or something that is emerging across your work with a number of clients. It can provide a space for you to talk about yourself in the work and the influences of the work on you.

Before each supervision conversation, you will decide what to talk about and do any preparation needed.

Serious safety concerns, ethical or personal concerns affecting you in your work, should be prioritised above other issues for discussion in supervision.

Ethics

I participate regularly in my own supervision. My supervision includes reflection on my supervision work. These are respectful conversations which focus on my practice and not on that of practitioners. They are for the purpose of my own professional learning. These conversations are also bound by the ethic of confidentiality, in the way that any supervision conversation is.

As part of my learning process, I occasionally make recordings of supervision sessions so I can review my work, sometimes with my supervisor. Your prior consent in writing would always be requested before recording any supervision session. All tapes are treated with care for your confidentiality and privacy and are erased after their purpose has been fulfilled. You are free not to agree to these arrangements, or to change your mind later, if you do agree. You are also welcome to record the supervision yourself, for later review.

Everything I write down or record from our supervision conversations is the property of both you and me. You are welcome to look at it, listen to it or make a copy of it. For the most part, what I write down will be the words and expressions you have used which captured my attention.

When we meet to discuss supervision, we can also talk about what arrangements we would like in place if either of us has concerns about an aspect of our work together.

When we meet for our introductory supervision conversation, I would invite you to join me to develop and document a supervision working agreement. This agreement would guide our work together and include the agreed purpose of supervision, our hopes and intentions for our supervisory relationship, methods and practicalities of the supervision work, any ethical issues that we consider important to acknowledge and address, what arrangements we would like for records of the supervision

conversations, confidentiality and its constraints and what arrangements we would like in place to assist us to review and evaluate our supervision work.

I look forward to our future supervision conversations, to the discoveries we are yet to make and to the influence these will have on my life and on yours, both personally and professionally.

Initial conversations and supervision working agreements

While a number of writers have stressed the value of developing supervision agreements (Berger & Buchholz, 1993; Bordin, 1983, cited in Feltham 2000; Carroll 1996; Carroll & Gilbert, 2006; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Inskipp & Proctor, 1993; Storm, 2002a; Whitman, 2001), this research suggests people are not using them. Only one of the four pairs participating had developed their own supervision agreement.

It appears from their accounts in the research that new practitioners and supervisors sometimes start supervision without adequate negotiation of their supervision work or of their relationship. Given the apparent limitations of practitioners' understandings of supervision and the diversity of understandings supervisors have, it seems that practitioners and supervisors might benefit from coming together for an initial "exploratory interview" (Inskipp & Proctor, 1993, p. 37) to discuss, negotiate and document clear agreements that will guide their work together and assist them to develop their supervisory relationship.

My reading of the participants' accounts suggests there is a risk in supervisors and practitioners beginning supervision on the assumption that they hold a shared understanding of supervision. It may be best to take a proactive approach to negotiating supervision at the outset which would permit supervisors and practitioners to build on their understandings, experiences, expectations, fears and hopes. Attending to the "ground work" (McMahon, 2002, p. 20) at the beginning could also reduce possible misunderstandings and avoid the assumption that they share beliefs about supervision. This may well prevent difficulties later in the supervision (Carroll & Gilbert, 2006; Storm, 2002).

Given that the new practitioners in this study tended to describe themselves as having limited knowledge and understanding of supervision, the supervisor may be best positioned for taking responsibility for inviting the new practitioner into a conversation about supervision and to provide the practitioner with enough information to feel prepared to engage in rich conversations about experiences, commitments, intentions and hopes for supervision and the supervisory relationship.

A number of authors have given examples of questions supervisors and practitioners can reflect on, first individually and then together, to assist them to negotiate supervision (Inskipp & Proctor, 1993; McMahan, 2002). It seems that whilst the same language is often used in discussions about supervision, the same language can have multiple meanings. Making space for conversation could allow supervisors and practitioners to unpack each other's meanings. Such discussions could continue over several supervision sessions and form the basis of a supervision working agreement.

Carroll (1996, p. 7) wrote of the hope to “work towards an understanding of supervision in which at least we all talk the same language”, though I suggest that even where a shared language exists it remains important for supervisors and practitioners to engage in conversation about their experiences and hopes.

Whilst many authors use the term supervision “contract” (Axten, 2002; Berger & Buchholz, 1993; Bordin, 1983, cited in Feltham 2000; Carroll 1996; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Henderson, 2009; Inskipp & Proctor, 1993; Scaife, 2009; Storm, 2002a; Whitman, 2001), my own preference is Inskipp and Proctor's (1993, p. 37) term - supervision “working agreement” - as it implies more of a negotiated process, with practitioners positioned to have a speaking voice. It also implies a sense of movement and flexibility and an acknowledgement that the needs and hopes for the supervision may change. As Polly and Sarah discussed, the word ‘contract’ has connotations of “being told”, of being given a binding document to sign, unable to influence its content.

The development of a supervision working agreement is intended to support meaningful conversation and to extend understanding. The co-production of such a document should stem from conversation. It is not intended to be written by the supervisor, in the absence of conversation with the practitioner, nor simply

provided for them to sign. It is meant to move beyond the practicalities of supervision to reflect on the values, hopes, intentions, roles and responsibilities relevant to the supervisory relationship. It clarifies the sorts of conversations that can be had and also the approach of exploration and enquiry that will support this.

Supervision working agreements can include, but are not limited to, the following considerations: an understanding of supervision, its aims, objectives and methods; the hopes, fears and expectations each party holds in relation to the supervision and to each other; the roles and responsibilities of the participants; the nature of the supervisory relationship; issues of compliance with credentialing requirements; the organisational and professional context; evaluation procedures; and logistics and practicalities such as record keeping, meeting location, frequency, and costs (Atkinson, 1997; Berger & Buchholz, 1993; Carroll, 1996; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Storm, 2002a). Contracts are individually tailored to individual supervisees and can be renegotiated as circumstances change (Storm, 2002a).

Considering the accounts of participants in this study, I am led to suggest that supervision working agreements could also take into account the following matters: the theoretical orientation of the supervisor and practitioner; the supervisor's style; ways to respond to difficulties or conflicts when they arise; the impact of power relations, including dual roles, where relevant; scheduling of formal review dates and ideas about reviewing the supervisory relationship, what supervision is and its purpose; ways of reviewing each supervision session; the role of the personal in professional supervision; discussion of codes of ethics; what can be discussed in supervision; arrangements for additional supervision sessions if needed; confidentiality; record keeping; who will be contacted if the supervisor has concerns about the practice; and arrangements for renegotiation of the working agreement.

While Penny expressed a view that supervision agreements do not need to be written documents, because they are "just a piece of paper", my own preference is to capture the conversation in writing to help keep the hopes and intentions alive and present. They can then be revisited and reflected on without relying on memory. The process of writing also provides a reflective surface to check and fine tune what is being written. Storm (2002a) suggested that documenting

supervision agreements “facilitate[s] clarity” and “can remind participants of the original commitments made to one another” (p. 281). The participants’ accounts also showed that there had been consideration given to whether documenting the agreements would make them too “formal”. This concern could be addressed if the document was written in a spirit of collaboration and partnership, with care taken to include the words of both the supervisor and the practitioner. Susan said that they had had good intentions at the beginning of their work together, but had not followed through with this. This highlights the importance of discussions about how the supervision working agreement can be maintained as a living document, remaining relevant to their work together. Such measures could include periodically reviewing and, where relevant, amending the agreement.

My experience is that it is important to establish a “receiving context” (White, 1995, p. 208) for the supervision working agreement. Supervisors are in a position to discuss and start negotiations on the purposes, content and process for writing of the working agreement. As with the use of therapeutic documents in counselling, a supervisor can introduce the idea of developing a supervision working agreement, its purpose and what could be included in it, while making it clear that changes can be negotiated later. It may be beneficial to allow time to create this receiving context for the working agreement, so that the document can inform the work and not just be filed away in a draw. Both parties are encouraged to come to the conversation from a position of curiosity and exploration so that the process is generative of thoughts and possibilities, and not simply retelling what is already known and familiar.

My experience in this research has strengthened my view that supervision working agreements work best as individually tailored documents, developed from particular conversations between the supervisor and the practitioner. They should include the words of the practitioner and the supervisor. They should not be standardised documents, authored by the supervisor or by the organisation without dialogue and negotiation.

On the subject of using therapeutic documents in therapy, White (1995, p. 199) related how he had been asked by a practitioner, “can the outlay of time and energy that goes into the preparation of these therapeutic documents be justified?” The same question could be asked about spending time discussing supervision to

develop a written supervision working agreement. It seems that the conversations that took place as part of this research were especially valuable, as contributions to developing the new practitioners' understandings of supervision. The practitioner and supervisor who had negotiated their supervision work and written a contract, spoke about how positive this had been. It seems that an investment of time at the beginning was experienced as contributing significantly to the usefulness of subsequent supervision conversations. Some of the participating supervisors spoke of how a written supervision agreement had not been developed because of time constraints and busyness. Storm (2002a, p. 272) described an experience where, "the hours spent hammering out the terms of our written contract were well spent... it was the contract that provided all of us with the working blueprint for our relationship".

On the basis of my own experience of this research, it is my intention to engage with both new and experienced practitioners to develop individually tailored supervision working agreements to guide our work together. My hope is that these working agreements will reflect my own and the practitioner's preferred ways of working and our philosophical beliefs. As Storm (2002a) described, there are some things I will always include in my working agreements, such as the requirement for practitioners to inform their clients that they participate in supervision. From engaging in this research process, I developed a supervision working agreement template to highlight some of the areas I came to consider important to negotiate prior to commencing supervision. This is a template designed to not only document agreements, but also to guide initial conversations about what we want our supervision to look like. My hope is that this contributes to establishing supervision as a negotiated process and a collaborative partnership. The template can be adapted to document the arrangements agreed between myself and a practitioner. This template leaves space for the voice of the practitioner, their words and expressions. I am interested to continue exploring ways to document supervision working agreements with practitioners and I will be curious to notice how they will change over time and between different practitioners.

Supervision Working Agreement

Practitioner: *(insert practitioner's name)*

Contact details:

Supervisor: *(insert supervisor's name)*

Contact details:

This documents the agreement between us about our supervision work together.

Purpose of Supervision

Supervision will aim to support you as a practitioner to practise ethically, effectively and in line with your hopes for yourself in your work. It will support you to review and reflect on your practice and to continue to story your preferred professional identity. It will support you to practise in accordance with the policies and procedures of *(insert Employer details)* and the Code of Ethics of *(Insert professional association)*.

Supervision will also support the safety and well being of you in your role as practitioner, your clients and other practitioners you work with. Supervision will aim to situate your professional identity within broader societal contexts as well as the organisational context. Our supervision conversations will be based on the approach that selves are storied and meaning is created through dialogue. Like everyone else, you are positioned as having skills, knowledges and experiences that are valuable.

The hopes that you spoke of for supervision are as follows:

(Insert the practitioner's hopes for supervision)

Supervisory relationship

Our supervisory relationship is a collaborative partnership. It is designed to build a working alliance that is productive of your authority and which stories your professional identity. My role as supervisor is to engage with you from a position of curiosity and rigour and to facilitate exploratory conversations that create space for reflection and new discoveries. I will share my ideas and knowledges with you. Unless there are serious issues or safety concerns, as supervisor I will offer ideas, reflections and experiences tentatively, in the spirit of sharing and collaboration, not as the “right” answer or the action that must be taken. I believe that as supervisor I am positioned as a partner in reviewing the work you bring to supervision for discussion. You, as practitioner are responsible for monitoring your own work and in working together in supervision you are inviting me as supervisor to join you in this process of reflection and review. We agree that the supervision relationship and the discoveries made as a result of it are dependent on the contributions of both of us. We will both be responsible for attending to and developing the supervisory relationship.

(Insert practitioner’s and supervisors negotiated hopes for the supervisory relationship. This may include a statement about their sense of supervision “fit”.)

(If the supervisor is also the line manager, insert something that acknowledges these two roles.)

On the basis of this, we agree to the following:

Method

Our supervision conversations can explore a wide range of practice reflections. These may include things that you are excited, intrigued or pleased about as well as things that worry you or create a sense of “stuckness”. It is also a space for thickening the available accounts of the skills, knowledges and abilities you bring to the

work. It is a space for conversations about ethical practice. This can also include experiences when you felt separated from ethical or preferred practice. Supervision conversations will explore the impact of professional practice on you and the ways in which your beliefs, commitments, intentions and life experiences shape and influence your practice.

(Insert any particular things the practitioner would like supervision to support).

Supervision will primarily occur through face-to-face dialogue. It may also include review of excerpts of your direct work using audio or video tapes, or reflection on client letters and reports.

You will prepare proactively for supervision. This will determine the content that we engage with. If you have serious safety concerns for a client or personal concerns that affect you in your work, these should be prioritised above other issues for discussion.

Supervision will occur at *(insert address, frequency and duration)*.

If additional supervision conversations are required, these can be scheduled, depending on my availability.

(Insert arrangements that will be in place if either party needs to reschedule supervision).

Ethics

As supervisor, I will take responsibility for reflecting on power and how it is being used, in line with a commitment to ethical practice.

Both of us agree to reflect on what might be filtered out and remain unspoken in supervision. We can both enquire about this in the supervision if filtering is interrupting of, rather than helpful to, the supervision and to your professional practice.

You agree you will inform clients that you participate in supervision.

If you bring recordings of your work to supervision, this will only be with documented, informed consent of the client. You will be responsible for adequately securing these recordings. Tapes will be erased as soon as possible after the purpose for which they were collected has been fulfilled.

(If I am also the practitioner's line manager, insert something that speaks to the ways this dual role will be acknowledged and reflected on, including its impacts during the life of the supervision and the measures that will be taken to support supervision being separated from line management or case management activities.)

Records

As practitioner, you should take notes of supervision conversations for your own purposes.

As supervisor, I will write a brief record of the conversation and file it electronically. I will forward you a copy of this. I will electronically store supervision summaries and then shred all handwritten notes.

Confidentiality

Our supervision conversations will remain confidential. However any breaches of ethical practice, non-adherence to the policies or procedures of the employing organisation, or illegal or criminal activity will not be kept confidential. If these circumstances arise, as supervisor I will discuss my concerns with you and we will make arrangements together for informing the necessary parties. The person at *(insert employer name)* who must be informed of such concerns is *(insert name, position and contact number)*.

I will only speak with *(insert contact person's name)* after speaking with you first, unless this would pose greater risk of harm. Where possible, you will participate in these conversations.

I am interested in notions of community and therefore will continue to explore ideas about confidentiality. It is agreed that either of us can share with others the discoveries, experiences and ideas that

we discuss in supervision. However, I will not disclose any personally identifying information about you or your clients.

During the time we work together, I will be participating in my own supervision which will include supervision of my supervision practice. This arrangement is also bound by the ethics of confidentiality.

Fees

(Insert information about the cost of supervision and how payment will be arranged).

Review and Evaluation

As supervisor and practitioner, we will regularly reflect on the supervisory relationship and on our supervision conversations. We will discuss challenges or concerns as they arise with a view to working with them.

This supervision working agreement is a work in progress. We can make mutually agreed changes to better suit the needs of the supervision as it develops.

This supervision working agreement will be in effect for a six month period. Our first supervision will occur on *(insert date)*. After six months, we will formally review this supervision working agreement.

(signatures)

(Insert practitioner's name)

(Insert supervisor's name)

Practitioner

Supervisor

Date

Date

Supervision Review

It seems from their accounts that whilst none of the participants had engaged in reflective conversations about their supervision it may be that review processes could have contributed to the development of their understanding and use of supervision and to the supervisory relationships. The research methodology itself invited participants to review their supervision. Participants remarked on how this contributed to generating understandings of supervision and to the development of their supervision practice and relationships. It appears that even where there are difficulties in the supervision, rendering these visible and engaging together with curiosity can aid in addressing issues and progressing the supervision. I hold the same belief that unless supervision reviews are structured and planned for they are unlikely to occur. Plans for regular reviews could be included in the supervision working agreement, describing frequency and what each party's intentions are for the reviews. I am interested in this review going beyond whether supervision is helpful, to opening up space for curiosity and discussion about the supervision work, the relationship, the positions available to the practitioner and supervisor and the ways supervision is contributing to the practitioner's professional identity. To support supervision review conversations in my work with new and with more experienced practitioners, I have developed a series of possible questions that the practitioner and I may find helpful to reflect on when reviewing our work together.

Possible Review Questions

Below are possible questions that we could ask to assist in our periodic review of our supervision work together. We could ask these questions both of me as supervisor and of you as practitioner. We could reflect on them first individually and then together in supervision. The questions are designed to invite us into a dialogue about our work in supervision. They are not designed to constrain our review. We need not limit ourselves to these questions, nor should we follow them slavishly. There will no doubt be many other possible areas of interest to ask ourselves about.

- Thinking back over our supervision work together, what stands out or captures our attention? What images, words or expressions come to mind?
- What have we appreciated about supervision? What has been particularly helpful? What have each of us brought to the supervision?
- Are there any aspects of supervision that have been less useful?
- Thinking about the supervisory relationship, what aspects have worked well and what have not worked so well?
- Have you experienced yourself as invited to ask for what is most important to you?
- How are you coming to know yourself as a practitioner through supervision? How would you speak about your professional identity as it is being co-constructed through supervision?
- How are the relations of power (or overlapping roles, where relevant) influencing the supervision work?
- In what ways are our supervision conversations influencing and shaping your practice?
- What discoveries have you made? What developments in your practice are you most pleased with?
- Is there anything that is not being talked about in supervision that you wish was being talked about? If so, what might have prevented it being spoken of before now and what might support those conversations in the future?
- Looking back at the supervision working agreement, how closely does the agreement reflect the conversations we have been having and the supervisory relationship?
- Are there aspects of the agreement you would like to change at this time so it better reflects the work we are doing or your hopes and intentions for our future supervision work?
- Is it time to finish our supervision work together and for you to change supervisors? If not, how will you know when it is time? In

what ways will we continue to review and to reflect on our supervision work together?

Line manager as supervisor

There has been considerable debate in the field about whether it is appropriate for line managers to also take on the dual role of supervisor. Several authors (Axten, 2002; Copeland, 2001; Ung, 2002) and, indeed, some codes of ethics (for example that of the NZAC) have recommended that a practitioner's line manager should not also be their supervisor. The current study, however, suggests that despite such concerns about the impact of dual roles, there is a tendency in the field for new practitioners to engage in supervision with their line manager or with another person who has administrative or clinical responsibility in their organisation.

Despite recommendations (Carroll, 1996; Carroll & Gilbert, 2006) that practitioners benefit when they choose their own supervisor, only one of the four practitioners in this research had selected their own supervisor. It is acknowledged, however, that it is not always possible for practitioners to choose their supervisor. Some authors (Carroll, 1996; Carroll & Gilbert, 2006; McMahon, 2002) recommend that when they do have a choice of supervisor, practitioners should interview potential supervisors to help them decide who would be the best fit for them and for their learning needs. Carroll and Gilbert (2006) suggested that even when practitioners are not in a position to choose their supervisor, they should still ask questions as the basis for negotiation. They encouraged practitioners to talk with their supervisor about the fact that they have not chosen each other. This could include a review of what this means for each of them and of the possible implications for their work. They should also schedule review times and specify their expectations of each other and of the organisational context. Carroll (1996) advised that where practitioners have not chosen their supervisor, it is particularly important to continuously review and monitor the supervisory relationship.

Ung (2002, p 94) found that internal supervision "has been conceptualised as having the functions of management, support and education," and this, he says, "necessitates supervisors taking on the potentially conflicting roles of manager,

supporter and educator”. He argued that these functions “complicate supervision because of the often competing and contradictory aims”. Axten (2002, p. 111) described supervision with a line manager, or with another co-worker with administrative responsibility, as “a hierarchical, evaluative model of supervision”. Carroll (1996) warned that practitioners will monitor what they bring to supervision when their supervisor is in a position to affect their job and their career.

Ung (2002) argued that external supervision offers “a broader and richer possibility” (p. 96). Because the practitioner has a say in the choice of supervisor, there is reduced power and a more collaborative relationship. Ung (2002) also maintained that having a say in the choice of supervisor “can be empowering, as there can be a greater negotiated process for framing the content, methods and outcomes of supervision. The supervisee also has the power to leave.” (p. 97). He added that “this can contribute to both supervisor and supervisee being more open to discussing practice experiences, the qualifications of the supervisor and the style of the supervision to be provided. Expectations can be expressed and a review of the process can be factored in” (p. 97). Ung (2002) stated that external supervision arrangements, on the other hand, involve “a shift in power towards a more collaborative relationship” (p. 98) where practitioners experience greater safety to reflect. This is because there are “no alignments to the political bureaucracy and no links to agency activities” (p. 98).

Schofield and Pelling (2002) described how most counselling practice in Australia has evolved through non-government, not-for-profit organisations. Many of these organisations pioneered the development of counselling supervision, with a focus on the managerial aspects of supervision. They were primarily concerned to ensure quality and accountability of the agency supervision, and protection of the client and the agency. It seems from the participants’ accounts that to a large extent, these arrangements continue today, certainly in internal supervision. Participants’ accounts suggest that there were times when supervision served the purposes of the supervisor, rather than meeting Carroll and Gilbert’s (2006) standard that “(s)upervision is for supervisee, not for supervisors” (p. ix). It appears there is a greater risk of supervision being for the purposes of the supervisor in situations where the supervisor holds a dual role as line manager. This could indicate that it is difficult for supervisors to separate their roles if they

have dual line management responsibilities. It may also reflect differences in some supervisors' understanding of these roles and their associated activities. This raises the question of what supervision is and how is it understood differently when the supervisor is in a line management position.

This suggests that it may be beneficial for organisations to review their supervision policies and procedures in light of the literature on dual supervision and line management roles. The supervision procedures of many organisations are constrained by the cost of external supervision. It may be useful, however, to further explore cost-neutral supervision options that do not involve such dual roles. Organisations could also consider putting in place systems and procedures to support practitioners to have a choice in who they work with in supervision, and making both internal and external supervision available.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NEW PRACTITIONERS

While there has been much written about preparing practitioners for supervision, it is rare that they are actively assisted to understand and use supervision (Carroll & Gilbert, 2006). The current research suggests it remains the case that new practitioners are not adequately prepared to engage in supervision. The new practitioners in this research appeared to have completed their professional education without a clear understanding of what supervision is, who participates in it, what right they have to participate in it, or what their role is. Without such preparation, practitioners new to the field go into supervision with only a limited understanding of it. This limited understanding positions new practitioners "at the margins" (Crocket, 2002a, p.19) in their supervision. They are positioned as needing to be told by their supervisor what supervision is and how it will work, rather than as having knowledge and as able to negotiate the supervision work with their supervisor. This may produce a unilaterally constructed supervision privileging the supervisor's ideas and preferences.

Many writers have described supervision as requiring the active involvement of both the supervisor and the practitioner and have called for practitioners to take responsibility for their supervision and for their learning, rather than leave the supervision in the hands of the supervisor (Berger & Buchholz, 1993; Carroll &

Gilbert, 2006; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; McMahon, 2002; Scaife, 2009; Whitman, 2001). However, given the lack of assistance new practitioners receive in preparation for supervision, it seems unreasonable for supervisors, employers, professional associations and educational facilities to expect new practitioners to take responsibility in this way for supervision.

There have been clear calls from some authors for professional education on supervision for practitioners (Bahrck et al., 1991; Berger & Buchholz, 1993; Carroll, 1996; Crocket, 2002a; Feltham, 2000; Horton, 1993; Inskipp, 1996; McMahon, 2002; McMahon & Simons, 2004;). The practitioners' and supervisors' perspectives presented in this research suggest a need for more education on supervision, both as part of the syllabus for academic professional studies and as part of practitioner professional development after graduation.

Several authors have outlined areas they believe are crucial for continuing practitioner education on supervision (Carroll, 1996; Inskipp & Proctor, 1993, for example). The current project confirms a need for professional education on supervision. These findings particularly highlight the value of professional education addressing a number of particular aspects of supervision. These aspects include: the purpose and value of supervision; what can be discussed in supervision; practitioners' entitlement to quality supervision; their role in shaping supervision to support their practice; and the differences between supervision and other professional activities. It appears from the participants' stories that it may be beneficial if professional education provided new practitioners opportunities to inquire about the ideas and experiences of other practitioners and supervisors. Professional education could better position new practitioners to negotiate for their needs to be met and to actively participate in developing supervisory relationships. This would support new practitioners to take responsibility for the effective use of supervision. This research suggests that professional education for new practitioners could address the following issues:

The purpose and value of supervision

Overall, the accounts presented in this study suggest that new practitioners could benefit from exploring what supervision is, how it supports ethical and effective practice, and what their role and the role of the supervisor is. It would be particularly useful for professional education to explore the anticipated benefits of

supervision so practitioners will consider it worth negotiating for, and not merely “a side thing” of scant importance, as one practitioner participant described it. Practitioners might benefit from a clear statement that supervision is something ethical practitioners engage in throughout their careers, and not just at the beginning when they are considered not yet competent.

Quality supervision as an entitlement

The research stories suggest that new practitioners understand supervision as something that occurs in the way the supervisor wants and with a supervisor who is chosen by somebody else, not by them. Polly spoke of her experience of not knowing that she could ask for supervision from elsewhere if she was not happy with the organisation’s internal supervision arrangements. New practitioners could benefit from education that promotes their entitlement to quality supervision. This could include informing new practitioners that they can pursue supervision independently of their employer. Education could also prepare them with knowledge of what they can ask for when negotiating their supervision and of how to assess whether it is meeting their needs.

Positioning

It was common in the research stories that new practitioners understood supervision as being determined by their supervisor, a process in which they are positioned to be “done to” (Crocket. 2002a), with a limited speaking position and unable to be influential in the production of the supervision. This stands at odds with the belief, expressed by some authors, that practitioners are responsible for supervision. In order to support practitioners to be better positioned to co-produce supervision, professional education might work to create opportunities for practitioners to reflect on the purpose and functions of supervision, on their experiences of supervision and their role in it. It may also assist new practitioners to think about what questions they may ask a potential new supervisor when negotiating their supervision work together.

The role of the personal in supervision

From the participants’ accounts it appears that new practitioners may not be familiar with professional discourses about the role of the personal in supervision conversations. What is meant by “the personal” and what place it has in

supervision could be usefully explored in professional education for new practitioners. This may better prepare them to speak to their hopes around how the personal is accounted for in supervision.

Distinguishing supervision from other professional activities

New practitioners may be inducted into supervision in ways that leave them uncertain about the distinctions between supervision conversations and other professional activities such as line management, case management, training, consultation or mentoring, or between professional supervision and other forms of supervision. This uncertainty may particularly arise when new practitioners meet with their line manager for supervision. Professional education for new practitioners may therefore assist them to distinguish supervision from other professional activities. Further, this would help them to judge whether they are in fact being offered supervision, or some other activity.

Consulting oneself, supervisors and colleagues

Several participants in this study identified the potential value of speaking with others about their experiences of supervision, though few of them had actually done this. Providing new practitioners with opportunities to consult other students, practitioners and supervisors about their ideas and their experiences of supervision could better situate them to engage in negotiations for supervision. Such consultation may help new practitioners to reflect on their ideas about supervision and, on their preferred ways of working. They could consider what questions they would like to be asked in supervision, what they want to ask for, and what sort of supervisory relationship they would prefer.

Professional education on supervision for practitioners could equip them to write a statement of their hopes and intentions for supervision in the same way that supervisors might develop a supervision position statement. Such a practitioner's supervision statement could then be shared with potential new supervisors or used when negotiating supervision work with a new supervisor.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SUPERVISORS

Given the limited professional education available to practitioners on supervision, it seems that supervisors take on an essential role when they induct new practitioners to the practice of supervision. A large part of this role of the supervisor is to assist new practitioners to develop their understanding and their effective use of supervision. A number of supervisors in this study had taken on their role with little, if any specialised education or other preparation for the role. They had various understandings of supervision and of the role of supervisor. They described themselves as having varying degrees of expertise. This appears to have resulted in a wide variability in the effectiveness of new practitioners' induction to supervision.

Carroll (1996, p. 32) asserted, "we have moved past the era when counselling supervision is an inherited task that comes with counselling experience". However despite calls for supervisors to participate in supervision education, the current study suggests the role of supervisor continues to be fulfilled by practitioners who have stepped into, or "inherited" (Carroll, 1996, p. 4), the role because of their seniority. They seem to have gained their skills as supervisors on the job (Grover, 2002).

Several authors (Akin & Weil, 1981; Bernard & Goodyear, 1998, cited in Schofield & Pelling, 2002; Carroll, 1996; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Henderson, 2009; Shofield & Pelling, 2002; Wheeler & King, 2001) agree that supervisors should undertake education to equip them to engage in quality supervision. It seems from this research that supervisors might feel better prepared to support new practitioners to develop their understanding of supervision once they themselves have a more solid understanding of supervision. Several authors (Bernard & Goodyear, 1998; Carroll, 1996; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000) have recommended a curriculum for professional education on supervision. There may be value in education activities for supervisors and practitioners being closely aligned. This would make supervision practice visible and position practitioners with knowledge with which to negotiate for their hopes for supervision. In addition to the discussion on education of supervisors in the literature review above, and on page in relation to practitioner training, the current research

suggests supervisors may also benefit from professional education which includes the following:

What is supervision?

A number of authors advise against presuming that practitioners know what supervision is or what they should expect from supervision (Carroll, 1996, Inskipp & Proctor, 1993). However, the accounts of participants in this research indicate that despite this concern, supervisors commence supervision with new practitioners not only assuming that the practitioner knows what supervision is, but also that they share common understandings of and hopes for supervision. Professional education on supervision could usefully stress the importance of exploring these assumptions.

Approach to supervision

Participants in the research expressed a preference for supervisors to clearly articulate their understanding of supervision, their approach to supervision, their understanding and their approach to implementing their roles. Professional education for supervisors should assist them to further develop their own understanding of supervision so they are better able to speak about what it is and about their approach and their role as supervisor. Education on supervision could support supervisors to articulate and document their own supervision position statement to share with new practitioners.

Collaborative supervision model

This research found that despite calls for practitioners to be positioned as partners and colleagues when reviewing their work (Crocket, 2002a, 2002b), several supervisors in the study continued to subscribe to the “supervisee as apprentice” model of supervision, where the supervisor “guided the ‘fledgling novice’ ” and “handed down what has been inherited” (Carroll, 1996, p. 25-26). The accounts of the practitioners in this study seem to indicate they would prefer to be positioned as holding skills, knowledges and experiences which are of value. Supervisors may benefit from professional education that equips them to deconstruct the master/apprentice model and encourages a more collegial, collaborative two-way model of supervision in which supervisors create space for practitioners to voice their hopes for supervision and their skills, knowledges and

experiences. Such education could support a supervision model that stories professional competence and preferred professional identity.

Supervision as separate to line management functions

From the participants' accounts, different supervisors not only have different understandings of what supervision is, but also a variety of sometimes limited understandings about the differences between supervision and other professional activities such as line management, case management, training, consultation and mentoring. Each of these activities was at times referred to in the data as supervision. It could be that supervisors would benefit from professional education that addresses the differences between supervision and these other professional activities. It appears from this research that there are, indeed, "multifarious practices commonly called supervision" (Grauel, 2002, p. 4). Education could focus on what supervision looks like and the ways supervisors in overlapping roles, of line manager and supervisor, can work to reduce the limiting impact of this on supervision. This would likely help supervision to remain focussed on the client and the practitioner and not on what is of interest to the supervisor/line manager.

The supervisory relationship

In the same way that the relationship has been described as what is most effective in counselling, Carroll and Gilbert (2006) suggest the supervisory relationship is central to effective supervision. The participants' accounts in this research seem to confirm that supervisors experienced the relationship as central to the success of the supervision. It appeared, however, that it would be useful for professional education to deconstruct the notion of a good supervisory relationship. This could unpack the sort of relationship supervisors would prefer to develop, and ask what practices, values, approaches, theoretic framework and so on would serve to develop, and be developed by, this preferred relationship. Holloway (1995, p. 6) conceptualised the supervisory relationship as a "learning alliance," a relationship that supports and prioritises learning. Carroll (1996) described how the supervisory relationship can support learning through safety that "is provided by both support and challenge" (p. 55). Professional education could encourage supervisors to create space to speak with practitioners about the hopes they each hold for the supervisory relationship, and about how they would know if they

were developing the preferred relationship and if they were going down non-preferred relationship paths. Supervisors could be supported to consider how to avoid becoming the practitioner's "cheer squad" (Todd, 2002, p. 247) so they can remain positioned to invite reflection and challenge practice. A number of authors have stressed that the supervisory relationship requires particularly clear negotiation and ongoing review (for example, Carroll, 1996), and this study suggests that this suggestion has yet to be consistently practised.

Some participants in the research spoke of feeling positioned as not able to speak safely about the more challenging aspects of their work. This was particularly so in the situations where there was the added difficulty that their supervisor was also their line manager. It may be helpful for professional education to support supervisors to develop supervisory relationships which ensure that space is created for practitioners to speak about challenges and moments of hesitancy. Supervisors could explore ways to normalise "mistakes" in practice and to create an environment in which challenges can be freely discussed. Professional education for supervisors could help them to consider ways to decline invitations to take only the position of expert, and ways to decide when and how to share their own experiences of "mistakes" and what they made of them. Hawkins and Shohet (2006) suggested that supervisors' self disclosure of times of not knowing what to do can assist in developing a safe climate for practitioners to openly speak about their work. This could be done in what has been described (White, 2003) as a "decentred" way. This is not intended to reduce the supervisor's credibility as a skilled practitioner and supervisor. Rather, it acknowledges that competence and credibility do not come without experiencing challenges. This approach is deconstructive of supervision models where the supervisor is an expert and the practitioner is the one who experiences challenges.

Supervision Working Agreement

Supervisors have a role in helping new practitioners prepare to negotiate and participate in supervision. Whilst many authors argue for the use of supervision "contracts" or "working agreements" (Inskipp & Proctor, 1993), the current research found these under-utilised by participating supervisors in their work with new practitioners. It may be useful for professional education for supervisors to discuss the value of supervision working agreements and the ways supervisors can

introduce and engage new practitioners in the development and use of supervision agreements.

Power relations

Despite the emphasis of some authors (Fine & Turner, 2002; Ung, 2002) on the idea that making power relations visible can open space for dialogue, many of the supervisors in the current research were silent on the question of power relations. They did not name or open up space for discussion about power. Nor did they invite conversations about the ways power relations may influence supervision. It would be valuable if professional education could encourage supervisors to render power relations visible. Critical reflection on issues of power could trouble, question and ultimately change the shaping effects of power in the supervisory relationship, since they cannot be removed. This reflection could address the positional power of the supervisor and the additional power of the line manager where there is a dual role. Supervisors may appreciate being prepared to initiate conversations about how, together with the practitioner, they will notice and reflect on power and its impact in the supervision work. Consideration could be given to how supervisors can respond when power relations limit what is possible in supervision.

Supervision Review

While regular reviews of supervision are considered important (Carroll, 1996; McMahon, 2002), for most participants in this study, reviews of the supervision work and the supervisory relationship were infrequent. This appeared to have had a limiting effect on participants' understandings of supervision and issues arising in the supervision work or in the relationship may have remained unnamed and unaddressed. It would be important for professional education of supervisors to promote the importance of both formal and informal reviews, so that supervisors and practitioners can reflect on how the practice lines up with the hopes and intentions that they may have documented in their supervision working agreement. Reviews can consider whether there are areas where intentions and practice do not match, and also reflect on whether either party's preferences have changed since the agreement was negotiated. Given the power relations at play in supervisory relationships, supervisors may benefit from encouragement to initiate

review conversations as a way to create space for the practitioner to speak of their hopes and intentions and to reflect on their experiences.

RESEARCH PRACTICES: SOME REFLECTIONS

Learnings were generated at many moments throughout the research process, even at recruitment. At recruitment I found that new graduates were generally not participating in supervision with private supervisors. All but one (Polly) of the participating practitioners, were working with supervisors who had been allocated to them by their employer, and in each of these cases the supervisor was their line manager.

The ‘one step back’ method of inquiry used in this research seemed to impose both limitations and benefits. My reliance on written questions to start the research conversations in each supervisor/practitioner pair, and my physical absence during these conversations, were somewhat determining of the course the conversations took. From my perspective, this meant I was not able to enquire in the moment about comments that caught my attention, as I would have if I had been present as interviewer. I was not able to ask more questions at all about the second interview conversations.

However, the conversations that generated the least learning of the kind I was hoping for actually seemed of most interest to the participants and elicited most expressions about their benefits. I might have expected this, as the participants were able to follow any line of conversation that they found interesting or useful. My sense is that there was a tone of frankness in the conversations that suggested possible future developments for the supervision practice.

However, there were many examples in participants’ accounts that flagged the productivity of the research process for generating new possibilities for the practitioners. They appeared to demonstrate ingenuity in taking positions of agency and eloquence in speaking of their preferences and suggesting actions to develop their supervision practice together.

I would have liked to have written a follow-up letter to the participants after their second conversation, highlighting the areas that had caught my attention and the

ways their participation had shaped my own practice as a supervisor. This would have added to my sense of transparency and accountability.

The limitations in the method used meant that the participants were not involved in the narrative analysis of the data. This would have been remedied if I had planned to involve the participants in reflection on each other's transcripts. This could have been done, for example, by inviting participants to be involved as outsider witnesses to each other's conversations. However, this would have led to a project of far greater scope than was possible within the limits of a three-paper masters thesis.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

The research raised questions which I consider worthy of further inquiry.

The participants' accounts raise concerns that many practitioners may be participating in supervision with a supervisor who is also their line manager. I would be interested to explore further the impact of dual roles on supervision and on each party's experiences of such supervision. It may be worth investigating the different outcomes produced by external and internal supervision.

It seems the responses of the participants in this research reflected Hobart's (1931, p. 17, cited in Grauel, 2002, p. 3) speculation that "there are probably as many points of view about supervision as there are individuals supervising and supervised". Grant's (2005, p. 337) description of the "uncertain state of supervision affairs" also seems apt. It appears that both new practitioners and their supervisors have various understandings of what supervision is. Further inquiry might explore how supervisors understand supervision and unpack how the same language may be being used to describe different activities.

Further inquiry might also be undertaken with practitioners and supervisors to explore their experience of creating and using supervision working agreements. It would be of particular interest to investigate the contributions that supervision working agreements make to the development of understanding and effective use

of supervision both by new and more experienced practitioners and how they contribute to supervision review processes.

It seemed that concern for accountability heavily influenced the nature and structure of some of the participants' supervision conversations. I am curious about what ideas exist around supervisors' responsibility for practitioners' practice (Crocket, et al., 2004; King & Wheeler, 1999; Webb, 2001), and whether these ideas are shared amongst supervisors, practitioners, employers and professional associations.

Further exploration of the effects of pre- and post- graduation education about supervision on the practice of supervision, would be of interest.

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APPENDICES

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Questions

Research Study: An exploratory study of the induction of new practitioners to supervision: Practitioner and supervisor perspectives.

Ahead of your conversation together, I ask that you spend some time individually reflecting on your work together in supervision. It may be helpful to make some brief notes for your own reference to refer to when you come together to share your reflections and responses to the questions below.

It is my hope that the questions I have asked will invite you into a dialogue together about the practitioner's induction to supervision. Please do not feel constrained by these questions when considering this research. Feel free to enquire further with each other about anything that comes up in your conversation in response to these questions.

- What in particular interests you about this research on how new practitioners are inducted to supervision?
- What do you remember about induction to supervision at the beginning of this supervisory relationship?
- What impacts did these aspects have on the supervision relationship and the practitioner's understanding and use of supervision?
- Are there any ongoing effects you are aware of?
- What was done that was particularly helpful in inducting the practitioner to supervision?
- Was there anything that was less helpful in the practitioner's induction to supervision? What effects did this have?
- What ideas do you have about what might have also assisted in the development of the practitioner's understanding and use of supervision?

- What memories do you have of these early supervision conversations? What stands out about the induction to supervision?
- How do you understand and experience the links between the induction and the practitioner's use of supervision? How did the induction make a difference for you in the supervision practice and work you are able to do together?
- What advice would you give new practitioners and their supervisors in commencing supervision?
- Do you continue to reflect on and discuss the practitioner's understanding of and use of supervision? If so, how and why?
- Do you think that a new practitioner's induction to supervision affects how well supervision is understood and used? If so can you tell me how?
- Is there anything else that caught your attention or is of interest to you when you reflect on the links between new practitioner's induction to supervision and the development of understanding and effective use of supervision?
- Is there anything that I have not asked but that is important for you to speak about when you consider the question of how new practitioners are inducted into supervision and how practitioners come to understand and effectively use supervision?

Appendix II

Letter to Polly and Sarah

17th November 2008

Dear Polly and Sarah,

I enjoyed listening to your first audio-taped conversation about how you, Polly, came to understand and effectively use supervision as a new practitioner. Thank you both for the consideration and thoughtfulness you put into preparing for the conversation together, it produced a lovely rich transcript with a lot that caught my attention. Thank you, Sarah for taking an inquiring position in the conversation and making so much of this richness available.

As we discussed, this letter is written in response to listening to your audio-taped conversation. It is my intention that this letter will highlight the areas of your conversation that caught my attention and were of particular interest in terms of my research question: how do new practitioners come to understand and effectively use supervision? This letter includes a number of questions based on some of what you both said in your first conversation.

There was so much that interested me that there are quite a few questions. I hope you will talk together about those that are most interesting to you.

You spoke about writing a “contract” in your first supervision conversation. Can you tell me a little about this contract and how writing it contributed to a greater understanding and effective use of supervision?

Polly, you said that supervision was “normalised”. Could you describe this process of normalising? How did you move away from a position of thinking that supervision was for those who were “not good workers” to one of thinking of supervision as something that good workers engaged in? Sarah, what did you do to contribute to this normalising?

Polly, you said that when you started work you didn't really know what supervision was and what to expect and that now you have come to understand the difference between having "quality supervision" – which is "useful", "important", "a support", "satisfying" and "stimulating" - and a different sort of supervision that you described as "managerial," that left you feeling like you were "going through the motions". Polly, what made this shift in understanding possible?

Polly, how did you come to let go of the idea that "you go through your clients" in supervision and take up Sarah's offer that supervision might "support" and "stimulate"?

Sarah, what would you say you did that so effectively made it possible for Polly to take up a different position in supervision to the one she described with her manager?

Sarah, if you were talking to a new supervisor interested in supporting a new practitioner in supervision, what would you say is critical from your experience of working with Polly?

Polly, you said the first conversation you had with Sarah clarified what you had been missing out on in previous supervision relationships. You said it changed your perspective on what supervision was and that you felt engaged from the initial induction conversation. Can you say more about what engaged you?

Polly, you felt it was a "big deal" that Sarah read back her notes on what you had said. You said no one had ever used your words in this way and that supervision was always someone else's words. Can you remember a particular occasion when you felt this? Can you describe a time when you really developed this sense of supervision being a "two-way street"? How was this introduced or negotiated?

Sarah, I would be interested to hear more from you about what you do in "inducting" a new practitioner to supervision?

Polly, you said you would advise new practitioners to acknowledge the personal and professional coming together in supervision as a kind of "natural process" and not something that is "unprofessional". How did you and Sarah find you both had the same understanding of the relationship of the personal and the professional in

the work? How did your ideas about the personal and the professional influence how you understood and used supervision? What difference do you think giving this advice would make to new practitioners in their understanding or use of supervision?

Polly, you said you would advise new practitioners to be honest with their supervisors, to bring moments of hesitancy and “stuff ups” to supervision for discussion. Can you say something about what it was that Sarah did that provided a space for you to bring these sort of things to supervision? What did Sarah do to create this “safe space”? Sarah, what did you do that contributed to the creation of the safe space?

You both suggested that it is helpful for practitioners to be clear about their expectations of supervision. Do you have any ideas about how new practitioners might develop an understanding of their expectations? Sarah, how do you assist new practitioners who are new to supervision to get clear on what they want from supervision?

Sarah, you spoke about making space and giving permission for the practitioner to negotiate what supervision could look like. How did you make space and give permission to Polly to develop and speak of her hopes?

Polly, I appreciated you drawing attention to the notion that practitioner’s ideas and understandings of supervision can be shaped and developed prior to commencing work in the field. How were you introduced to supervision prior to commencing work in the field? What did university teach you about supervision? Was there specific teaching and reading? If so, what was it? Was it useful? How?

I wonder if you could each spend some time reflecting on the questions in this letter before you meet again on the 30th November. It would also be helpful if you both made some notes for yourselves to help you focus your conversation around the research question.

Thank you again for your interest and willingness to participate in this research. If you have any questions or wish to discuss this letter with me please call me on

0410 504 416. If I don't hear from you first I will give you both a call some time during the week of the 24th November to check in.

I am looking forward to hearing your second audio-taped conversation.

Best wishes,

Rachel.

Letter of Introduction (Supervisor)

Research Study: An exploratory study of the induction of new practitioners to supervision: Practitioner and supervisor perspectives.

Dear colleague,

My name is Rachel Wolfe and I am undertaking research as part of a Master of Counselling programme I am enrolled in at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand.

The project will investigate supervisors' and practitioners' experiences of how new practitioners are inducted to supervision. While there is much literature and discussion on the importance of supervision, there is little written on how practitioners are inducted to or come to understand and effectively use supervision. This research will explore the many and varied ways new practitioners come to understand and effectively use supervision. In this study I hope to hear about particular experiences of how practitioners come to understand supervision and how supervisor's contribute to new practitioners' induction to the practice of supervision.

I am writing to you because in informal professional conversation you expressed an interest in participating in this research project. Participation is voluntary and you are welcome to choose not to participate in this research.

Participation in this research would firstly involve asking the practitioner you identified if they would be interested in participating with you in this research. A copy of the paperwork for the practitioner is enclosed in the attached envelope. Participation requires both you and the practitioner you work with or have worked with in supervision agreeing to participate. In order to be eligible you must have been working with the practitioner for between three and twelve months and the practitioner must have been practicing for less than two years after completing

their undergraduate studies. If you have concluded supervision with the practitioner, the date of starting supervision should be no more than twelve months before participating in the research.

If your situation meets the eligibility criteria and you both decide to participate, your involvement in this research will include engaging in reflection by yourself on some questions (see attached) which focus on how you contributed to the induction of the practitioner to supervision. I would ask that you make brief notes to refer to for your own reference in a later conversation with the practitioner. These notes would belong to you. After reflecting on these questions I would invite you to come together with the practitioner to discuss these questions and each of your reflections in a one-hour audio-taped conversation, with just the two of you. The conversation can be in your usual supervision setting, or in another suitable place. I will then listen to your audio taped conversation and as researcher, I will frame a series of follow up questions. I will then ask you to reflect on and discuss with the practitioner in an audio-taped conversation this follow-up series of questions.

You are also welcome to contact me individually at any time during your participation in the research if there is something you wish to add to your reflections. I will transcribe the audio-taped conversations and your names will be replaced with pseudonyms. You will be known by name only to me and the research supervisor at the University of Waikato, Dr Kathie Crocket. You will be provided with a copy of your conversation transcripts.

If you decide to participate, it is possible to withdraw from the research, without explanation, up until the completion of their first audio taped conversation. After this point it will no longer be possible to withdraw. Any data that has been generated will be used in the research. If you wish to withdraw from the research I ask you to inform me, the researcher, either verbally or in writing.

The anonymous transcripts will provide the material that will be written up in my thesis. Further publications, presentations and training may come from the data at a later date. You are entitled to access the completed thesis if you wish to read it and any subsequent publications.

If you would like any further information about this research at any stage please contact me.

Rachel Wolfe

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Mobile: 0410 504 416

If you have any concerns about any aspect of this research you can contact Kathie Crocket, research supervisor.

Dr Kathie Crocket

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Thank you for considering contributing to this research. If you are willing to go ahead and participate, please return the enclosed consent form to me at the above address, by (insert date).

Regards

Rachel

Wolfe

Letter of Introduction (Practitioner)

Research Study: An exploratory study of the induction of new practitioners to supervision: Practitioner and supervisor perspectives.

Dear Colleague,

My name is Rachel Wolfe and I am undertaking research as part of a Master of Counselling programme I am enrolled in at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand.

The project will investigate supervisors' and practitioners' experiences of how new practitioners are inducted to supervision. While there is much literature and discussion on the importance of supervision, there is little written on how practitioners are inducted to or come to understand and effectively use supervision. This research will explore the many and varied ways new practitioners come to understand and effectively use supervision. In this study I hope to hear about particular experiences of how practitioners come to understand supervision and how supervisors contribute to new practitioners' induction to the practice of supervision.

I am writing to you because your current/ previous (delete one option) supervisor expressed an interest in participating in this research project. Your participation is voluntary and you are welcome to choose not to participate in this research. Should you choose not to participate you will not be disadvantaged in any way nor will your current supervision work and relationship be affected.

Participation in this research requires both you and the supervisor you work with / worked with (delete one option) to consent to participate. To meet the eligibility criteria you must have been working with the supervisor for between three and twelve months and you must have been practising for less than two years after completing your undergraduate studies. If you have concluded supervision with

the supervisor, the date of starting supervision together should be no more than twelve months before participating in the research.

If your situation meets the eligibility criteria and you both decide to participate, your involvement in this research would include engaging in reflection by yourself on some questions (see attached) which focus on how you were inducted to supervision. I would ask that you make brief notes for your reference in a later conversation with your supervisor. These notes would belong to you. After reflecting on these questions I would invite you to come together with your supervisor to discuss these questions and each of your reflections in a one-hour audio-taped conversation, with just the two of you. The conversation can be in your usual supervision setting, or in another suitable place. I will then listen to your audio taped conversation and, as researcher, I will frame a series of follow up questions. I will then ask you to reflect on and discuss with your supervisor in an audio-taped conversation this follow-up series of questions.

You are also welcome to contact me individually at any time during your participation in the research if there is something you wish to add to your reflections. I will transcribe the audio-taped conversations and your names will be replaced with pseudonyms. You will be known by name only to me and the research supervisor at the University of Waikato, Dr Kathie Crocket. You will be provided with a copy of your conversation transcripts.

If you decide to participate, it is possible to withdraw from the research, without explanation, up until the completion of the first audio taped conversation. After this point it will no longer be possible to withdraw. Any data that has been generated will be used in the research. If you wish to withdraw from the research I ask you to inform me, the researcher either verbally or in writing.

The anonymous transcripts will provide the material that will be written up in my thesis. Further publications, presentations and training may come from the data at a later date. You are entitled to access the completed thesis if you wish to read it and any subsequent publications.

If you would like any further information about this research at any stage please contact me.

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If you have any concerns about any aspect of this research you can contact Kathie Crocket, research supervisor.

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Thank you for considering contributing to this research. If you are willing to go ahead and participate, please return the enclosed consent form to me at the above address, by (insert date).

Regards

Rachel Wolfe

Supervisor Consent Form

Research Study: An exploratory study of the induction of new practitioners to supervision: Practitioner and supervisor perspectives.

Please sign and return this form to Rachel Wolfe by the (insert date). Please retain the second copy for your own reference.

- I am willing to participate in this research investigation into the induction of new practitioners to supervision.
- I meet the eligibility criteria to participate in this research. I have been working with this practitioner for between three and twelve months. It has been no more than twelve months since we commenced supervision together.
- I have the information about the research that I need to make an informed decision about participation.
- I consent to the audio taping of the two conversations between the practitioner and me. I understand that I may refrain from responding to any of the questions proposed by the researcher.
- I consent to any notes I make on the transcript being regarded as data for the research.
- I consent to any written or verbal correspondence being regarded as data for the research, unless I specifically ask that it not be.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research up until the completion of the first audio taped conversation. I understand that I can withdraw by informing the researcher, Rachel Wolfe, either verbally or in writing of my wish to cease participation in the research.

- I give my consent to data collected and generated in this research being used as part of the researcher's thesis and subsequent publications, training and presentations, provided that my privacy is protected and all possible steps are taken to provide anonymity.
- I understand that the transcriptions of my audio taped conversations will be jointly owned by me and the researcher. Audio tapes will be owned by the researcher. Tapes held by the researcher will be erased after the completion of the researcher's assessment for the paper. I will not use the transcriptions beyond the supervision relationship until the research has been examined.
- I understand that the University of Waikato regulations require the archiving of data collected for published research.
- I understand that I can contact the research supervisor, Kathie Crocket at any time if I have concerns about any part of this research or my participation in it.

Researcher contact details:

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Work: 0064 7 838 4466 ext 8462

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Address:

Phone number:

Email address:

Practitioner Consent Form

Research Study: An exploratory study of the induction of new practitioners to supervision: Practitioner and supervisor perspectives.

Please sign and return this form to Rachel Wolfe by the (insert date). Please retain the second copy for your own reference.

- I am willing to participate in this research investigation into the induction of new practitioners to supervision.
- I meet the eligibility criteria to participate in this research. I have been working with this supervisor for between three and twelve months and it has been less than two years since I completed my undergraduate qualifications.
- I have the information about the research that I need to make an informed decision about participation.
- I consent to the audio taping of the two conversations between the supervisor and me. I understand that I may refrain from responding to any of the questions proposed by the researcher.
- I consent to any notes I make on the transcript being regarded as data for the research.
- I consent to any written or verbal correspondence being regarded as data for the research, unless I specifically ask that it not be.
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