

# **CROSS-CULTURAL SUPERVISION: 'IT'S A SMALL WORLD AFTER ALL'**

Post-graduate Certificate in Professional Supervision

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Dr Donna Swift

# THOSE -OLOGIES

- **Ontology** describes a set of philosophical beliefs people have about the kinds of things that exist in the world. Ontological beliefs deal with the question, 'What is real?' and 'What things exist?'
- **Epistemology** describes a set of philosophical beliefs people have about how they can know things. Epistemology deals with questions such as, 'What is truth?' and 'What is proof?'

# ONTOLOGY

- An inventory of the kind of things that do, or can, exist in the world. Different cultures often have quite different ontologies. In this regard, those cultures can quite literally be said to living in 'different worlds'.
- *Whale Rider*-“It's not just your fathers who are watching you, your ancestors are watching too.”

# ONTOLOGY

- Do you believe in ghosts? Wanted: A person to spend ten nights alone in a house thought to be haunted
- Do you believe that children's parents' incomes are different and this leads to different life chances (i.e. educational attainment)?
- Gender leads to different pay rates

# GENERAL FUNCTIONS OF SUPERVISION

Educative

Administrative

Supportive

Formative

Normative

Restorative

# CONTEXT OF SUPERVISION

- Supervision is a familiar concept for many in the helping professions
- So familiar that supervisors may assume that others share the same familiarity
- Yet supervision can have different meanings
- Supervisors need to critically examine the limitations of their personal understanding
- It is important to identify the existence (or historical existence) of power differentials, privilege and oppression.

# DEFAULT ASSUMPTIONS

“Supervisors from dominant cultures are particularly vulnerable to the unconscious perpetuation of personal prejudice and institutional racism through the assumption that their model of supervision is ‘the’ model.”

(Beddoe & Davys, 2016, p.46)

# DIVERSITY IN SUPERVISION

- Habitus: the embodied social structures that determine how supervision practice is shaped.
- The constellation of internalized social structures in which everyday practices are ingrained and unconsciously perpetuated without critical reflection.

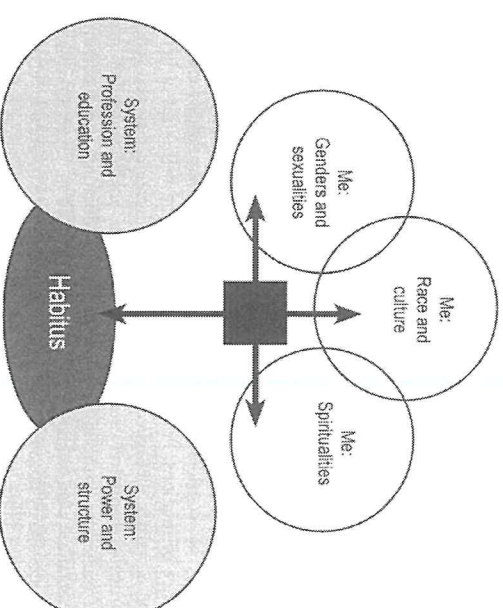


Figure 2.1 Diversity in supervision

We are the product of our culture



We grappled with the context that cultural supervision would provide as a space to learn about culture, and questioned whether it could possibly 'ensure and standardise safe cultural practice,' an assumption that seems to be at the base of this concept. Is this intention best met in a dedicated cultural supervision context, or within existing supervision relationships? Or is it our responsibility as practitioners 'to be students of culture' and to seek collaborative and consultative opportunities to extend our cultural experiences and understandings? (Crocket *et al.* 2013, p.82)

# EXAMPLES

- Client: Not understanding the way of obtaining job promotion
- Client: Offended by comments of co-workers
- Supervisee: Frustrated by client from another culture

# GLOBAL MOBILITY

- Brings forward the intersecting of supervisors, supervisees and service users with multiple worldviews, and different cultural backgrounds and migrations experiences, all seasoned with a depth of historic influences.
- “Are we ready for them?”

# CULTURE DEFINED: MANY FORMS OF IDENTITY

- Ethnicities
- Genders
- Sexualities
- Faiths and spirituality
- Health
- Ability
- Political beliefs

Culture is a complex set of elements including artefacts (symbols and rituals), behaviour and mind-sets, emotions and meaning making.

Beddoe & Davys, 2016

Hawkins & Shohet, 2012

# CULTURE IN THE SUPERVISION PROCESS

- Culture shapes the complexity of interactions among all parties with vested interest in the supervision relationship

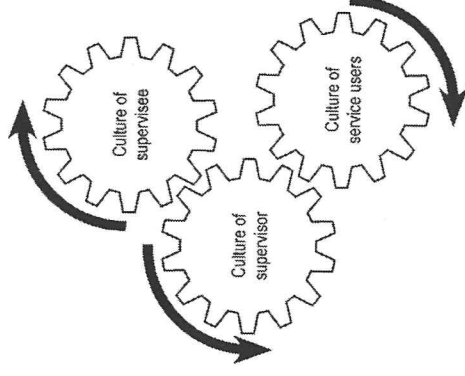


Figure 2.2 Culture in the supervision process

# **WHAT WORKS WELL IN ONE CONTEXT MIGHT NOT WORK WELL IN ANOTHER**

- What difference does culture make?
- How do genders and sexualities impact on supervision relationships?
- What impact do systems of education and professional acculturation have?
- How do organisational systems influence the practice of supervision?

# CRISS-CROSSED CROSS-CULTURAL SUPERVISION

- When it is not working:
- You are communicating, but on parallel planes
- You don't know what they know and they are unsure about showing that they don't understand
- Everyone is polite with smiles, but there is an under current of anxiety
- Both parties know something is not right but not sure what to do about it.

# RED ALERT – THIS IS NOT GOING TO WORK

- **When the supervisor shows:**
  - Cultural discrimination
  - Lack of respect for other cultures
  - Lack of cultural empathy
  - Lack of cultural awareness
  - A sense of superiority or ethnocentrism
  - No attempt to resolve communication difficulties
  - Frustration with difference
  - Reluctance to adjust to more accommodating practice



## **WHAT THE SUPERVISEE MIGHT BE FEELING:**

- Lack of understanding
- Lack of confidence
- Alone and isolated
- Fear of being vulnerable
- Sense of confusion
- Insulted or disappointed
- Ashamed
- Marginalised

## THE IDEAL

“A blend of supervision that deconstructs our own cultural influences ‘not so we can remove [them] because that’s not possible, but so we can account for them,’ with seeking collaboration and consultative opportunities for cultural knowledge, while holding that ‘everybody has their own unique experience of whatever culture they identify with’. With such a stance, there is the possibility for mutual respect, equality, and the valuing of our differences and similarities.”

# TRAINING FOR MULTICULTURAL COMPETENCY

Four dimensions:

- Awareness
- Knowledge
- Relationship
- Skills

# CROSS-CULTURAL SUPERVISION:

- is where aspects of culture, gender, and belief are brought to the forefront of supervision, rather than being features which are occasionally explored.
- is thus an integrated approach, holding together strengths-based, reflective, experiential learning practices within a supervision relationship that is respectful of cultural complexities.

# CULTURAL COMPETENCY IN SUPERVISION

The supervisor has the ability to:

- address all worldviews (supervisor, supervisees, service users and organisational processes)
- Facilitate culture-rich discussion in supervision
- Incorporate culturally sensitive assessments and interventions
- Promote social justice for service users
- (If required) Evaluate the competence of supervisees

## **SUPERVISORS SHOULD BE ABLE TO:**

- Develop their own awareness of their worldviews, personal values, beliefs, and assumptions
- Facilitate supervisees awareness of personal values and beliefs
- Develop conceptualizations that are cognisant of service users' cultural contexts
- Guide supervisees towards employing culturally appropriate interventions with service users
- Attend to cultural context and process in supervision
- Effectively evaluate their supervisees' cultural competencies

# 'WHAT HELPS AND HINDERS IN CROSS-CULTURAL SUPERVISION' L. WONG

## HELPS

- Personal attributes of the supervisor
- Supervision competencies
- Mentoring
- Relationship
- Multi-culture supervision competencies

## HINDERS

- Personal difficulties as a visible minority
- Negative personal attributes of the supervisor
- Lack of a safe and trusting relationship
- Lack of multicultural supervision competencies
- Lack of supervision competencies

# KEEP IN MIND

- Some cultures consider it insulting for a person to challenge people in authority, or older than themselves or of a different gender
- Some people place different values on expression of feelings
- Supervision may serve a different purpose that you assume
- Formality of speech, demeanor, dress and protocol may vary
- Fear of inconvenience may stop some from asking for assistance
- Trust in a relationship may not come easily
- Working cross-culturally is a fluid and continuous process



**WHAT COULD YOU DO  
TO ENSURE THE  
AVOIDANCE OF  
CULTURAL IMPERIALISM  
(ETHNOCENTRISM)?**

## **SELF REFLECTION / BEGIN THE DIALOGUE**

- How would you describe your cultural heritage?
- What privileges does your history bring into your work?
- How will you weave cultural/religious/ideological values influence your professional relationships?
- Which cultural group do you feel most comfortable working with?
- Which group do you feel most anxious about?
- What challenges do you have in supervision as a function of your race?
- How important are the identities of your colleagues and service users in social interactions?

# TIME TO PRACTICE

Spend a few moments looking over the 'self-reflection questions'.

Then 'begin the dialogue'

As a supervisor you are wanting to deepen your cultural understanding of your supervisee.

- Switch roles.
- Discuss how you felt as the supervisor and then as the supervisee
- Exchange your thoughts.....
- Was this difficult?
- Did it change the depth of your understanding or appreciation for the other person?
- What did you do well and what could be improved?
- Etc.....

