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**What Contributes to  
the Development of  
Supervisory Style in the  
Context of Live  
Supervision in a  
Training Institute?**

**Barbara McKay**

**Dissertation in Fulfilment of the  
Doctorate in Psychotherapy**

**Birkbeck College, University of  
London**

I declare that the work contained in this thesis is entirely  
the work of Barbara McKay

Signed

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Abstract**

This study is situated in live supervision groups held over a two year period in a London training institute that delivers systemic therapy training.

It focuses on the development of supervisory style which can be both consistent with a characteristic approach regardless of context as well as emerging and responsive to supervisees' needs.

The study includes data from twelve interviews with supervisors and supervisees plus one observation.

Supervisors show a strong connection with their articulated characteristic style which distinguishes them from one another and provides an overarching frame of reference for both supervisory interventions and relationships with their groups.

They demonstrate some consistency relating to the supervisory requirement to educate, develop systemic practice skills or the family facing work influenced by their considerable practice expertise. There are also some marked differences that appear to be linked to individual style and relational responses to their supervisees which captures the recursive influence of supervisees on supervisory style.

The study found two main themes significant to both supervisors and supervisees, namely the development of technical ability through skill acquisition and the creation of connected relationships.

Supervisory interventions that contribute to technical ability are shown through the educational function of supervision. The meaning made around these practices is much more complex and varied and significantly affects supervisory relationships. These relational constructions go on to define the relationships between supervisors and supervisees and impact learning.

Connected relationship building in supervision is not new. This study offers a range of ideas to show the construction and effect of relationship building through the exploration of supervisory interventions, supervisory style, and responsiveness to supervisees, attention to professional standards and other factors such as gender and professional experience. These factors contribute to the development of relationships as well as the definition of relationships from the vantage points of supervisors and supervisees.

Some tentative suggestions are offered to enhance the quality of supervisory relationships and thus improve learning.

The study makes no claims that this is reflective of other live supervision experiences within the systemic field or indeed other disciplines that utilize live supervision methods.

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

This study is located in the MSc live supervision groups at the Institute of Family Therapy over a two year period.

As a supervisee I remember considerable anxiety in the early stages of training about whether I was being systemic enough and waiting for my supervisor to intervene and correct my practice. As I became more skilled I saw supervisory interventions as supportive and enhancing although my anxiety did not abate.

As a supervisor I noticed that despite being trained systemically using a Milan structure, I often changed direction or reviewed an intervention as a result of my supervisees' actions or comments. I began to wonder about the mutual influencing process in live supervision.

In my position as Director of the Institute of Family Therapy I consider live supervision a key component of systemic training. In this context the development of safe and ethical practice is crucial to therapeutic development and as such institutes must make more efforts to understand its complexity.

In 2001 I completed a small study tracking the isomorphic influence of creative practices in live supervision on creative practices in therapy. This focused on the development of supervisees and neglected the recursive effect on supervisory activity.

The shift towards the supervisor occurred when I mentored a male supervisor in training. I was struck by his active posture in pre-session, in-session and behind the screen with frequent phone-in interventions and a directive approach in the post-session. This was in contrast with my own less interventionist style. I initially thought the differences might be linked to gender and a common perception that

men are more directive than women who are more collaborative and relationally focused. This gendered explanation seemed one dimensional which led me to be more curious about supervisory style and whether there were core practices that supervisors brought into any supervisory activity and flexible practices that were in response to supervisees.

Whilst observing other supervisors I noticed many variations on the theme of live supervision. All of the supervisors were trained in accordance with the Association for Family Therapy and Systemic Practice (AFT) Red Book suggesting some consistency which was reflected in the Milan structure. However there were many differences in action that led me to turn my attention towards the notion of co-construction and mutual influencing processes as one way to understand the variation. This moved away from the narrow view of supervision in a training context being about transmission of knowledge, skills and core competencies.

Further I began to wonder whether supervisors had preferred practices or characteristics that would be consistent regardless of context and other moments when their supervision was more strongly influenced by supervisees' learning needs or the requirements of the families accessing therapy services which could capture a more adaptable and relational approach in style.

The study is arranged in six chapters. Chapter two provides a literature review in relation to live supervision, supervisory style and improvisation. This is supported with limited research in the area. Chapter three focuses on research methodology comparing some qualitative methods. It sets out the study in detail through the use of a table to illustrate the data collection process with supervisors and supervisees. Chapter four sets out the findings through the analysis of the waves of data collection. Chapter five develops a discussion of the findings making connections and distinctions with the existing literature and research. Chapter six concludes the study with some suggestions for future learning.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature review**

The study focusses on live supervision which is placed within the context of generic descriptions of supervision taken from systemic and counselling literature to illustrate the supervisory landscape. It goes on to chart the development of live supervision and its significance in systemic training courses prior to describing and focusing on supervisory style as an individual characteristic and a relational process. Educational theory will be used to illustrate different levels of supervisory intervention. Gaps in the literature will be noted.

#### **2.1 Generic descriptions of supervision**

Clarkson writes,

“Supervision has been defined as a contractually explicit conversation between two or more professionals with the purpose of educating, monitoring and developing their service to patient(s).” (Clarkson, 1998, p.14).

Other writers suggest that supervision includes generating new ideas and skills that have transformative effects on the process of therapy and as such are less hierarchical and more flexible (Fruggeri, 2002; Hawes, 1992).

Fruggeri (2013) alerts us to the range of supervision contexts that require different postures and action. This begins with the obligations of the institution with its rules and conventions moving to self-reflexive supervision which she calls epistemological supervision. This attends to personal development and awareness of the effects of prejudice and power. She also emphasizes the ability to demonstrate technical competence in the model being used by showing its basic tenets in action. Fruggeri considers the training context as most likely to promote

practice which is characterized by instructive interaction legitimized by the supervisor's higher level of competence. Finally, she describes relational supervision which she considers to be the most significant in that it is through joint action that sequences of supervisory action are understood. She makes links with the work of Shotter (2010) saying that when we explore joint action or co-constructed action, it is possible to see what people in relationship make together and in turn explore the different perspectives in joint action that defines the other participants.

Chang and Gaete (2014) extend the idea of supervision as a relationally responsive practice which minimizes the temptation to focus only on hierarchy and power. They move the emphasis from the supervisor and supervisees as individuals to the space between them shown through relational patterns. This does not neglect the clear differences in power between the supervisor and supervisees but seeks to understand and intervene through relational responsiveness within an agency context. This supports the notion of participation and contribution by those involved. Chang and Gaete (2014) coin the phrase, "covision" for this participatory approach which explores the interconnected interpersonal patterns that are made between the supervisees and supervisor (named as IPscope).

"In particular we value that by looking through IPscope, we can render supervision as a relational responsive, participative, reflexive, and transformational practice" (Chang & Gaete, 2014, p. 190).

Like Fruggeri (2013), Chang and Gaete (2014) make explicit links with the work of Shotter (2011) noting that supervisors should respond to what the situation 'calls forth' (Chang and Gaete, 2014, p. 270).

Inskipp and Proctor (2001) bring together the different emphases. They highlight the alliance between supervisor and supervisees in which the supervisee can give

an account of work, reflect on it and receive feedback. They also suggest that the supervisor may offer guidance on technical ability which supports the development of confident and competent practice to ensure a good service to clients.

## **2.2 The development of live supervision**

Live supervision as a method was developed in the 1950's when Haley saw the work of the psychologist Charles Fulweiler. He saw the potential of entering the room to alter practice. Haley, Minuchin and Montalvo began using this method in the Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic. Live supervision is defined thus:

“the process by which someone guides the therapist while he works. The person supervising, watches the session, usually behind the one-way mirror, and intrudes upon it to guide the therapist's behaviour at the moment the action is happening.” (Montalvo, 1973, p. 343).

Montalvo (2002) extends this practical aspect, calling supervisory activity an art. He has clear ideas that useful supervisory action guards against the possibility that supervisees may become puppets of the supervisor, elsewhere described as “robotization,” (Schwartz et al., 1988, p.183) Montalvo writes:

“Supervisors should be cryptic and economical in their comments, have an unobtrusive way of operating, and leave their supervisees standing on their own.” (Montalvo, 2002, p. 288).

## **2.3 The training context**

The training context provides additional levels of complexity with the supervisor moving between different and sometimes competing domains of action (Lang, Little and Cronen 1990). Charles et al (2005) suggest that it is the clear responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that safe and ethical practice is the highest context. The supervisor must monitor risk in order to decide whether or not to

intervene which might be at odds with the ideas of the supervisee. In the absence of risk the supervisor may wait to observe the emergent skills of the supervisee before intervening. Liddle and Schwartz (1983) echo these sentiments and add that the supervisor must also assess the ability of supervisees to implement ideas with the family and monitor their own interventions in order to avoid the possibility of dependency.

Gilbert and Evans (2000) describe this movement between different and sometimes competing positions as, “inclusion,” which is taken from the work of Buber (1996), who invites people in relationship to enter the world of the other whilst holding-on to one’s own view. Gilbert and Evans (2000) expand this idea:

“To this process we would add the vital importance of holding a meta-perspective on the relationship, *viewing self in relation to the other in context* – a standing above the field, whilst also being within it.” (Gilbert and Evans, 2000, p.10).

McCann (2000) concurs in relation to hierarchy and flexibility and makes a useful distinction between first-order and second-order training. In first-order activity, located in the hierarchical relationship, he describes the responsibility of the supervisor as making sure that the supervisees can demonstrate practice in the taught model. He talks about incorporating post-modern approaches that move from instructive interaction towards reflexive positions, socially constructed knowledge and collaboration shown through multiple voices rather than expert positions. This second-order approach develops supervisees’ ability to think differently about client work as opposed to learning specific techniques. Bertrando (2008) echoes this by highlighting that in the Milan approach in which a specific structure prevails, the supervisor thinks of the supervision group as a family system within which members are encouraged to think systemically rather than or perhaps in addition to practicing techniques. He links this to the ambient music of Brian

Eno whose instructions to musicians is only to play in the same key but they can play at any speed and begin at any bar of music. What emerges is within a structure and set of rules but is unpredictable and improvised. This reflects the intention of the Milan training programme in which the supervisor attended to macro rather than micro in-session interventions highlighting the idea that supervisees must develop abilities in seeing and responding to patterns in the family system rather than hear detailed supervisory interventions (Liddle,1991). This notion of meta positions links with Fruggeri's (2013) thoughts on epistemology which she sees as a second order approach and the ability to reflect on and scrutinize thinking and the positions that people hold in order to review and re-position. This will be expanded through the section on pattern, parallel process and isomorphism.

One tension in the training context can be expressed as supervisors holding the possibilities of both first-order and second-order positions. Bertrando (2008) names this dilemma as seeking ways to teach skills at the same time as having an effect on the supervisees' basic premises. He connects this with ideas of moving between teachings of techniques to in-deutero learning in which supervisees' learn to learn (Bateson, 1972; Bertrando, 2008).

Supervisors also hold responsibility for assessment of supervisees' practice, providing two written reports that contribute to the final qualification. This ongoing assessment and continual gaze may also create tension in supervisory relationships. Nel (2006) concludes that the evaluation process is likely to contribute to anxiety affecting supervisees' practice. Boston (2010) notes that supervisors may choose to offer appreciative verbal feedback to the group as a whole and follow this with written feedback to individuals about adjustments they need to make in their practice. In this way she suggests that the assessment focus is managed privately avoiding potential embarrassment for supervisees. Mason (2011) offers some guidance for supervisors with his six levels of feedback that provide an accessible

assessment framework. These include comments about observed practice followed by questions to bring out the supervisees' ideas and introduces curious questions about the potential direction of the session and finally offers some supervisory statements and suggestions. In other writing, Mason (2012) includes personal core beliefs as another supervisory lens that becomes part of the assessment of reflexive practice in addition to the ability to show systemic theory in action.

## **2.4 Supervision models and relevant research**

Olsen and Stern (1991) concur with Goodyear and Bradley (1983) who reviewed five different models of supervision in a range of clinical psychology contexts and found that there were more similarities between the supervisors than differences despite the different theoretical orientations, suggesting there are common themes across supervision practices.

Some writers note a strong coherence between the preferred theoretical approach of the supervisor and the delivery of supervision (Bertrando and Gilli, 2010; Colapinto, 1988; McCann, 2000). This might also be reflected in the structure for supervision as set out by the supervisor. Colapinto (1988) suggests that in structural supervision the pre-session and post-session discussions are very active with the emphasis during the session on the therapy. The supervisor makes active contributions as part of the system of change. In post-session the supervisor concentrates on the development of the trainee by explaining the suggestions or instructions offered during the session. In other words the supervisor uses familiar aspects of a structural session. Piercy et al. (1996) introduce power as a central consideration in different models of therapy which is reflected in supervision such as hierarchical emphasis in structural supervision and collaboration in systemic supervision. They also talk about feminist perspectives in recent social constructionist approaches.

McCann (2000) describes the Milan five stage model as commonly used in live supervision in systemic training. With the advent of the one way mirror, supervisors were able to take multiple positions in relation to the work in the session and conversations behind the screen. This set the scene for the mutual influencing process in which all members of the supervision group become participants and observers (Cade, Speed and Seligman, 1986; Montalvo, 1973). The five stage model includes the pre-session, to discuss new ideas and hypotheses, the session in which in-session interventions are offered, a discussion break to expand ideas and create a final message followed by post-session discussions and reflections. This familiar structure provides a secure environment within which more creative ideas can emerge. The practice of live supervision became the focus for training systemic psychotherapists.

Fenell et al. (1986) completed a small study comparing the effect of live supervision with delayed feedback (retrospective supervision) on the acquisition of skills in a family therapy training clinic. Thirteen doctoral students were split between the two different supervision contexts. They found no discernible difference between the two methods of supervision in terms of skills development but the live supervision group felt they related better to clients. Despite being a small study this directs attention to the potential benefit of live supervision in creating therapeutic relationships but challenges the idea that live supervision is key to skills development.

Bartle-Haring et al. (2009) researched the effect of live supervision on families. Supervisees who were live supervised recorded more progress with families, although families did not make the same link. However, this suggests that supervisees find live supervision to be effective in creating change with families. Once again this is a small study focussing on the service to clients, rather than the

supervisory action, although many writers make explicit link between an effective therapy system and as a context for developing an effective supervisory system.

One such writer is Burnham (2010) who posits that although there are advantages in the similarities between therapy and supervision, not least that the supervisee can see coherence between practice theory and supervisory action, this could constrain supervisors in their supervisory task if they sound too much like experienced therapists and fail to develop their supervisory repertoire.

Wilson (2011) extends this view,

“In supervision the emphasis on explaining what we do is necessary as is identifying oneself with the model of choice and copying its exponents until, eventually, one begins to feel one’s style developing like a new skin.” (Wilson, 2011, p11).

He suggests that the performative practices in live supervision highlight the experiential nature of the task and argues that supervisors must access abilities beyond their familiar practice skills. In doing so he posits that it is possible that as the supervisor moves into more creative practices, he/she may take more risks.

This idea is not confined to systemic supervision as illustrated by Proctor who writes about group supervision and the position of the supervisor:

“The *creation* of anything usually entails craftsmanship – which may be highly skilled, aspiring or poor. The *process of creativity* also builds on craftsmanship and the quality of the resulting innovation will probably be in proportion to skill. Art emerges from craft.” (Proctor, 2008, p.165).

## **2.5 Interventions and interruptions**

Supervisors may use different modes of intervention during live supervision such as bug-in-the-ear, video monitoring, in vivo, walk in, phone-in and consultation

(Bernard and Goodyear, 2004). The choice that supervisors make and the frequency of interventions may be influenced by their preferred style or orientation. It may also relate to other factors such as the therapeutic service to families as well as the learning needs of supervisees. In-session interventions could be helpful as a training aide and potentially disruptive to therapy.

As phone-in interventions are commonly used in live supervision, relevant research is included to explore the effect of phone-in on different parts of the therapy system.

Frankel and Piercy (1990) offer interesting views from their research in a structural training course. They note the pattern and quality of supervisory interventions directly influences the pattern and quality of the therapy. They reflect on the use of phone-in as a teaching method and suggest that when supervisors and supervisees are well coordinated and share similar ideas or the supervisee follows the supervisors' suggestions, this has a positive effect on relationships between the supervisee and families.

Smith et al. (1991) researched the disruptive effects of interrupting therapy sessions either by the supervisor, the supervisee seeking a therapeutic break or phone-in. A control group was set up in which no interruptions were offered. They found that interruptions per se were not disruptive and that the gains of live supervision interruptions outweighed any limited experience of disruption. However, they did suggest that disruptions should be kept to a minimum and resisted during emotional moments in therapy.

Moorhouse and Carr (1999, 2002) in their studies on phone-in interventions conclude that there is an average of five phone-ins during each session with a minimum of two ideas offered to the supervisee. They argue that frequent phone-ins would be anything over six interventions. The researchers link frequency of

phone-in with collaboration between supervisors and supervisees suggesting that infrequent interventions with many suggestions seem to be accepted by supervisees as expanding the conversation and creating more therapeutic opportunities.

Frankel and Piercy (1990) add that supervisors in their attempts not to overwhelm supervisees often make distinctions between what they 'must do' and what they 'might do.' This attends to the complexity of the therapy service as well as the demands of training.

Bobele et al. (1995) suggest that phone-in can be confusing as it is unlikely that the suggestions are mutually constructed which relates to the unequal power within supervision. These themes of power and authority in the supervisory relationship appear later in the study.

### **2.5.1 Phone-in and gender**

As it is common to have male and female supervisors and supervisees, research on the patterns and styles of communication influenced by gender is relevant.

McHale and Carr (1998) make explicit links between phone-in and supervisory style in terms of discourse, by which they mean preferred ways of communicating. They identify gender as a significant context marker over forty episodes of live supervision within which they explore examples of collaboration.

This research notes four different supervisor / supervisee partners from female supervisor and male supervisee, female supervisor and female supervisee, male supervisor and male supervisee and finally male supervisor and female supervisee. They rate the quality of communication based on two variables from the supervisor and two from the supervisees. The supervisor variable is directive or collaborative styles of interaction and the supervisees' resistance and collaborative responses.

McHale and Carr (1998) unexpectedly found that the female supervisors in their sample show more directive styles of communication. They suggest this could be due to the homogenous sample in a training institute and sample bias rather than evidence of females stepping away from traditional female styles of collaboration.

In terms of mutual influencing processes between supervisors and supervisees, they found little evidence of any effect of gender on individual communication styles but they did find that supervisees with male supervisors contributed less to discussions whereas same gendered supervisors and supervisees showed more ability to collaborate and challenge. This could have implications for the construction of supervision groups.

## **2.6 Pattern, parallel process and isomorphism**

Boston (2010) promotes the view that replicating the theoretical practice being taught on courses enables supervisees to learn their craft more quickly. She also attends to the potential effects of time and experience as she talks of students being able to “branch out” later in the supervision (Boston, 2010, p.29).

Other writers (Berger and Dammann, 1982; Hawkins and Shohet, 1989; Ormand, 2009; White and Russell, 1997) talk about patterns across supervision and therapy contexts such as parallel process or isomorphism that creates a range of opportunities for supervisory interventions to directly influence practice. Haley (1988) talks about parallel process, a concept articulated by Searles (1955) which sought to make links between transference and counter-transference that was being mirrored across different relationships such that a supervisee might present their work in similar ways to the pattern in the therapeutic relationship. In using this notion of parallel process Haley (1988) began to think about using interventions behind the screen to directly influence practice in front of it.

Boyd-Franklin (2001) emphasizes the importance of using parallel process to consider cultural competence between different levels of the therapeutic system including supervision.

Isomorphism developed from the notion of parallel process and includes the potential for bi-directional influence between people (White and Russell, 1997). This makes it available as an intervention. Isomorphism is based on the interconnection between different systems with a familiar form or process but different content. Live supervision reflects the form and process of the therapy system with different content thus creating opportunities for supervisors to introduce ideas and practices as specific interventions with the intention of influencing the therapy context (Elizur, 1990; Liddle, 1988; White and Russell, 1997).

Haley (1988) offers the notion that supervisors and supervisees must find ways of conceptualizing their work together that is beyond the session to expand practice to include other practice areas. Montalvo (2002) offers caution in relation to isomorphism suggesting that the supervisor and supervisee must differentiate between the form and function of supervision as different to therapy in order to maintain useful interventions. Foy and Breunlin coin the term ‘metaframeworks’ (Foy and Breunlin, 2001, p. 392) to capture the shift in supervisory position.

In seeking to make the transformation from therapist to supervisor Burnham (2010) suggests that this is more fully achieved as the supervisor learns to respond to the group and can use the process of isomorphism, which he calls, “imaginative isomorphism,” (Burnham, 2010, p.53). In this way the supervisor can use practice skills and patterns of practice to move into relevant activities in the new context. In doing so he invites supervisors to use adult learning theory as a resource to guide supervisory action and intervention. (Brookfield, 1995; Kolb, 1987; Schön, 1987; White and Russell, 1997).

Chang and Gaete (2014) suggest that relationally responsive supervision brings isomorphism alive in ways that offers the potential for unique and novel interactions to open up new conversations. They caution against using isomorphism as a specific phenomenon, preferring to see isomorphism and creativity embedded in every supervisory interaction.

## **2.7 Live supervision in a training context**

The academic and professional demands of training courses and the responsibilities for clinical services leads to additional complexity in live supervision. The standards of practice are set out by the Association for Family Therapy and Systemic Practice in the Blue and Red Books (2007, 2009) which underpin all systemic training courses.

The Blue Book (AFT, 2007) sets out the requirements for practice training at Qualifying level (MSc). This includes levels of competency that courses must include in their construction of which live supervision is one element. Supervisees must participate in a live supervision group for 300 hours.

The Red Book (AFT, 2009) sets out the requirements for supervision courses which supervisors who offer live supervision must successfully complete. This includes four broad categories of activity ranging from the promotion of systemic theory and practice to personal and professional development and ethics.

## **2.8 Practice responsibilities**

Supervisors are expected to bring forth new possibilities for clinical action, expand practice, make clear and robust connections between the model taught and practice techniques, develop reflexive abilities that supervisees can incorporate into their

repertoire of skills, create a collaborative learning environment, take appropriate risks, monitor risks in clinical work and make decisions about competent practice. (AFT Red Book, 2009; Burnham, 2010) These abilities are encouraged and achieved through the use of different supervisory practices which are characterized by collaborative conversations (Chua, 2006; Anderson and Swim, 1995).

Tan (2006) comments upon his experience of observing live supervision in a London training institute, that some sessions were structured, others less so and supervisors needed to be able to respond to supervisees who often wanted “quick – fix” answers (Tan, 2006, p.220). He notes the complexity of the task and the flexibility of the supervisors as they embody a range of skills to bring out different abilities in the supervisees. He writes of the supervisory role as,

“how to encourage an individual’s style as opposed to creating “clones” ;  
how to pace each trainee’s learning; and what to do in pre-, mid – and post-session discussions” (Tan, 2006, p.220).

Other writers (Breunlin et al., 1988; Gilbert and Evans, 2000; Karamat Ali, 2011; Scaife, 1993; Wilson, 2011) emphasize the relational aspects within supervision between the supervisor and supervisee, the structure of supervision, the stage of training, and the orientation to therapy (theoretical orientation of the supervisor), life experiences, cultural heritage and personality style.

## **2.9 Educational theory and learning styles**

Several writers make distinctions between education, training and supervision (Anderson et al., 1995; Bertrando, 2008). Bertrando takes education to mean the imparting of knowledge from one to another, a first order position, and training as the development of skill acquisition which is self-actualized, a second order position. He recalls the original ideas of the Milan training quoting Boscolo:

“to learn to think systemically in order to act systemically.” (Bertrando, 2008, p.111).

The supervisor must incorporate both of these positions as well as considering supervisees’ learning styles.

Burnham (2005) makes links between supervisory practice and learning styles. He poses questions to better understand peoples’ preferred approaches to the world; doers or thinkers or feelers? In his view this will inform supervisory interventions and promote supervisees’ ability to develop their reflexive capacity. This could be usefully applied to supervisors as one way of understanding acts of coordination with students (Pearce 1989, 1994, 2007).

Kolb (1984) offers a model based on Socrates’ notion that the potential in people can be drawn forth. He posits that there are two ways of grasping the world. The first is abstract conceptualisation to practical action, which is a convergent style of learning, shown through practical application of ideas. The second is conceptualisation to reflective observation, a divergent style, characterized by reflective conversations to process information with a strong ability to empathize with others. It is worthy of note that this model makes no distinction between different learners in terms of gender, ethnicity, culture, class, beliefs about education and other distinctions that influence learning. Nevertheless with additional consideration of such distinctions, Kolb can be a useful framework for transforming practice.

## **2.10 Gendered discourses**

Boyd (2010) explores gendered language acquisition and relational capacity. She quotes from sociolinguistics as she writes that from age 3 girls change their speech style depending on whether they are talking to boys or other girls and by adolescence they are more likely withhold their own views in the face of more powerful voices. Boyd calls this

“voice entitlement” (Boyd, 2010, p.205) and links it with personal history of culture of which gender is a feature that affects participation and challenge in conversations.

Baron-Cohen (2003) picks up the theme supporting the view that females’ superior language abilities are associated with empathy and creating room for multiple perspectives. Males are more likely to be systematic and look for one version. Gilligan (1993) goes as far as to say that females may choose to remain quiet in conversation rather than risk comment that might adversely affect the relationship.

Turner and Fine (1997, 2002) talk about the inherent complexity between gender and power. The position of supervisor includes legitimate power which should be taken into account in supervision groups. They suggest that male supervisors have the most power by position and gender and female supervisees the least. They believe this is significant to create environments in which most learning and development can be achieved. All-female groups may find it easier to connect but ignore aspects of power. All-male groups may relate to male supervisors as father figure in an apprentice model. Male supervisors and female supervisees may have the opportunity to challenge some stereotypical views through their conversations but it is also possible that they might inadvertently reinforce them. Female supervisors and male supervisees could create opportunities to redress gender inequality.

Abela and Scerri (2010) explore gender in supervision citing a meta-analysis of 160 studies that explores gender and leadership in groups. They note that females use more participatory and democratic styles of communication rather than autocratic and directive styles which are more strongly associated with males. They report that all-female supervision groups are more likely to act like peers including the supervisor and male supervisors and male supervisees are more likely to socialize than female supervisees with male supervisors. This suggests that same gendered groups create different relationships than mixed gendered groups.

Aggett (2004) in his small scale research looked at gender and learning narratives in live supervision. His conclusions suggest that gender may influence individual learning narratives with men and women often following gendered discourses. Aggett notes that men can be linear in their approach and women may use issues of self and personal ideas as a frame for learning. He supports the notion of using adult learning approaches to develop responsive ways of creating learning environments to encourage practice and reflective capacities to create collaborative learning systems. This suggests that both rigour, flexibility and reflexivity should be incorporated into the supervisor's repertoire.

## **2.11 Stages of learning**

It is possible to make links between the stages of learning and learning styles using a stages model offered by a number of writers (Berger and Dammann, 1982; Breunlin et al., 1988; Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986; Friedman and Kaslow, 1986; Haber, 1997; Liddle et al., 1988; McCann, 2000).

Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) articulate stages that appear in most of the literature. They describe five stages of learning which apply to all participants in new contexts and can be informed by previous levels of professional experience. The stages begin with novice, which is skills by instruction. The second is advanced beginner which takes account of the context but still works by the rules. The third is competence where activity can still be rule bound but there is some discrimination about priority in action. The fourth stage of proficiency is deep involvement in the task and a know-how rather than know-that; and finally 'expert'. This style introduces the notion of intuition which is described as;

“intuition or know how, as we understand it, is neither wild guessing nor supernatural inspiration, but the sort of ability we use all the time as we go about our everyday tasks.” (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986, p. 29).

As supervisors and supervisees gain more confidence together they begin to show increasingly reflective and collaborative styles of interaction. This links with some specific ideas offered in relation to the live supervision context.

## **2.12 Supervisee perspective**

Many writers follow the theme of stages of learning and consider the effects on supervisees. Stage one of the process for the supervisee is characterized by anticipatory excitement which could be shown by high anxiety leading to dependency and over identification with the supervisor. Supervisees worry about criticism which is reflected in Nel's research in a training context in which he

describes confusion, discomfort, insecurity and de-skilling leading to reluctance to engage in conversation with the supervisor about interventions (Nel 2006).

Stage two also has features of over identification with the supervisor and is termed, “affirmation hunger” (Barnat, 1974, p.190 in Friedman and Kaslow, 1986). Schwartz (1988) considers supervisees to be more able to make sense of supervisory interventions but are still more likely to put their own ideas aside in favour of the supervisor. He coins the phrase, “robotization” (Schwartz, 1988, p. 183) in which the supervisees want to re-produce the practice style of the supervisor. In considering systemic training, Markovic Radovanovic (1993) concurs that supervisees enter and try to learn the rules underpinning systemic practice. During this phase, supervisees have the experience of being part of a team and according to Gershenson and Cohen (1978) begin to experience the effects of parallel process as an active ingredient in supervision.

Stage three includes the emergence of more confident practice with supervisees developing their own interventions and strategies with families. They also begin to make more direct links between theory and practice. Markovic Radovanovic (1993) sees this as challenging the notion that there are systemic rules through increased knowledge of systemic ideas including irreverence. As supervisees move into the third phase Gershenson and Cohen (1978) talk of more independent thinking and confident practice.

The fourth stage is described as exuberance with supervisees becoming confident in showing practices within the taught model thus becoming more experimental. They also begin to see and monitor the effects of their interventions on families and adjust practice in response. Markovic Radovanovic (1993) adds weight to this experimental practice suggesting that supervisees continue to pose questions that bring forth multiple perspectives, including reflexivity positing the idea that systemic practice cannot be rule bound.

The fifth stage is described as independence of thought in which supervisees' are willing to challenge the ideas set forth by the supervisor, offering their contribution as useful to the group. Markovic Radovanovic (1993) names this as developing the capacity to hold the tension of the co-existence of rules and collaboration.

The sixth stage according to Schwartz (1988) is calm and collegiate action in which supervisees' begin to act autonomously and prepare for independent practice. Markovic Radovanovic (1993) suggests supervisees use systemic rules to challenge and create meaning about rules. This connects with Fruggeri's (2013) relationship between supervision and epistemology. Nel (2006) adds that this stage sees supervisees seeing supervisors more as equals creating more confident practice.

### **2.13 Supervisor perspective**

Supervisory activity appears to follow the same broad stages as supervisees and responds to their needs creating reciprocal patterns. Stage one is characterized by the supervisor creating a secure environment which Liddle (1988) suggests is critical to supervisee's learning and should attend to the self-consciousness that supervisees may experience as they enter live supervision for the first time.

The second stage of supervisee dependency, leads to supervisors being more directive, using instructions and making frequent interventions usually via phone-in.

The third stage of supervisees growing in confidence leads to more supportive comments from supervisors and more time elapsing in sessions prior to intervening. There may be moments of clumsy practice but the supervisor begins to notice the abilities and is prepared to wait longer prior to intervening. Supervisors are more likely to pose questions that enquire into the supervisees' thinking and encourage practice that they identify as skilled or developing.

In the fourth stage the supervisee becomes significantly more accomplished and confident which leads to fewer in-session interventions and more use made of pre and post-session conversations. Supervisors are described as more confident in permitting supervisees to manage the session.

The fifth stage shows the supervisor engaging in more collaborative conversations as the supervisees take risks in challenging supervisors' ideas. The hierarchical nature of the relationship is shown as consensual (Hawes, 1992).

The sixth stage in which the supervisees are preparing for independent practice leads supervisors to sit back and appreciate the skills that are shown. This is characterized by very few interventions and a move towards supervisees managing the whole session, pre and post-sessions. Nel (2006) points out that supervisors should make use of the considerable professional knowledge supervisees bring with them which at some stages is underutilized as they embrace new ideas.

#### **2.14 Communication styles**

Some writers highlight communication styles of the supervisors as relevant to each stage of supervisee learning and development (Haber, 1997). In the early stages supervisors are inclined towards specific detailed instructions shown through directive interventions. As they become more confident in the supervisees abilities they use more enquiry and invite links between theory and practice. It is at this point that supervisors introduce reflexive conversations and consider the effect of the clients in the supervisees practice. This leads to reflection-in-action as described by Schön (1987).

#### **2.15 Time and evaluation**

Boscolo and Bertrando (1996) make an interesting distinction about time and training. They argue that the passage of time (the two year live training experience) might not be so important in helping supervisees develop their autonomous

practice, as they continue to act as if they should demonstrate skills that the supervisor wishes to observe. They link this with the evaluation aspect of training and argue that supervisees may wish to adopt the supervisors' style and preference to achieve good feedback. Boston (2010) describes the movement between performing competent practice and cooperating with the supervisor to show that they are good supervisees.

Chua (2006, who cites Schwartz, Liddle and Breunlin, 1998) talks of the preoccupation with the external evaluation of practice as she writes that supervisees can sometimes be occupied with the "MEGO syndrome" (Chua, 2006; p. 235; Schwartz, 1988; p.183). This might lead to tentativeness, insecurity and anxiety. It is often described as, "mine eyes glaze over" and is attributed to the futurologist Herman Kahn.

Daniel et al. (2010) include adult learning approaches as another context suggesting that learning could be eroded by the anxiety associated with the assessment context. They posit that assertive supervisory practices could be constructed as authoritarian, leading to misunderstanding. Liddle et al. (1988) support this view noting that the relationship between supervisors and supervisees is affected by the meaning attached to phone-in often associated with criticism or mistakes in practice. Later in the supervisory experience, it seems that the same action can be seen as creating therapeutic direction.

The assessment context may also influence supervisors as Carroll (1996) notes that although they have access to a wide range of supervisory ideas, they tend to use a fragment of them in live supervision that are familiar and consistent with their own preferences and model.

Other writers explore the development of supervision practices through time such as Wilson (1993) and Morgan and Sprenkle (2007) when they talk about the move towards

autonomous practice for the supervisees and an equivalent shift in the level of in-session intervening from the supervisor.

### **2.16 Power in live supervision**

Power is neglected in the stages models. Burck (2010) talks about the potentially negative construction of competition between supervisees and conflict with the supervisor. Far from being problematic she argues that this is an opportunity for supervisors to encourage more learning as supervisees push one another and to monitor and respond to the challenge of the emotional effects of difference by negotiating ways of talking about disagreement. Burck (2010) makes some suggestions for supervisors when they take different positions to their supervisees. She notes that this may have a disqualifying effect and thus encourages “de-centring,” (Burck, 2010, p.157) practices to appreciate the supervisor’s voice as one contribution, not the most important contribution. It is likely that this will be influenced by the stage of training and experience of the supervisees. Similarly, Daniel (2013) reports that supervisor feedback could feel oppressive due to the power imbalance. She notes Campbell’s ideas of polarized positions constructing the supervisee knowing very little and the supervisor knowing everything. She suggests that movement can be achieved through continuous recognition of the complexity of the relationship.

In two studies Roybak et al. (1986/87 in McHale and Carr 1998) found that male supervisors use power to influence supervisees whereas female supervisors use relational and collaborative postures and hold power more lightly.

Murphy and Wright (2005) in their research on supervisees’ perspectives on power in supervision make no gender distinctions. In their semi structured interviews with eleven supervisees in a training context, they note that supervisors are likely to use their power to promote an atmosphere of safety, to openly discuss power or to

impose their style or orientation. Supervisees on the other hand use peer power as one way of acting as consumers to invite supervisors to respond differently.

### **2.17 Co-construction in live supervision**

Sutherland et al. (2013) describes social constructionist supervision as dialogic and fluid which increases the potential for generative conversations. Knowledge is viewed as a joint endeavour with the supervisor making shifts to accommodate the development of supervisees. They hold the notion of competency informed practice as opposed to competency based practice which encourages more fluid postures for the supervisor.

Von Foerster (1994) makes some useful remarks about the process of mutual influencing. He posits the idea that the act of observing directly influences that which is observed. This shift captures the move from first order to second order cybernetics. This also paves the way for considering reciprocal and reflexive relationships, in this instance between the supervisor and supervisees.

Wilson (1993) and Morgan and Sprenkle (2007) highlight that at different stages of training, supervisees want different styles of supervision moving from more structure, direction and instruction in the early stages to less direction, more collaboration and autonomy in the later stages of training.

Ungar writes:

“I am never just the ‘supervisor,’ a single identity determined by my role, but instead I am co-constructed in multiple ways through interaction with the supervisees, depending on what the supervisee wants or needs.”  
(Ungar, 2006, p.59).

Atkins and McGovern (2012), graduates of IFT, talk about the early stages of their training and the fear that everything would go wrong in live supervision but found

that the skill of the supervisor and confidence in practice was reassuring. They highlight the initial dependence on the supervisor moving towards collaborative experiences as the group became more established.

Liddle, Davidson and Barrett (1988) in their research with 85 trainees' experience of live supervision suggest that the supervisees have very specific ideas about what they want from supervisors. They mention structure and coherence with the taught model but also highlight expertise and experience in the field. They include relational qualities viewed as enhancing supervision such as sense of humour, an ability to understand the struggles of the supervisees, using language to challenge that encourages change and not engender criticism and being mindful of the previous experience of the supervisees. This suggests open conversations between supervisors and supervisees.

Other writers caution against this idea of open feedback noting that the issue of unequal power is always present and influential which could be doubly challenging for female supervisees with a male supervisor (Caust et al., 1981; Garret and Dent, 1997; Murphy and Wright, 2005). In this instance supervisees may not feel able to offer open feedback for fear of adversely impacting their supervisory relationship.

What is consistent across the literature and limited available research is that supervisory approaches and practices are often determined by named theoretical orientations and techniques. Interventions and interruptions connected with live supervision training commonly have the client system in focus. The educational nature of the training context offers additional considerations based on the needs of the supervisees across the time of the training course.

## **2.18 Constructions of supervisory style**

### **2.18.1 Supervisory style and live supervision**

It seems clear that live supervision is co-constructed and the development of supervisor style is bidirectional shaped by both the orientation of the supervisor and feedback from supervisees. This constructs the supervisor as flexible and able to improvise using skills of knowing from within the live supervision activity. This speaks to the idea that style incorporates individual characteristics, embodied knowledge and relational qualities.

This is the crux of the description of style:

“Broadly, we can afford to sink those sorts of knowledge which continue to be true regardless of change in the environment, but we must maintain in an accessible place all those controls of behaviour which must be modified for every instance.” (Bateson, 1972, p.142).

### **2.18.2 Mutual influencing to fit as a supervisory style**

Even though there are familiar structures for live supervision sessions, Fruggeri (2013), Haber (1997) and Wilson (2011) explicitly invite consideration of the co-constructed reality which is made through the complex pattern of interactions.

Other writers articulate the importance of the quality of the supervisory relationship (Edwards and Miocevic,1999) using an attachment frame to suggest that the goal of the supervisor is to create a relationship that provides a safe container, with warmth, security and trust in order that supervisees can manage their anxieties and vulnerability.

Wilson (1993) and Mason (2013) concur with the significance of the supervisory relationship, moving from certainty and observed systems to the notion of “fit,” and observing systems. Wilson describes four dimensions that characterize the interactions between supervisor and supervisee. They are negotiating positions of openness and closedness, giving direction and being directed, knowing and not knowing and using humour as challenge and confirmation. He aspires to use more

personal experience to realign the boundaries and encourage supervisees and supervisors to see one another as people outside of the training context. He also connects this type of openness with risk taking in a safe environment. Mason (2005, 2013) expands this view through the concept and practice of relational risk taking, suggesting that supervisors should be more transparent in the way they include stories of self and their core beliefs. He sets the context for some useful distinctions arguing that the self of the therapist / supervisor can be seen as a direct expression of the self or indirect utilization of the self, either way this invites a fuller articulation and appreciation of the experiences that people bring into every relationship that could become a resource.

In line with social constructionist approaches, the supervisor must be able to make moment to moment decisions in live supervision sessions. Selicoff's (2004) small scale study of one training group in a Mexican context supports this idea. When looking for examples of mutual collaboration efforts between supervisors and supervisees, she notes decisions fluctuating depending on the context and changing needs of the case and the supervisees. She concludes that collaboration offers opportunities for further questions and doubts. Selicoff suggests that without the hierarchical structure, it is less likely that collaborative supervision is possible. She quotes Cantwell and Holmes (1995) when she writes that there are occasions when supervisors, "lead from one step behind" and there are other occasions when they must be "one step ahead." (Cantwell and Holmes cited in Selicoff, 2004, p. 48).

Chang and Gaete (2014) pick up the theme of the alliance between the supervisor and supervisee. They suggest that many writers fall short of the co-constructed aspects seeing participants in the relationship as separate people. They emphasize their view that careful consideration of the patterned interactional possibilities between people who come with personal and professional history carries more potential to create useful supervisory experiences.

### **2.18.3 Improvisation and knowing from within influencing supervisory style**

The notion of improvisation seems to be useful for the live supervision context. Schön (1987) like Bertrando (2008) offers the metaphor of the jazz musician who improvises and coordinates with others in an ongoing performance within a structure that elaborates emergent processes. There is an expectation that the supervisor will attend to the nuances of each movement and utterance in order to make decisions about how or whether to respond.

Gladwell (2005) talks about the adaptive unconscious which is the process by which decisions are made quickly with apparently very little information. He writes,

“the adaptive unconscious does an excellent job of sizing up the world, warning people of danger, setting goals, and initiating action in a sophisticated and efficient manner.” (Gladwell, 2005, p.12).

He believes that people call upon experience and rules that govern the situation which create an environment in which they can improvise or use intuition. He does not suggest that these are random actions but that people are managing to “thin slice” information to arrive at decisions quickly (Galdwell, 2005, p.23). He posits that by using experience and skill in noticing patterns, this provides cues to create useful and imaginative responses that are not always explained in language but appear to be embodied in the person. Gladwell calls this,

“the conditions for successful spontaneity” (Gladwell, 2005, p.117).

Although research evidence is scant Gladwell’s perspective builds on Andersen’s description of intuition (Andersen, 1991).

Hoffman (2007) uses the work of Shotter to consider the process of “embodied knowing,” which she takes to be illustrative of dialogic practices between people. Shotter (2010) describes the shift as moving away from the familiar patterns and structure which he calls “aboutness thinking,” to being continually concerned with the uniqueness of the moment in which one is currently involved and constantly emerging, which he calls “witness thinking.” (Shotter, 2010; p. vi). This shift requires an active relationship with reflexivity with oneself and others in a particular context. In such moments, supervisors must meet supervisees with openness and willingness to respond to the multiple positions and voices and adjust his / her practice and style to respond to that moment. This links with Burnham (2005) and his notion of relational reflexivity and Chang and Gaete (2014) and their notion of relationally responsive practice.

Wilson, 2012 offers a further description of style:

“Style is described as what you do with all of the knowledge you have available. It is the doing of the practitioner / supervisor, the manner pace and rhythm, tempo, language and relational skills as well and the practice skills.” (Wilson, 2012, personal communication).

In this quotation he echoes ideas set out by others about the somatic response between people situated within cultural contexts that shape knowledge (Andersen, 1987; 1995; Hoffman, 2007; Shotter, 2010). He also suggests that in creating the movement between people, it is possible to transcend familiar patterns which could be organised by familiar supervisory structures. Schön (1987) coined the phrase “knowing-in-action” which supports this kind of knowing that is shown in intelligent action which is visible but may not be put into language.

This embodied knowing and practice is reflected in Frosh (2013) writing about David Campbell. He describes his style as simultaneously both warm and cool. He describes this in action:

“his capacity to question and not to be thrown, his adoption of a certain mode of deliberate *slowness* that ensures that no rushing takes place, that time to consider is built into every response.” (Frosh, 2013, p.19).

Shotter (2010) reported in Wilson (2011) refers to this relational capacity as poised resourcefulness, a readiness informed by experience and the ability to improvise usefully without planning beforehand. Chang and Gaete (2014) talk of “anticipatory listening” which prepares people to re-engage with another.

#### **2.18.4 Knowing from within to coordinated actions: embodied and embedded supervisory style**

Andersen (1987, 1995) considers the principles of the reflecting team as a dynamic form of interaction that takes into consideration the whole system and style of interaction, including speech and bodily expressions.

Shotter (2010) usefully moves us towards knowing from within (a context or activity) to knowledge of the third kind which he describes as joint knowledge held between people. Wilson (2007) elaborates the intangible elements of this insider knowledge by suggesting that we notice a range of things in every moment that includes images, associations from previous encounters and somatic responses and the notion that we sense what is important. He posits that spontaneity is always in relationship with thinking and is moved into relational action.

This is shown through coordinated actions within a social situation. Such joint action moves beyond the possibilities of individual discrete and universal action to relational engagement. This seems very relevant for the supervisors as they attend to the different requirements of each supervisee.

Burnham (2005) and Pearce (1989, 1994, 2007) argue that coordination forms one of the central ideas in considering the ongoing emergent nature of interaction. Pearce (2007) suggests that coordination should not be thought of as a concept that tries to make sense of the stable social world as he takes the view that social worlds are not stable but constantly in the process of becoming something else. Coordination attends to the joint process between people and the ways in which they try to collaborate to make something that is “noble and good” (Pearce, 1989, p. 32). Therefore, he invites us to:

“Look at the way people put their actions together.....coordinated behaviour says....look here, look here.” (Pearce, 2007, p.81).

Gergen (2012) expands this notion of coordination as enactment of sets of beliefs with others in interaction. He argues that the “who I am depends on the who I am with” (Gergen, 2012, personal communication).

Chang and Gaete (2014) concur with this theme and posit the idea that people create internalized versions of others through their interactions that contribute to the construction of identity thus shaping responses made to others from the internal construction of them.

Burnham (2005) suggests that supervisors and supervisees should coordinate resources in order to avoid the possibility of passing each other by. He invites supervisors to inquire into what coordinated resources supervisees would find useful by posing questions such as:

“How do you want me to participate in this conversation?”

“What kind of listener would you like me to be today?.....so far I have waited until you have finished what you have had to say before I say something. I wondered if I might ask some questions to make sure I am

understanding you in the way that you want me to.” (Burnham, 2005, p.13).

In this way he actively brings into visibility the co-construction between supervisor and supervisee which shapes the style and activity of the supervisor. Sprenkle and Wilkie (1996) talk about supervisors’ developing idiosyncratic practices to respond to the differing needs of the supervisees.

### **2.18.5 The social GRRRAACCEESSS as a context for supervisory style (SG) (Burnham, 2012)**

This stands for gender, geography, race, religion, age, ability, appearance, class, culture, ethnicity, education, employment, sexuality, sexual orientation and spirituality. Burnham (2012) talks about visible-voiced, visible-unvoiced, invisible-voiced and invisible-unvoiced in relation to each of the SG’s above. In the supervision group there are several visible and voiced SG’s such as gender, age, race and culture as well as invisible and voiced, sexuality and class. The construction of the supervision groups provides a rich context to explore the potential influence of the SG’s. This is an established practice concept which is becoming more significant in supervision literature (Totsuka, 2014).

### **2.18.6 Gender and supervisory style**

Related research on gender is included earlier in the study due to the dual focus of gender and phone-in interventions. This section expands gender narratives in therapy and supervision.

Several writers explore gender and therapy (Brannen and Collard, 1982). Gerhart et al. (2001) completed an ethnographic study to determine clients’ experiences of gender in the therapeutic relationship. They suggest that male clients are less satisfied with non-directive approaches in therapy and prefer goal setting and

advice giving. Females prefer less directional therapy and enjoy building relationships with the therapist.

Although this is clearly not the supervisory context, the differences between male and female responses to different styles of therapy could have relevance in live supervision where supervisors and supervisees are likely to utilise their preferred theoretical orientation and gendered positions.

Tannen (1990) observes that men often relate to one another through competition whereas women are more concerned with emotional connectedness. This position is challenged by Carr and McHale (1998) who conclude that female supervisors are more likely to use directive styles, make more interventions than their male colleagues and offer opinions more readily, regardless of the gender of the supervisees. They note that that female supervisees are likely to be more interactive and interrupt the supervisor more than male supervisees. As noted earlier in the study, McHale and Carr question whether the sample reflects gendered positions or is skewed by the training context which is likely to attract confident people prepared to question and articulate their views.

Kaiser (1997) argues that each supervisee might have different responses to the same supervisor as a consequence of their gendered position and the gender of the supervisor. Such experiences of gender may get played out and influence the supervisory relationship, making it even more important for the supervisor to be mindful of the impact of gender and preferred style.

Turner and Fine (1997, 2002) note that female supervisors with all-female groups expect fewer challenges, find it easier to disclose personal information and consider gender as a connecting factor. This may lead to struggles when female supervisees challenge. With male supervisors and male supervisees the overarching relationship seems to be mentoring or apprenticeship, although there may be an

element of competition as male supervisees try to assert their autonomy. Male supervisors with female supervisees often highlight female voices in order to redress the traditional balance of power between genders. Turner and Fine (1997, 2002) suggest that this is an error as female supervisees may in fact experience this as confirmation of the gendered positions of power. Female supervisors and male supervisees create a different challenge as it is argued that females are attracted to empathy and mutual empowerment which could inadvertently create alliances with female supervisees and thus marginalize male supervisees.

### **2.18.7 Race, ethnicity and supervisory style**

Karamat Ali (2001) writes about the neglected aspects of race in supervision. Hardy and Laszloffy's (1995) cultural genogram is commonly used in supervision training to alert supervisors to their own culture whilst being interested in others' experiences. Pendry (2013) links race and racism in systemic supervision to political acts and the perpetuation of dominant discourses in professional relationships. Burnham and Harris (2002) talk about the particular effects of culture, class and gender within the supervisory relationship linked with power invested in the position of the supervisor that demands supervisors' create opportunities for marginalized voices to be heard. They suggest that a supervisor should develop the capacity to hold on to her / his view and at the same time support the group in discussion about the issue. They name this as moving from "withholding" to with-holding." (Burnham and Harris, 2002, p.10). Totsuka (2014) uses Burnham's social GGRRAAACCEEESSS (2012) to create reflexive exercises in supervision training to promote thinking and action in relation to social difference.

Coleman (1999) issues an invitation to supervisors to become more aware of their own cultural being. He offers an example as a black male supervisor in which he states that he works hard to avoid the practice of protecting supervisees of African

descent that might hide conversations that are essential for developing practice. Coleman accounts for this through his position as a black supervisor in a predominantly white profession and goes on to say that he must be mindful of his internalized racism leading to over criticism of black supervisees rather than observing and commenting on the quality of their practice. He makes the relational aspect of this clear through his observation that he may offer less feedback to black supervisees as he internalizes the view of expecting less of them which then creates a context for less development.

Burck (2010) discusses the effects of difference in supervision groups and touches on issues of 'race' and culture. She concludes that training courses must find ways of opening up conversations about culture to include wider discourses that potentially disqualify views and to find ways of respectfully challenging across difference. Bond (2010) in her experience as a black female supervisor with an all-black group suggests that it is possible that practices reflect institutional racism and have a marginalising effect. More open discussions can facilitate better interpersonal relationships.

Ayo (2010) provides evidence from a small scale study of six supervisors and supervisees that conversations about culture frequently had a client focus rather than the supervisory relationship. She suggests that such aspects of the relationship were very subtle and that more should be done to create safe enough environment to open up differences.

This seems to be a growing area of work that has much to contribute to developments in supervision practices.

## **2.19 Supervisory style as a researchable topic**

Style is taken to mean any consistent distinguishing characteristic approach, mode of action or distinctive manner that influences the supervisory process.

These could include:

### **2.19.1 Taken for granted style (structure)**

This is the familiar structure and standard practice associated with live supervision such as the Milan five stage model. It might be the case that supervisors and supervisees do not question this structure but may participate in imaginative and creative practices and approaches within it.

### **2.19.2 Consistent supervisory style (distinguishing / characteristic features)**

This refers to the stated preferences in supervisory orientation that shapes practice regardless of context. This could be theory based or relationally based.

### **2.19.3 Relationally responsive style**

This refers to the responses supervisors make to the needs of supervisees. This includes decisions to intervene or interrupt therapy sessions and the method of interruption. This could link to perceptions of learning needs (training context), needs of the clients, risk assessment and responsibilities in the supervisory role or other factors. This may show some flexibility or capacity to improvise in responding to supervisees.

### **2.19.4 Communication style**

This is concerned with the type of language supervisors' use when they make interventions, either during sessions, in pre and post-session which may connect with the purpose of the intervention. This incorporates any feedback during live supervision which could also be a response to the learning context and stage of training of the supervisees.

### **2.19.5 Supervisees' contribution to supervisory style (co-constructed view)**

This focuses on the stories that supervisees tell of their supervisors and their views of the groups' contribution to the supervisors approach and activity which is likely to be overlaid with their experience as supervisees in a training context. This relationship might be complicated with assessment and issues of power in various forms.

Each of the different elements of supervisory style has the potential to be influenced through the recursive links between supervisor and supervisees in live supervision, thus co-constructed.

## **2.20 Gaps in the literature**

The overwhelming themes that emerge from the literature are concerned with stages of training and experience, the emergence of confidence and ability to move towards autonomous practice (mostly in relation to supervisees). There is a wealth of descriptive literature on supervision structures and the complexity of the position of supervisor, much of which is written from supervisory experience but there is less large scale research of live supervision. Much of the research is located in small training environments studying the effects of live supervision on supervisees and clients not the supervisor.

Other gaps relate to the inclusion of the Social GRRRAACCEEESSS (Burnham, 2012) as a central defining feature of the relationship between the supervisor and supervisees. Most articles that include differences relate to gender. Writing on culture and race is growing and this could be an area for further research.

Such gaps in the literature could be enhanced by the current study. This could have implications for supervision training courses as well as contributing to the decisions to partner supervisors and supervisees for live supervision.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

This section builds on the introduction which outlines the context and rationale for the study. The research question is offered with additional themes derived from existing literature and personal experience of live supervision. An overview of methodological approaches relevant to such a study follows with a rationale for the final choice. The chapter concludes with a detailed description of the methods of data collection and approach to analysis.

#### **3.1 The research question**

##### **What contributes to the development of supervisory style in the context of live supervision in a training institute?**

For the purposes of the study style is defined thus, “mode of expression,” “characteristic mode of presentation.” (Patterson and Dougall, 1935) and any distinguishing features that shape supervision.

In framing this question, there is a danger of falling into the trap of creating a list of ideas and practices that lead to the development of supervisory style, a unidirectional view rather than a bidirectional co-construction. In order to avoid this potential pitfall I expand the question and aim to include the notion of mutual influencing processes between supervisors and supervisees. This does not neglect the possibility that supervisors may have some consistent approaches influenced by training, theoretical preference and previous experience but it incorporates the notion that the development of supervisory style can be constructed through relationships with others in context.

**To understand the process of mutual influence between supervisor and supervisees as well as other factors that contribute to the emergence of supervisory style.**

### **3.2 Research methodology**

#### **3.2.1 Qualitative methods**

The conditions under which qualitative research methods may be more appropriate than quantitative methods have been widely discussed (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Emerson and Frosh, 2004, 2009; Riessman, 1993, 2008; Smith 2003; Smith et al. 2009; Harper and Thompson, 2012). Quantitative methods reduce data to numbers, such as frequency of an event or the size of association between variables which are analysed using statistical methods. Qualitative approaches take an idiographic perspective that takes into account the effect of social environments, cultural history and other descriptive factors on behaviour, feelings and experience. This requires the researcher to remain interested in meaning and process. The research design should maintain a posture of curiosity and openness that welcomes the inclusion of feedback to rework ideas. There must be transparency in the research construction including any insider knowledge and critical reflection on the research position. The researcher must sustain the ability to be both simultaneously enquiring and analysing during data gathering.

This study uses interviews and observation to understand the experience, meaning, complex interactions and processes of supervisors and supervisees who participate together in live supervision rather than gathering data about the incidents, frequency or statistical significance of events. The principles of qualitative methods apply. A brief review of three approaches appropriate for consideration follows. These are grounded theory, interpretive phenomenological analysis and

thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is accorded additional attention as the preferred method.

### **3.2.2 Ethnography**

This sits within the range of observational methods and provides a framework for immersing oneself in the area under study producing detailed reflections and observations which can be unstructured and open ended (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Aull Davies, 2008; Dallos and Vetere, 2005). Dallos and Vetere (2005, p.163) introduce the notion of “interpretive observation” which incorporates an interpretive aspect using the researcher’s experience in the field of study which emerges in the analysis, another way of responding to the challenge of research reflexivity.

In the construction of the study I considered entering one supervision group over the two year period to understand the activity from an insider position. This remains an attractive idea although I refined this to one single observation to contribute to the development of interview schedules to use with four supervisors and groups in the first years and two further groups in the second year.

In some ways my decision was influenced by my position in the organisation. As participant observer I would need to create a role for my presence that could be incorporated into the live supervision group. I was not convinced that as Director I could achieve this without significantly influencing the activity of the supervisor and perhaps increasing pressure on the supervisees who were already in an assessment situation.

I also concluded that one ethnographic study might limit the research to one single narrative in relation to one group and for the purposes of expanding the available accounts of live supervision to make a contribution to the field it seemed important to include a wider sample. By choosing to use flexible interview schedules with the benefit of one observation and preliminary interviews, this created a rich approach to the subsequent interviews. There are of course limitations to interviews which are reported accounts but on balance this appeared a more attractive option to secure a range of accounts of live supervision.

### **3.2.3 Grounded theory (GT)**

Glaser and Strauss (1967) introduced grounded theory as a response to the positivistic quantitative methods of the time to permit the emergence of new theory from data as opposed to the traditional deductive methods of hypotheses testing from existing knowledge. It is an inductive method which promotes a flexible research question. It is similar to phenomenological methods in using a range of data collection practices including interviews, observations and focus groups. Once data is available GT offers freedom to interrogate the data using open codes line-by-line to develop descriptive labels. Tentative links are made between codes before returning to the research field to collect more data. Data collection and analysis occur simultaneously which enables the researcher to alter direction depending on codes emerging from data. Glaser and Strauss (1967) argue that codes should not be predetermined but remain open and only noted when emerging from data. Once codes are generated they can be arranged in hierarchical fashion using coding paradigms that create “core” and “periphery” codes. (Willig, 2008, 2009). This creates a pyramid with broader codes creating the foundation leading to fewer core categories towards the top (Harper and Thompson, 2012). It is

essential to return to the data frequently until reaching saturation point in identifying codes.

The decision to discount Gt for the current study is based on two aspects of the theory. The first is the delay in reviewing existing literature in the field of study in order to resist the temptation to use deductive approaches during data analysis. The field of study is familiar to me in terms of literature and practice suggesting that it would be difficult to take a neutral position to the data.

Secondly, using only inductive methods limits the inclusion of reflexivity from the researcher's perspective. Current writers are addressing this through consideration of the position of the researcher and the construction of codes but it is not yet clear how this can be included without resorting to wider frames of reference such as discourses that influence the field of study.

### **3.2.4 Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)**

Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) highlights the primacy of language and the idea that a person is located within and influenced by the context in which they act. (Moustakas 1994, Creswell 1998 and Smith 2003). There is an emphasis on the meaning that people make of their world from inside the activity under study. It uses flexible interview schedules to obtain data. The data is analysed through a formal process of reading and re-reading to engage with the transcript to create meanings. They are then clustered together to create influential themes, some of which will be subordinate and some super-ordinate. One premise of IPA is that the research participants will have a stable story and that the researcher uses an idiographic approach to get as near to these accounts as possible by including his or her own interpretive ability in accessing the account. This method treats each research participant as an individual case with unique views about their own situation in context. IPA would bring forth multiple stories from within the

supervision context but these might remain at the level of description unlike other phenomenological methods such as narrative analysis built on the epistemological assumption of hermeneutics privileging the interpretive approach to the world characterised by Heidegger and Gadamer (Murray & Sargeant 2012).

### **3.2.5 Thematic analysis (TA)**

Thematic analysis is located in narrative approaches. Murray and Sargeant (2012) trace the development of such approaches to 1986 and the work of both Mishler and Sarbin who began to articulate the notion of narratives as a site of interest and as part of the human repertoire. Mishler notes that descriptions of self were artificialized through the traditional interview structure, bringing into focus the construction of self through previous experience, highlighting the potential for those current accounts to embed future aspirations. This links to social constructionist notions of meaning created in context between people. In later texts Sarbin (1999 cited in Murray 2003) claims that narrative accounts have ontological status that is a way of being in the world and constructing the world.

Mishler (1994 cited in Emerson & Frosh 2009) describes the interview, which is commonly used to generate data, as a site where stories are not found but made. They note that the use of linguistic tools of analysis are not neutral and that the researcher contributes to the story made.

TA has recently been described as a narrative method in its own right (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006). Its origins lie in content analysis which identifies categories in data and the number of times categories appear. The absence of meaning led to new developments in TA attending to and incorporating tacit meanings that emerge from themes. Narratives are kept intact, coded and categorized to provide themes in relation to participants' experience. From this stance Riessman (2008) suggests an adaptation of Mishler's distinction: she

concentrates on the told story from the participants rather than the aspects of the telling.

Joffe suggests that TA is useful when researching a social phenomenon that focuses on the content of participants' thoughts and feelings within the context of the study. She describes this as compatible with "weak constructionism" (Joffe, p. 211). This is the notion that the participants socially construct their story around an issue although the issues themselves have material basis. In this study the site of interest is the stories created in relation to live supervision but the reality of live supervision is given.

Writers concur that themes and patterns must be observable and identifiable pieces of content, patterns of meaning or latent content that might be alluded to through references in the text but not made explicit. Coding of themes must be rigorous to include clear rationale for inclusion or exclusion as this method can be highly subjective (Aronson, 1994; Guest and MacQueen, 2012; Joffe and Yardley, 2004).

TA invites the researcher to indicate whether a theme originates from the text and the raw data which is inductive or from literature or other sources which is deductive. By incorporating both approaches it is possible to come to each text with previous knowledge as well as maintaining an open mind to new ideas emerging from the texts. Joffe (2012) makes an argument for inclusive methods noting an inductive and deductive approach and manifest and latent themes create the potential for high quality qualitative work.

Aronson (1994), Guest and MacQueen (2012), Joffe and Yardley (2004) provide a useful step by step guide to TA practice which is utilized in the study and will be shown in more detail in the method section.

TA incorporates flexible data collection methods. This research incorporates individual interviews, group interviews and observation. TA provides a template for analysis through coding.

Each interview is transcribed and coded / themed to note content and meaning to develop a systematic understanding of each text. Identification of themes must be transparent and usually include quotations and paraphrasing from the text. Themes are constituted either through the told story or latent meanings inferred through the text. They often include topics of conversation, recurring ideas, meanings or phrases. These can be both created directly from the data and influenced by literature. Each theme should be named to create distinctions and connections between themes. From the individual texts can be drawn a comprehensive picture that describes joint experience across all texts. Dey (1999) describes this process as splicing and linking. Splicing joins codes / themes that create a bigger category thus identifying the more dominant narratives, which are named as 'common' and those that are less apparent as 'rare.' Linking makes connection and distinctions within and between transcripts.

In considering the challenge of reliability, Dey (1999) suggests that coding could be repeated with each text after a time lapse to note any changes in understanding. Aronson (1994) posits a different approach by returning the transcripts to the participants for comment or alternatively seeking an independent perspective from outside of the study.

Thematic analysis is the most appropriate method for the following reasons. Literature can be used to create a deductive approach to the data and contribute to research rigour. Data collection methods are flexible and analysis promotes a systematic approach to make sense of the content of the narratives as the primary site of interest. This provides an inductive approach to complement and enhance the deductive methods. Observable and tacit / latent meanings are encouraged

through interpretation of the data by the researcher. This permits the active inclusion of self reflexivity from the researcher as someone with insider knowledge. To respond to research rigour transcripts are often returned to participants for commentary. Original transcripts of the interviews and the analysed findings were returned to the participants.

### **3.3 Method**

#### **3.3.1 Research design**

In this section I set out the context of the study, ethical considerations and describe the process of participant selection. I use four tables to show participants and the pattern of data collection over time. Each table is followed by a narrative to demonstrate my research process prior to the next stage of data collection which attends to issues of validity /reliability, generalizability and reflexivity.

#### **3.3.2 The context**

As director of IFT I have access to live supervision groups, part of the two year MSc in Family and Systemic Psychotherapy. This position affords easy access to groups in an environment where students and staff are sympathetic to research.

For supervisees the supervision group is the single most time consuming part of the qualifying level course. This experience is significant in their development and forms a central part of the training process so any new information about this context could have implications for future groups.

For supervisors, this is the most complex and demanding element of the training due to the multiple layers of responsibility including clinical accountability for the

service to families, education and learning to the supervisees and demonstration of theory in action through their interventions.

At the time of completing the research proposal I was embarking upon re-writing the supervision training and working with others at IFT on developing continuous professional events for supervisors and so hoped that any findings may also shape IFT's support and education in the supervisory context.

There are seven groups at IFT, six of which are paired into two's and meet on the same evening. The purpose of such pairing is to swap groups with their paired supervisor following completion of the first year of the MSc course. The rationale for this is to introduce potential difference to supervisees for their final year and prepare them for independent practice where they may encounter a range of supervisory experiences.

### **3.3.3 Dual relationship: ethical considerations and informed consent**

As Director of the Institute of Family Therapy I have overall responsibility for the quality of the courses and it is conceivable that my engagement in research around live supervision could be viewed as a covert way of checking quality.

Although it is customary to anonymize all research participants, this is a challenge for this study in a small local training environment. Pseudonyms have been used throughout but it is unlikely that this is sufficient to create anonymity.

In order to manage this complexity and reassure potential participants that my primary position is that of researcher, all contact with supervisees and supervisors was conducted through the Director of the MSc in Family and Systemic Psychotherapy with the proviso that anyone could freely decline to participate without any explanation. (Appendix 1).

For those who agreed to participate an information sheet was provided and a follow up letter including consent form (Appendix 2, 3, 4 and 5). The Director of the MSc acted as gate-keeper to participants. All participants retained the right to withdraw without explanation or consequence. This was repeated at every stage of the research including at the beginning of the recorded interviews. No information from the interviews or observation was used for any other purpose than research. All participants had the opportunity to comment on the transcriptions of the raw data via e-mail.

### **3.3.4 Selection**

All supervisors must be UKCP registered systemic psychotherapists and have completed a systemic supervision course. Apart from the supervisor in the preliminary interview who was taking a break from live supervision, all supervisors in the study were currently offering live supervision groups as part of the two year MSc. in Family and Systemic Psychotherapy.

All supervisees in the study were currently undertaking their MSc. Family and Systemic Psychotherapy at IFT. They were all part of supervision groups offered by participating supervisors. The exception was the preliminary study in which a recently graduated student agreed to be interviewed about her experience of live supervision.

I anticipated that I would have access to supervisors and supervisees of different gender, ethnicity, culture, professional backgrounds and other potentially influential features due to the diversity in the supervision groups and I did not wish to limit participation by including such criteria.

**Table 1: Supervisor participants.**

| <b>Name</b>   | <b>Age</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Ethnicity</b>    | <b>Professional background</b>   | <b>Preferred Orientation</b>   |
|---|------------|---------------|---------------------|--|--|
| Neil<br>(individual interview)                              | 40's       | Male          | Black Asian UK      | Social work, Tier 4 service family court work. Teaching workshops and supervision for IFT.                 | Systemic social constructionist  |
| Jane supervisor to Group 1                                  | 60's       | Female        | White UK            | Social work, CAMHS, Director for MSc. Course, supervision for IFT  | Structural preferences, adjusted to social constructionist for supervision |
| Mark supervisor to Group 2 (yr. 1) and Group 3 (yr. 2)      | 50's       | Male          | Black Zimbabwean    | Nursing. Tier 4 CAMHS. Teaching supervision course and live supervision for IFT.                           | Attachment theory  |
| Christopher supervisor to Group 3                           | 50's       | Male          | White Irish (South) | Speech and language therapy. Community adult mental health service. Teaching and live supervision for IFT. | Milan systemic.  |
| Elizabeth supervisor to Group 4 (yr. 1) and Group 5 (yr. 2) | 50's       | Female        | White UK            | Social work. CAMHS. Eating disorders unit. Live supervision for IFT  | Social constructionist.  |

**Table 2:       Supervisee participants**

| <b>Group</b>   | <b>Supervisor</b>                   | <b>Age range</b> | <b>Gender</b>        | <b>Ethnicity</b>  | <b>Professional background</b>                         |
|--|-------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|---|--|
| Christine, individual supervisee preliminary interview | Not known                           | 30's             | Female               | White supervisee UK.  | Social worker  |
| Group 1  | Jane                                | 30's to 50's     | 4 Females            | All white supervisees UK.   | 1 teacher<br>1 psychologist<br>1 counsellor<br>1 nurse |
| Group 2  | Mark                                | 30's to 50's     | 3 Females<br>1 Male  | 2 Black supervisees<br>2 white supervisees UK                                       | 3 social workers<br>1 nurse                            |
| Group 3  | Christopher year 1 and Mark year 2. | 30's to 50's     | 3 Females<br>1 Male  | 2 Black supervisees<br>2 White supervisees of different European heritage.          | 4 social workers                                       |
| Group 4  | Elizabeth                           | 30's to 50's     | 2 Females<br>2 Males | 1 Black Caribbean supervisee<br>1 Asian origin supervisee<br>2 white supervisees UK | 2 nurses<br>1 social worker<br>1 counsellor            |
| Group 5  | Elizabeth                           | 30's to 50's     | 3 Females<br>1 Male  | 4 white supervisees of different European heritage                                  | 2 nurses<br>2 social workers                           |

The potential sample was seven supervisors and groups.

### **3.3.5 Process of participation (tables 1-4 interviews and observation process)**

### **3.3.6 Preliminary interviews / reported historical account**

I approached Neil who had recently completed his tenure as live supervisor and for whom I had been mentor during his training. He had experience and inside knowledge of live supervision at IFT.

I approached a number of students who had recently graduated from IFT who were embarking upon their supervision training and could speak of their experience of live supervision. Christine came forward.

### **3.3.7 Main study / live current accounts over time**

In order to research the mutual influencing process between supervisor and supervisees I decided to secure supervisor participation first. I did this through the Director of the MSc as gate-keeper with an information sheet and invitation to participate. Four supervisors came forward. At this point I used the same method to access their supervision groups. All four groups consented. I was keen to include pairs of groups so that I could continue the research into the second year of the MSc and learn more about the effect of time and supervisee influence on supervisors' practice new groups. Fortunately one pair came forward and there was the possibility that the second pair may be available.

### **3.3.8 Observation / live supervision session (Jane, Group 1)**

As part of the research process I wanted to strengthen the development of a semi structured interview through preliminary interviews and live observation of one supervision group. One of the groups who participated in the study consented to the observation.

### **3.3.9 Data collection over time**

I followed the observation in the first year of the MSc. with a series of four individual interviews with the supervisor and group interviews with their four supervisory groups. Two final group interviews were conducted in the second year of the MSc. with two supervision groups whose supervisor had participated in the first round of interviews. I transcribed all of the interviews apart from the final two groups in 2014. In this instance I watched the recorded DVD several times to draw out themes that supported or challenged themes from previous data collection and analysis.

The following tables contain information about participants, the timing and form of data collection over the length of the study from 2012 to 2014. A narrative accompanies each table.

Table 3 shows the orienting data collection phase in 2012 with two preliminary interviews. These interviews supplied accounts of live supervision that led to the focus for the observation.

Table 4 shows the process of observation intended to sharpen the development of the semi-structured interview schedules for both supervisors and supervisees.

Table 5 shows the first round of interviews in 2013 using the constructed semi-structured interview schedules.

Table 6 shows the second round of interviews in 2014 following the change in supervisors across groups to explore the influence of time.

**Table 3: 2012 Orienting data collection**

| <b>Date</b>  | <b>Participant/s (anonymised)</b> | <b>Data collection method</b>               | <b>Purpose of data collection</b>   | <b>Additional information about participant/s</b>  |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|--|
| July 2012    | Supervisee<br>Christine           | Individual interview transcribed            | To hear from supervisee perspective in relation to live supervision and supervisory style as guide to developing a semi-structured interview schedule | White female. Completed the IFT supervision course and experienced live supervision. Trained as a systemic supervisor. |
| October 2012 | Supervisor<br>Neil                | Individual interview/ contemporaneous notes | To hear from supervisor perspective about personal style and responses to supervisees to construct a semi-structured interview schedule               | Black male. Completed both IFT MSc and Supervision training. Experience of offering live supervision at IFT            |

### **3.3.10 Preliminary interviews to observation.**

The themes emerging from the two interviews with supervisee Christine and supervisor Neil (details of which are included in the findings section) led me to approach the observation with the following questions in mind.

### **3.3.11 Supervisor position / action**

1. What do supervisors do? (action in pre-session, in-session and post-session)
2. What critical moments lead to supervisory action? (Co-ordination, content of the case, clinical development, habit such as always intervening after certain time, stage of the training).
3. What critical moments lead to no action? (Co-ordination, confidence in supervisee, stage of the training, covert attempt to control the session?)
4. How do supervisors do it? (Interpersonal approach, tone of voice, type of comment, directive, instructive, curious questioning).
5. What accounts, relational or other, do supervisors give for their actions and how does this fit with the stories they have of their supervisory identity? (Consistent, fixed, improvisational, responsive).
6. In what way, if any, does their own sense of personhood contribute to their supervisory action and approach? (Power in context, belief systems).
7. What effects do their interventions have on supervisees? (Intended, unintended, relational perspective, opens up conversation, closes down conversation).

### **3.3.12 Supervisee position / action**

1. What do the supervisees see their supervisors do? (Descriptions of action, interventions).
2. How do they make sense of the moment of interventions? (Co-ordination, reflexivity).
3. In what way do the supervisees imagine they contribute to or shape the way their supervisor acts / responds in the live supervised context? (Mutual influencing process).
4. How is their contribution influenced by their own personhood and that of the supervisor? (Belief systems, power training positions).

**Table 4: 2012 Observation**

|               |                     |   |   |  |
|---------------|---------------------|---|---|--|
| November 2012 | Supervision Group 1 | Observation of one live supervision group across one evening and two families. Observation from behind the screen. Contemporaneous notes. | To hone ideas about supervisory practice activity in live supervision and note any examples of co-construction with supervisees | White female supervisor with all female Group 1. |
|---------------|---------------------|---|---|--|

I utilized the contemporaneous notes of the observation to construct the semi-structured interview schedule for use with supervisors in an individual interview and supervisees as a group interview. (Appendix 6 and 7). The findings of the observation appear later in the study.

**Table 5: 2013 First round of interviews**

| <b>Date</b>   | <b>Participants (anonymised for confidentiality)</b> | <b>Data collection method</b>                 | <b>Purpose of data collection</b>  | <b>Additional information about participants</b>                                     |
|---------------|--|---|--|--|
| February 2013 | Supervisor Jane (Group1)                             | Individual interview recorded and transcribed | Throughout these interviews the purpose was to encourage a variety of narratives in relation to live supervision including mutual influencing processes. | White female. Professions of social work, systemic therapy, teaching and supervision |
| April 2013    | Supervisee Group 1 ( Jane supervisor)                | Group interview recorded and transcribed      | Draw out themes that relate to their experience of live  | All White female group. Teaching, nursing, counselling                               |

|                |   |   |             |   |
|----------------|---|---|-------------|---|
|                |   |   | supervision | and psychology backgrounds  |
| April 2013     | Supervisor Mark (Group 2)                   | Individual interview recorded and transcribed | As Jane     | Black male supervisor. Professions of nursing, systemic therapy and supervision.                                |
| May 2013       | Supervisee Group 2 (Mark supervisor)        | Group interview, recorded and transcribed     | As Group 1  | 2 Black and 2 White supervisees. 3 female and 1 male. Nursing, and social work backgrounds                      |
| May 2013       | Supervisor Christopher (Group 3)            | Individual interview recorded and transcribed | As Jane     | White male. Health service, speech therapy background. Systemic therapy and supervision.                        |
| June 2013      | Supervisee Group 3 (Christopher supervisor) | Group interview recoded and transcribed       | As Group 1  | 2 Black and 2 White supervisees. 3 female and 1 male. Social work backgrounds.                                  |
| July 2013      | Supervisor Elizabeth (Group 4)              | Individual interview recorded and transcribed | As Jane     | White female. Social work background, systemic therapy and supervision.   |
| September 2013 | Supervisee Group 4 (Elizabeth supervisor)   | Group interview                               | As Group 1  | 1 Black, 1 Asian and 2 White supervisees. 2 female and 2 male. Nursing, social work and counselling backgrounds |

In order to research the effect of time, which is noted in the literature as potentially important, I returned to the groups to complete a second wave of interviews. My

intention was to interview two groups that had swapped supervisors. I made the assumption that supervisors' characteristic approach would remain consistent, although interventions may change due to increased ability and confidence in the supervisee groups or indeed anxiety about a failing supervisee.

It was not possible to secure my preferred sample, due to two supervisors not continuing with groups into the second year. I decided to return to the original sample and interview one group that had changed supervisors and part of the original data collection. In order to secure a second group and supervisor I decided to approach a new group who had changed to a supervisor who was part of the previous data collection. The common factor in this part of the process was the supervisors had both taken part in the study.

**Table 6: 2014 Second round of interviews**

| <b>Date</b> | <b>Participants (anonymised for confidentiality)</b> | <b>Data collection method</b>                    | <b>Purpose of data collection</b>   | <b>Additional information about participants</b>  |
|-------------|--|--|---|---|
| March 2014  | Supervisee Group 3 (now – Mark as supervisor)        | Group interview recorded and reviewed for themes | To strengthen / challenge themes emerging from first round including effect of time | 2 Black and 2 White supervisees. 3 female and 1 male. Social work backgrounds                                     |
| April 2014  | Supervisee Group 5 (now – Elizabeth as supervisor)   | Group interview recorded and reviewed.           | As above  | 4 White supervisees of different European heritage. 3 female and 1 male. 2 nursing and 2 social work backgrounds. |

### **3.4 Thematic analysis**

I used the same method of analysis for each wave of data with the exception of the second round of group interviews which I did not transcribe but watched several

times (DVD) to identify and consolidate themes that were part of the original analysis. Any new theme was noted.

I analysed the remaining transcripts in the following order: the pair of preliminary interviews, the single observation, each 'set' of supervisors and supervisees prior to analysis of the final two supervisee group interviews. I coded and analysed each text separately to understand the narrative within each one prior to making links across the sample.

### **3.4.1 Step one**

I immersed myself with the data through transcribing the recordings and re-reading several times to identify codes by noting any idea that emerged in the text through repetition of content or the development of a particular story or feeling. Any changes in focus by the participant produced a code. The codes were broadly named and not edited at this stage. (Appendix 8 and 9).

### **3.4.2 Step two**

Codes within interviews were combined into a smaller number of themes. The distinction between a code is that a theme:

“captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data set.” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, P.82).

This process was repeated within each interview transcript. It was becoming clear that some of the codes in the texts seemed important to individuals but not others and could not be combined into themes. These were considered 'features' or 'rare' themes and reported separately (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p.203).

### **3.4.3 Step three**

In order to identify themes across the data set, I looked for patterns in terms of repeating ideas, topic or comments that had meaning for the participants and related to the research question. Where there was considerable overlap I constructed the boundary around each theme to identify examples across the data to either support or refute it.

#### **3.4.4 Step four**

I looked at the relationship between themes across the data to identify any hierarchical arrangement that would suggest some themes had more influence than others in relation to the research question. I was then able to create a coherent story in relation to the whole data analysis.

### **3.5 Dealing with research rigour**

#### **3.5.1 Validity / credibility**

Creswell (1998) notes the work of Eisner (1991) who reconceptualises the term validity to credibility. Reasonable credibility includes structural corroboration which is the inclusion of different types of data collection methods that contribute to the study, transparent account of research methods and commitment to incorporating other's views in relation to the data. This study incorporates a range of methods such as observation, individual and group interviews.

Face validity or respondent validity (Dallos and Vetere, 2005) called consensual validation by Creswell (1998) is the process by which data is returned to participants or an independent researcher to review the conclusions. Data in this study was returned for comment at two points. Transcripts and the subsequent analysis were returned to the participants, who variously agreed with the broad themes and indicated that the interviews had encouraged additional thinking about

live supervision. One MSc student subsequently decided to focus on the appreciative effects of live supervision for her final dissertation.

Lather (1991) uses the term triangulation to show the connection between different aspects of the research that she considers creates a credible approach. In addition to the points made about multiple methods and transparent accounts of the process of research, Lather includes returning to the literature as the final arm of the triangle to measure the research against existing work in the same field. This is attended to in the discussion section.

Emerson and Frosh (2009) highlight Mishler's approach to validation and generalisation suggesting that the availability of primary texts enables others to evaluate the methods and reading of the data to decide whether it is reasonable and plausible and thus representative of other texts that may make claims about the research area. (Appendix 8 and 9).

### **3.5.2 Reliability / validity**

Reliability refers to the repeatability or replication. This should enable the research to be reproduced by another researcher under the same conditions and arrive at broadly the same conclusions. In the context of qualitative research reliability can be framed as internal rigour and consistency. Smith (2003) makes the case for considering validity and reliability together suggesting that it is more useful to consider the quality of the research. He articulates ideas set forth by Yardley (2000) who writes that there are three principles that inform the quality of research, namely sensitivity to context which she describes as an understanding of the site of the research, secondly an understanding of the data or the broader narratives that shape the stories people tell. Thirdly she outlines notions of commitment, rigour, transparency and coherence. Commitment is extensive experience of the domain

under study. Rigour is the thoroughness of the study and the ability to see the audit trail.

In order to respond to issues of reliability I have provided a transparent overview of the study and offered detailed descriptions of the development of the interview schedules and sampling process.

### **3.5.3 Generalizability**

Generalizability is the term used when research findings can be used to make generalised statements and claims across similar contexts without necessarily engaging in further research. This is commonly associated with quantitative research which includes large samples and a control group. The current study includes a small homogeneous sample and no control group and therefore no claims will be made about generalizability.

Although the sample size is small, it can be argued that if the research design demonstrates rigour in its construction, the texts are available for consideration and the readings of the texts can be considered reasonable and plausible then the research can make a useful contribution to an understanding of the area under study.

In the case of this study, the joint production of narratives of co-constructed live supervision (the collective narrative) is likely to inform supervision and practice training. This will be achieved in part by returning the analysis to the participants to engage them in the development of additional narratives that will go on to shape future practice.

### **3.5.4 Reflexivity**

Since the 1970's there has been a move towards the incorporation of the researcher's position as a legitimate part of the research enquiry. Subjective

accounts became commonplace and were expanded by feminist writers who invited active consideration of power imbalances in research and the areas of enquiry. (Finlay and Gough, 2003). This led to researchers stating their position in relation to the subject area and making explicit their views and contribution to the construction, analysis and reporting of the research. Aull Davies (2008) writes:

“Reflexivity, broadly defined, means a turning back on oneself, a process of self reference. In the context of social research, reflexivity at its most immediately obvious level refers to the ways in which the products of research are affected by the personnel and process of doing research.”  
(Aull Davies, 2008, p.4).

Finlay and Gough (2003) conceptualise reflexivity in several ways, the most relevant for this study is mutual collaboration which deals with co-constructed accounts including the voice of the researcher. In addition to this, Willig (2008) emphasises personal and epistemological reflexivity as significant in the construction of research studies and analysis of the emerging data. In terms of personal reflexivity, my experience of training as a systemic psychotherapist and supervisor as well as delivering live supervision groups and leading a systemic institution places me in a knowing position, embedded in the field of study. In many ways my contribution to the construction of interview questions and analysis of the data reflects the notion of thin slicing (Gladwell 2005), an insider knowledge of the field that threads through every aspect. Before the preliminary interviews with Neil and Christine, I had ideas about live supervision from my subjective experience which shaped the direction of the interviews towards key aspects such as developing secure practice, being thoroughly versed in a particular approach which reflects the institutional purpose and achieving good experiences of therapy with families. In order to manage the potential for bias and remain curious I needed to ensure that the interviewees had ample opportunity to expand their stories in any

preferred direction, drawing out the significance of relational narratives that move beyond the factual descriptions of live supervision. It is this emphasis on the relational aspects of supervision that subsequently shaped the observation.

It is likely to be the case that my observation of the live supervision group was influenced by my perception of useful live supervision and the live supervision I observed could be affected by my presence as both researcher and Director. The preliminary interviews and observation served to both confirm and challenge my experience and understanding of live supervision, leading to the construction of the flexible interview schedule that appears in section 3.3.11 which incorporates my own areas of interest and experience of live supervision as well as the themes drawn out from the preliminary interviews and observations. Similarly, the interpretive sections of the data analysis reflect my own understanding of the narratives that emerge from the research participants.

In terms of epistemological reflexivity, I bring a particular emphasis to the research question from a social constructionist position which embraces curiosity as a key element of systemic inquiry. This defines the boundary of what emerges through the use of interview schedules through question construction and emphasis. In this study I am interested in stories offered in one systemic training institution in relation to live supervision which inevitably excludes aspects of live supervision in other contexts outside of training and other uses of live supervision that might appear in different professional disciplines.

These aspects of reflexivity shape my engagement with the partial stories and performances of supervision that form the basis of the data collection and analysis. By remaining profoundly curious I hope to reflect the most useful account of live supervision to contribute to the field.

In an attempt to be relationally reflexive with the research participants, I returned transcripts of the interviews at two different points to engage in the potential for dialogue around the emerging narratives. This responds to Riessman (1993) who poses a question about whose voice is the strongest voice in the final account. This question immediately implies that as one voice is more influential others are neglected or hidden which highlights the notion that the text is open to many different readings and the position of the researcher is likely to include a subjective reading of the data.

Finlay and Gough (2003) highlight the potential challenge of unequal positions of power within the research activity. This has been considered in part through the use of a gate-keeper to access the sample and written assurances about the use of the data.

The next chapter follows the narratives that emerge from the data collection.

# Chapter Four

## Findings

**This section consists of four parts**

- 4.1 Supervisor narratives: Neil, Jane, Mark, Christopher and Elizabeth
- 4.2 Supervisee narratives: Year one; Christine and Groups 1,2,3 and 4
- 4.3 Supervisee narratives: Year two; Christine and Groups 3 and 5
- 4.4 Observation of one group: Year one; Jane and Group 1

### 4.1 Supervisor narratives

**Table 7: Summary of supervisor narratives.**

The table illustrates inductive and deductive themes, although the deductive themes will be fully explored in the discussion.

| <b>Common themes from data (inductive)</b>                                     | <b>Links between themes</b>                | <b>Rare themes (inductive)</b>                          | <b>Links with literature (deductive)</b>  |
|--|--|---|---|
| 1. Theoretical/conceptual approach (style) and attendant supervisory practices | Technical requirements of live supervision | 1. Experience of the supervisees in usual work contexts | Colapinto (1988)<br>McCann (2000)<br>Inskipp & Proctor (2001)<br>Montalvo (2002)<br>Wilson (2011) |
| 2. Effect of the training context/stage of training                            |  | 2. Time and pressure of requirement of training hours   | Frankel & Piercy (1990)<br>Smith et al. (1991)<br>McHale & Carr (1998)                            |
| 3. Complexity and  |  |   |   |

|  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| competing demands of live supervision within the Milan structure |  |  | Lang, Little & Cronen (1990)<br>McCann (2000)<br>Fruggeri (2013)  |
| 4. Client focus influencing supervisory position and action      |  |  | Frankel & Piercy (1990)<br>Charles et al. (2005)<br>Bertrando (2008)  |
| 5. Comparison with previous groups                               | Relational aspects and influence from different vantage points |  | No literature   |
| 6. Gender  |  |  | Tannen (1990)<br>Kaiser (1997)<br>Turner & Fine (1997)<br>Carr & McHale (1998)<br>Gerhart et al. (2001)<br>Burnham (2012) |
| 7. Co-construction and style                                     |  |  | Andersen (1991)<br>Burnham (2005)<br>Hoffman (2007)<br>Shotter (2012)<br>Wilson (2012)<br>Chang & Gaete (2014)            |

There are seven common themes that appear across all five supervisor interviews. Commonality does not mean consensus. Connecting and contrasting narratives are drawn out.

The themes group into two broad categories, themes one to three concentrate on the technical requirements of live supervision. They offer what appear to be core concepts and supervisory practices regardless of context which are modified as a result of the complexity in the training context. The second category of themes four to seven begins to explore the relational aspects of live supervision from different vantage points. The supervisors begin to construct their style and identity through this relational lens.

A smaller number of themes feature in one or two of the interviews and appear to be significant to the particular supervisor. They are set out as rare themes. One such theme for the female supervisors is the relational effect of previous professional experience of the supervisees on supervisory activity. This could be included in the category of different vantage points but as it appears in only two of the interviews it does not seem to hold as much weight as other themes but seems to have real effects on the supervisory activity of the female supervisors and as such seems worthy of inclusion.

The second rare theme of time appears frequently in one interview and is barely mentioned in others and although this may be relevant to main themes two and three which concentrate on the training context and the complexity of live supervision, it seems helpful to note it as an organising factor for one supervisor but not elevate this theme as significant to others.

#### **4.1.1 Theme 1: Theoretical or conceptual approach (style) and supervisory activity (practices)**

The boundary of this theme is the supervisors' stated conceptual approach that shapes action and is noted as consistent across all supervision contexts.

## **Similarities**

All supervisors give a clear and articulated rationale for their conceptual approach but they differ in terms of emphasis on theory and relationships.

Neil names two characteristics in his supervision, the application of systemic theory and his insistence that supervisees complete their cultural genogram. He posits that culture, ethnicity, gender and other factors that shape personhood must be explored as a resource to supervisees to enhance curiosity about sameness and difference. Neil highlights aspects of power, oppression and the potential effect of perpetuating dominant discourses in supervision.

Jane talks about style as theoretical orientation. She leans towards structural ideas but adjusts this to meet supervisees' preferences for social constructionist approaches. She has a wide repertoire and can improvise as needed. What seems more important and consistent for Jane is building good relationships with supervisees in order for them to build good therapeutic relationships with families.

Mark's approach is from an attachment orientation which he supports with literature. He offers a written position statement to supervisees.

Elizabeth's orientation is social constructionist with collaboration and mutual influencing as high context markers.

Christopher similar to Jane highlights the therapeutic relationship and the process of therapy as most significant in shaping his supervision, utilizing the Milan approach.

They all emphasize purposeful relationship building between supervisors and supervisees as a context for working with families as the most significant factor. They achieve this in various ways, either through creating good working relationships with supervisees or encouraging robust articulation of theory.

## **Differences**

Christopher and Elizabeth use different methods of relationship building with Elizabeth promoting ethical supervision coherent with her preferred social constructionist model. Part of the relationship building is to appreciate the different positions available to everyone in the supervision group as one way of understanding supervisor and supervisee participation and collaboration.

Christopher uses higher level abstract principles to promote relationships, such as respect, fairness, value, agency and autonomy which he considers essential in all relationships both supervisory and with families. He openly talks about power and oppression when considering the therapeutic encounter and as such becomes focused on the process of therapy and the quality of the therapeutic relationship as one way of monitoring the service to others. His emphasis is on meta-positions.

## **Interpretation**

These consistent core characteristics from each supervisor become the highest context marker and stable narrative within which other themes are understood.

Jane's ongoing developing narrative appears to be recursively linked to this original idea of making relationships with supervisees as she returns to descriptors such as good feeling and warmth in the group which creates a context for taking relational risks.

**“I can make mistakes or I can make a joke or we can share something around humour or about ourselves and that feels somehow OK.” (J 60-63).**

Mark uses his attachment lens to create rituals with his group that he utilizes to enhance a safe environment. His narrative is peppered with words and phrases that

are commonly associated with attachment theory such as ‘feeling safe, containment, and security.’

Christopher’s narrative centres on fairness, equality, agency, autonomy and responsibility. He frequently returns to the theme of the therapeutic relationship, paying particular attention to issues of content and process in therapy, highlighting that by making sense of the process, the content of therapy is manageable.

Elizabeth’s narrative incorporates collaboration and co-construction which she threads through every domain of supervision. Elizabeth openly notes that she supervises using aspects of her therapeutic model in order to maintain coherence across contexts and relationships.

Without exception the supervisors make comparisons with previous groups to strengthen their narrative of consistent practice as well explain the exceptions to this story highlighting their additional ability to improvise in response to new situations with supervisees. They go further and add the influence of the live context and training environment as additional layer of complexity.

#### **4.1.2 Theme 2: The training context / stage of training**

This theme deals directly with the influence of the training context on supervisory action. In some ways this reflects adherence to the core practices whilst creating room for improvisation taking into account the different needs of the supervisees over the two year training experience. Each of the supervisors has a developmental account of practice though they emphasise different aspects.

#### **Similarities**

A consistent view is that in the first of the two years training, supervisees are working to make sense of what to do in therapy in terms of systemic techniques and skills, whereas in the second year they are moving towards independent

practice and are learning about the process of therapy and the management of sessions. Christopher calls this ‘achieving therapy.’ In order to facilitate this, the supervisors offer their views about the stages of training.

Mark and Christopher use family metaphors to illustrate their positions. Mark uses a developmental life script frame which links with the age of the supervisees who are much younger thus positioning him as a parental figure. He constructs supervisees as moving from young to older adolescents and maturing as they journey which he links with attachment and life cycle ideas. He also includes the notion of apprenticeship. His supervisory actions flow from this perspective encouraging supervisees to share ideas which he links with the position of educator.

**“What are your values, what do you know, where are you coming from, which practitioners do you look up to .....helping them to do more of whatever they said.” (M 51-54).**

Mark’s style of scaffolding is to offer some instructive interventions to focus the supervisees as well as invitational interventions to expand their understanding of the therapy session.

Christopher also uses a family metaphor. He describes the first of the Masters’ like fostering where he suggests that he is in a position to shape the supervisees. In the second year he feels more like a step-parent where the supervisor joins an established group and may have less influence. This frame seems to support Christopher in being pro-active in shaping the early structure and process of the supervision sessions and his preference for process over content. The supervisory actions that flow from this position includes Christopher’s insistence that supervisees as a group prepare to offer systemic hypotheses for new referrals and move these into potential interventions so as to make sense of the contribution they

make to the process of therapy. Christopher also emphasises the requirement to create a contract for therapy to maintain the focus for each session and develop consistent structure. As with Mark, Christopher's position leads to some directive interventions that he expects supervisees to follow.

Neil describes his position as the most experienced therapist in the room and as such makes the case for guidance and instructive supervision early in the relationship which he believes changes as the supervisees become more confident and skilled. Like other supervisors this position influences his interventions such that he often gives direct word for word instructions that he expects supervisees to follow and repeat in sessions.

### **Differences**

The female supervisors, Jane and Elizabeth, appear to take a wider angled view of supervision. They make comments about the experience of the supervisees in other work contexts and their perception that they are keen to learn. They note the quality of the relationship between them and their supervisees and make links with the development of skills and emerging systemic ability. This is not to say that the male supervisors neglect this aspect, all supervisors highlight the relational aspects of supervision but the emphasis is different.

In the service of good relationships with supervisees Jane prefers to offer choice and use invitational language to allow supervisees to make their own therapeutic decisions. She suggests that the composition of the group and the high level of experience and skill enables her to take this position and in other circumstances she may have to be 'punchier' and more directive.

Consistent with her theoretical orientation, Elizabeth posits an idea that within any session (structure) she will offer flexibility to encourage supervisees to develop their own abilities. Elizabeth notes different learning styles as one cue to help her

construct her supervisory response. She also gives an example of her explicit requirement for supervisees to efficiently manage the practical aspects of sessions such as case notes and diary. She is the only supervisor to mention the practical elements of live supervision. Her expectation seems to link back to the level of experience of the group and their usual work contexts where they manage such practical issues. In some ways this could connect with Christopher and his emphasis on planning ahead for a session and managing different aspects of therapy. For both it seems as if this forward planning creates a context for more experimentation in direct work.

When considering the educational aspect, the supervisors approach this with different emphases and practices. Christopher and Mark introduce the notion of isomorphism and Jane and Elizabeth offer written feedback. This is explored in theme four.

### **Interpretation**

The use of family metaphors suggests that Mark and Christopher may occupy parental positions in relation to supervisees. For Mark this fits with notions of attachment and creating a safe and secure base from which supervisees' can experiment and come back to safety. For Christopher this fits with ideas of the family life cycle, stages of development and transitions with healthy development measured by separation, independence, autonomy and responsibility as supervisees become more mature.

For the female supervisors it seems that relationships become the context for episodes of supervision so when they have to introduce direction or instruction, the relationship incorporates this without being adversely affected. This may link with some gendered discourses about women who may prefer to create and preserve relationships and adjust their communication to achieve this.

### **4.1.3 Theme 3: The complexity and competing demands of live supervision**

This theme highlights the consistency in the structure of live supervision as well as breadth and creativity of supervisory activity and the challenge of simultaneously attending to all of the different elements of training and therapy services.

#### **Similarities**

The supervisors talk about competing demands and multiple levels of complexity requiring their moment to moment attention. Some of the competing demands are in relation to client facing tasks such as risk assessment, the quality of therapy and the provision of a good service. Other demands relate to the educational aspect of supervision. This emphasises developing systemic skills in the session, making explicit links with theory, encouraging feedback processes as part of the systemic skill set and working within a group.

All supervisors use the Milan structure for the sessions. They concur that their purpose is to encourage skilled and competent systemic therapy and prepare supervisees for independent practice. There are some different practices but agreement in the perception that the content of a session as well as the context of training requires nimble supervisory movement to respond to new situations.

All agree families and the service to clients' is the highest context marker. In this regard they name potential for risk as the most influential reason that leads them to intervene in a session. They describe risk factors as their cue for making directive interventions and giving instructions that offer little choice to their supervisees.

To convey direction or instruction they commonly use statements to close down other options Jane notes:

**“I would like you to do this. I mean if you actually want them to do it you are not giving them the choice and we have had a bit of discussion in the group about that.” (J 177-180).**

Each supervisor in their own way makes an explicit statement to their supervisees that shows the difference between instruction and invitation and those moments during a session when they have no alternative but to act as the supervisor instructs.

### **Pre-session**

The pre-session has the same structure and focus across the groups with all supervisors requiring supervisees to engage in disciplined hypothesizing. In some ways that is where the similarity ends with supervisors taking different positions in pre-session.

Jane and Mark take responsibility for leading and maintaining the focus of the conversation so that supervisees have clear ideas to use in the session. Elizabeth is less likely to lead and more likely to ask the supervisees if they want to hear from her as another voice in the conversation. This is her approach to creating multiple ideas that have equal value. Elizabeth is cognisant of the unequal power within the supervisory relationship but prefers to create a flat hierarchy wherever possible. She is alert to the notion that pre-session should have direction which relates to the clients.

Christopher returns to familiar themes of supervisees' responsibility for their ideas with agency and autonomy.

**“I have a standard or a set form in that I find that I like the form that the person who takes the role of the therapist or key interviewer to to err to be the anchor of the session and I actually ask them to begin. It's focused with them as the main contributor to it and with that I ask**

**them or support them about where they begin on each session.”(C 59-63).**

Mark in many ways reflects a similar leadership pattern as Jane although he seems to offer more specific rituals about the pre-session. Like Neil he actively promotes the use of the Social GRRRAACCEEESSS (Burnham 2012) in hypothesizing. He also openly discusses his expectation that the supervisees must locate their ideas theoretically. He deliberately steers them away from speculation which he sees as different from hypothesizing. In fact he goes as far as to say that he will only permit conversations that are focused on the information available from or about the family. Mark connects this with practice rigour and once again links this back to his notions of the value of theory.

This emphasis on theory is reflected in Neil’s conversation which he comes back to time and again as he notes that interventions must be directly linked to systemic theory. Like Mark he is keen that the skills of a systemic approach are embedded prior to experimentation with other models.

### **In-session interventions: in front and behind the screen**

#### **Similarities**

There are more similarities than differences during the sessions. All supervisors commonly use phone-in interventions, although there are differences in the frequency from one to three times. Christopher and Neil share a view of permitting the session to run for about twenty minutes to allow the supervisee to settle with the family. The exception to this is risk assessment.

Neil uses phone-in either to call supervisees out to give them breaks or to offer direct ideas about interventions without the stress of hearing other views which would be the case in a reflecting team. He is clear that sometimes he requires

supervisees to act on his instructions until he is satisfied that they can skilfully manage a session.

Christopher feels phone-in is preferable to a physical intervention such as a reflecting team. He constructs phone-in as a disturbance to the therapy which preserves the therapeutic relationship in a way that entering room does not. He believes entering the room transgresses a boundary which he constructs as an act of power on the part of the supervisor. Christopher links this with preserving the process of therapy with an overarching theme of remaining outside of the room. He sees this as a physical meta-position enabling him to monitor practice skills, the therapeutic relationship, the presentation of emotions and other aspects of the session that shape his decision to intervene or not.

Jane also uses phone-in during sessions but unlike Christopher and Neil, she is very flexible about the way that supervisees might use her interventions and talks of occasions when she offers specific ideas that are changed by the time the supervisee uses them in session. Jane wonders if her interventions should be more structured or specific but overall feels that the movement that she creates with phone-in usually stimulates new ideas. Elizabeth talks less of the phone-in practices and concentrates more on the post-sessions in which she encourages lots of playfulness and collaboration.

Mark in some ways is consistent with Christopher in that he also prefers to call supervisees out of the room. His reasons for doing so are somewhat different, focussing on the notion that supervisees may experience interventions with lots of ideas as confusing. He uses words such as overwhelmed, something that connects with Neil. He mentions that some suggestions might not be relevant to the session. This links back to Mark's efforts to encourage supervisees to be focused on specific hypotheses and theories to guide practice rather than speculate.

**“they (supervisees) are coming here (live supervision) to be helped to sharpen their tools so that they can go back (into the session). They don’t want to be overwhelmed with more ideas.” (M 151-153).**

## **Differences**

When turning to the other common in-session intervention, the reflecting team, Christopher introduces the notion of power. He prefers to remain outside of the therapy room and plan reflecting team interventions ready for the time when the supervisees can lead the process. To achieve this he uses in-session interventions with an educational focus to engage in short simulated sessions with the supervisee during a break. This includes interviewing the supervisee (seeing the family) and creating a short reflecting team to offer ideas and expand possibilities for the next part of the session. Mark and Christopher name this type of activity as isomorphism. Christopher notes:

**“.....so I am mimicking by talking to the therapist, the position of the therapist talking with the family with them actually talking amongst themselves so we bring in the rules at this point so they don’t engage with us and then we reflect back after ....” (C 199-202).**

Despite his view about power, he is clear that when he makes instructive interventions he expects supervisees to name the origin of the intervention as coming from the supervisor and as such is active during the session. Christopher’s emphasis appears to be concentrated on the process of therapy.

Unlike Christopher the other supervisors commonly use the reflecting team intervention. Mark actively promotes its inclusion which he describes as not only an opportunity for supervisees to explore and expand ideas with the family but also as an educational opportunity. This is consistent with Jane and Elizabeth who also

enter the room as part of the reflecting team and offer their ideas alongside the supervisees in an effort to expand themes for the family and simultaneously educate the supervisees in the model. In this sense they seem to promote the educational aspects of in-session interventions.

## **Behind the screen**

### **Similarities**

One of the common features between supervisors behind the screen is their practice of pausing before intervening. The female supervisors craft this as a supervisory posture of waiting with patience in order to see what supervisees do in session believing that it is often the case that they will arrive at a useful intervention if left. The male supervisors focus on supervisee postures using words like stutter or drift as a cue to intervene.

Jane is attracted to quiet restraint behind the screen coherent with waiting patiently before intervening so that she can attend to the family material and concentrate on the therapy process in the room and produce notes of the session for supervisees. This includes aspects of practice that she believes either require further attention and reflection or show particular skill that she wants to point out. Elizabeth also engages in extensive notes about her observations of practice.

Jane notes:

**“I do try in my role within the session to step back a bit and also think about what the student is doing and to make notes for them to look at afterwards so, for instance, I try and make a note of you know any particular time in the session on the DVD that might be of use for them to go and look at in more detail.” (J 388-393).**

Jane prefers to wait to see the supervisees' development in a session before intervening. She links this directly with her supervision training during which her tutor talked of encouraging patience as a supervisory practice. This is also reflected in Elizabeth's account where she also talks of waiting to see what emerges before making a decision to intervene. Interestingly, Elizabeth counters this practice with an example with her previous group where she describes waiting too long. This idea of moving in and out of different practices depending on feedback from the group seems to be more evident in Elizabeth's account than others.

Mark seems to hold multiple options behind the screen and decides how to act depending on the activity in front of it. He talks of observing what he calls 'stuttering' from the supervisee with the family.

**“sometimes it is about the supervisee looking like they are struggling or looking like they're drowning or or sometimes beginning to stutter where I get a sense that there is something that is not going as well as they would have wanted ....I tend to say 'what are your values, what do you know, where are you coming from ....helping them to do more of what they have said,' (M 46-54)**

As Jane and Elizabeth, Mark posits the notion of giving people a long rope to try to understand what they are trying to achieve with a family before intervening which he constructs as an example of his preference to support supervisees in developing practice skills that they identify in the pre-session.

Christopher in some ways concurs with Mark in that he talks of being more likely to intervene when he notices drift in the session which moves him into action.

**“...if I felt there was drift going on in it (the session) or it would be important to draw the therapist back to a conversation that appeared to be important from the pre-session or in the case as it is going on or**

**to reflect to the therapist that there might be something going on in the room that might impair their position...or might not support the aims of the session... I phone.” (C 109-118)**

As mentioned he leaves supervisees for about twenty minutes to make connections with the family, very similar to Neil. This fits nicely with his preference about the development of the therapeutic relationship rather than the content of the client issue. Christopher also introduces a suggestion that all activity should focus on the contract of therapy. He is the only supervisor who uses this language.

### **Differences**

Differences relate to the amount of conversation behind the screen and the propensity for the male supervisors to construct themselves as more active. This is articulated clearly by Neil who talks of being very active and conversational behind the screen to create learning opportunities for those observing supervisees. In some ways Mark concurs with this view.

### **Post-session**

#### **Similarities**

Like other aspects of the session, the post-session is based on the Milan structure and each of the supervisors retains this as the overarching framework. The post-session by far the most creative and playful element of the session. The supervisors describe this phase as an opportunity to concentrate on the developing therapist.

They all initiate different kinds of conversations which move between supervisee focus, family focus, skills development and reflexivity through mutual feedback processes as well as more structured exercises. Some examples include practice interviews, focused discussions and supervisor led interview with reflecting team. The emphasis on the educational function of live supervision is highlighted by all

of the supervisors. They all introduce theory, research and reflexivity in this section.

## **Differences**

Elizabeth encourages creativity as long as it is coherent with systemic practice. She is open to innovation and recalls using a sand tray at the invitation of a supervisee. Elizabeth continues to give options, invite choice in ways that she believes nudges them along and stretches practice. She moves between structure and flexibility as she says:

**....”then I guess I do a lot of talking about like.....would you like to step outside of your comfort zone a bit...so maybe talking about the process rather than just say...well today.... I never say today we are going to do this...but I might say would you be interested in trying this?” (E 116-120).**

Mark and Christopher are specific about their post-session process and name isomorphism as intentional practice. They note the responsibility to teach as well as supervise and utilize circular and reflexive questions and the reflecting team as an intentional supervisory exercise. This fits with the notion of experimenting in a safe environment.

Mark offers a particular example of isomorphism in action. He recalls in his previous group when the session was taking an unhelpful turn that he swapped rooms so that he and the rest of the team could offer a reflection incorporating some teaching about how to go on in the session. In this way, Mark engages with the educational aspect of supervision which he strengthens by explicitly naming adult learning theory.

Jane and Elizabeth do not talk about isomorphism in the same intentional way as Christopher and Mark but they nevertheless embed educational aspects into their

supervision through the use of weekly written feedback to the supervisees. Elizabeth encourages engagement through e-mail generating multiple points of view through several turns of conversation consistent with collaborative practice.

The male supervisors provide regular verbal feedback.

### **Interpretation**

There are many common features of supervisory practice during a therapy session which are to do with the same structure and the use of systemic interventions. One such feature is the practice of waiting prior to intervening although the explanations for the waiting are different. The male supervisors judge their waiting by the supervisee activity in the room which could be described as directionless or unfocused thus cueing an intervention to bring the session back to a particular focus.

Both Mark and Christopher emphasise the significance of preparation for therapy sessions through the pre-session and appear to be organised around the expected therapeutic activity based on prior hypothesizing and their own experience of systemic therapy sessions. Using an apprentice model it makes sense to intervene when the session does not develop according to the pre-session plan and reflect their version of systemic practice.

Mark describes stuttering as an indication of losing focus with the planned interventions and an indication that supervisees may have lost their relationship with therapist identity. This becomes an important signal for intervention based on his view that therapy should have a clear purpose. This fits with an overarching view that Mark offers of insisting that supervisees become skilled in systemic

practices prior to any kind of experimentation and is also coherent with his preference for supporting therapist identity through encouragement to reconnect with their ambitions as developing therapists. This may also reflect his attempts to create security with his supervisees through responding quickly to hesitancy or uncertainty in practice with supervisees looking for reassurance through Mark's interventions.

There are links with Christopher's idea that supervisees should be working to a therapeutic contract and come prepared with hypotheses and interventions for each session and Mark's idea that supervisees are training to 'sharpen their tools' and any stuttering is constructed as an invitation to intervene with additional tools. Christopher in his own way uses the term drift in a similar fashion to Mark's stuttering. Drift is constructed as directionless therapy which Christopher suggests should be drawn back to something connected with pre-session plans. Once again the emphasis appears to be on creating clarity in the therapeutic task with focused interventions that reflect recognised systemic practices. Interestingly, although both male supervisors seem to talk about practical therapy, they also embed relational ideas such as therapist identity or more subtle relational aspects such as 'the dynamic in the room' which Christopher mentions as potentially influencing activity.

Although it seems that male supervisors reflect interventions relating to competence and technical skill which could be linked to first order positions at this stage, they begin to embed relational notions which are less visible than with the female supervisors.

The female supervisors appear to show a different skill which is about supervisory patience and confidence in the supervisees to find their own interventions, less aligned with technical skill and more with second order positions about making relationships.

There could be many explanations for this reading such as differences in the abilities of the supervisee groups or perceptions of the supervisors about the practice needs of the supervisees. It could reflect gender preferences for interventions with male supervisors often more active than females. It could be to do with coordination with the group or experience of the supervisor and supervisees in terms of skilled practice.

#### **4.1.4 Theme 4: Client focus in relation to supervisory positions and actions**

This theme in many ways extends theme three by giving more attention to client services. This is about the development of the profession and the level of responsibility that supervisors have in creating ethical systemic practice that both reflects and contributes to the wider systemic standards of therapy.

#### **Similarities**

The theme of family focus appears in all of the accounts as the supervisors' responsibility to ensure that the therapy service to clients is of good quality. There is consensus that aspects of risk generate clear and focused instruction. Outside of the risk context there are different supervisory practices and emphases.

Jane for example, in contrast with her definitive statement when addressing risk, offers an authoritative position whilst simultaneously inviting practice development.

**“I try to be concise but I might veer between giving an instruction and or, or it might be one or two key words like sort of just saying..... think about this theme or I'd like you to go back to this theme.” (J 166-170).**

Like Jane, Mark focuses on the family / supervisee interaction to decide when and how to intervene. Mark talks of the quality of service to families and suggests that if he believes they are not receiving a good service, he will intervene. His view is that families should leave sessions with a sense that it is good value and worth attending and making payment. Christopher concurs and offers the strongest version of client focus. He names his authority as power and links this with the idea that each person in the group should take ownership of their decisions and activity. Christopher openly offers the idea of power not only invested in his position as supervisor but in his position as a male, and suggests that he may choose to directly intervene from this position of power. The gender issue appears as a separate theme.

**“So if I feel that someone’s doing something and they know what they are doing then I feel that it is appropriate and we can talk about this later. But if I think there is something going on which is not mindful to the process or mindful to the people then I would have to take a different stance and influence much more strongly.” (C 301-305).**

Elizabeth is equally passionate about the service to clients and one instance in which she takes an openly authoritative stance. She introduces the word ‘slacking’ which she describes as the lack of attention to practical aspects such as keeping the diary and case notes up to date. In the interview she recoils from the chosen word but reiterates her insistence that the structures around therapy should be maintained to high standards which is similar to any workplace.

In terms of ensuring the therapy is of good quality, Elizabeth, like Christopher, talks of offering equal time to each supervisee and insisting that they remain as one group for some sessions where she can get a good overview of the clinical work and the supervisees’ ability.

**“I think they know that I don’t let important things go but I think they’d see me as quite supportive and encouraging.” (E 299-300).**

Neil in his description maintains the client focus with attention to the quality of therapy for clients. Like Christopher he speaks of the process of therapy rather than the content and the move from learning to do systemic therapy to becoming a systemic therapist.

### **Interpretation**

This is one theme where there is great coherence, agreement and clarity across the sample and some impatience if the supervisees do not concur with this view. The supervisors talk passionately about their wealth of practice experience to respond to families. In their repertoire they have experience in child and adolescent mental health services, community adult mental health service, in-patient adolescent unit, hospital assessment team and eating disorders unit which provides clear ideas about service provision. In this instance it seems that the educational focus is of less significance for the supervisors, although of course any supervisory activity includes some potential for learning. This may be more about preparing the supervisees for ethical independent practice.

#### **4.1.5 Theme 5: Comparison with previous supervision groups**

This theme sees the supervisors actively consider their practices in a relational frame which recursively links to previous practice and comparison with other groups. This is the beginning of overt conversations about co-construction.

In addition to gender which will appear as a separate rare theme, the supervisors all note the construction of their groups in terms of age, culture, ethnicity, experience and wider professional positions. They note their own responses shaped by their gender, age, experience, ethnicity and other defining factors of personhood.

## **Similarities**

There seem to be some gender splits in constructing stories about current and previous groups although they all talk in relational terms.

For Jane and Elizabeth the contrast with previous groups leads to one recurring theme which is their current groups' keenness to learn. This appears to invite Jane and Elizabeth into more relaxed and collaborative positions which they describe favourably.

Jane contrasts her experience between this group and her previous group (which was also entirely female), using emotional language to articulate her feelings. She notes that this group finds ways to appreciate and value different views whereas in a previous group she remembers that difference led to competition between group members. Jane responds to the story of connection rather than competition. She suggests this enables her to feel more like herself in this group which has the effect of increasing her confidence.

Elizabeth shares the importance of relational connection with supervisees and also uses emotional experience to describe her response. She offers a repertoire of words such as 'uncomfortable', or noticing a bodily feeling, 'gut feeling,' to monitor her effect on others and their effect on her. She adjusts her responses based on this somatic information.

Like Jane, Elizabeth contrasts the experience with her current group and a previous group. She describes experiences of coming forward and contributing with this group as a result of backing off too much with a previous group, against her better judgement. This leads Elizabeth to monitor her bodily posture as well as the more obvious practical activity in sessions.

One aspect of the narrative that Jane and Elizabeth share is their attention to relational processes. They emphasise the importance of creating a good

relationship between themselves and the supervisees that go on to influence their activity as they describe recalibrating their practice as a result of feedback from the groups and past experiences.

### **Differences**

The male supervisors come at the relational aspects of supervision from different positions. As previously mentioned they use family metaphors to construct their understanding of their own positions in the groups. Mark notes an experience in his previous group with a black male supervisee who looked up to him as a role model thus creating Mark as someone with influence beyond the supervisor / supervisee relationship and perhaps as a parental figure. In this instance the contexts of importance seem to be age, ethnicity and gender that enables Mark to be a wise, older mentor.

Christopher does not use comparisons with previous groups emphasising the shift in his own position and his preference for monitoring group processes.

### **Interpretation**

They all share a relational focus but the female supervisors seem to understand their position by examples of relationships that have felt better than others which they recursively link with previous and current experiences.

The male supervisors use a mix of family metaphors to illustrate their positions in relation to the supervisees which shape actions. In addition to attachment Mark uses mentoring ideas and includes the social GRRRAACCEEESSS as a key ingredient to supervision utilizing his gender, ethnicity and age as important contexts.

With Christopher the narrative that is embedded through this theme is one that returns to the dance between process and content with Christopher talking openly about group processes as an organising factor in his supervisory responses.

#### **4.1.6 Theme 6: Gender**

This theme focusses on the potential effects of gender on the construction of supervision including the gender of both supervisors and supervisees. It expands the relational aspects of supervision.

#### **Similarities**

All of the supervisors express views about their own gender and that of the supervisees as instrumental in shaping their supervisory style. The construction and meaning of gender is different from each supervisor.

#### **Differences**

Jane takes gender to mean female connection. As a white female supervisor she suggests that she is more likely to achieve good relationships and use a social constructionist approach (the style she believes supervisees prefer) with a female group to enhance free flowing conversations. In contrast, with male supervisees she is more likely to adopt a different position, constructing male supervisees as preferring a style that is,

**“focused and punchy and precise” (J 259).**

Having the experience of supervising mixed male / female and female only groups, Jane is in a good position to offer ideas about the effect of gender on her practice. She adapts her style to fit with the group suggesting that male supervisees require challenge and risk-taking to enhance their learning, which she recalls as feeling risky for her as supervisor. By contrast she notes that she and her current female group seem to be able to manage a similar level of risk-taking together in ways that

do not feel risky. She links this with two aspects of the current group which is the high level of professional experience in which she has confidence and the gendered position of appreciation that pervades all of the supervision sessions. Jane focusses on the relational qualities between supervisor and supervisees as key to the functioning of the group.

Mark takes gender as one context of many in shaping his position and he adds ethnicity, culture, age, education and other contexts that he openly uses in his supervisory activity. From the position as a black male supervisor, he notes many examples of the potential effects of his gender and supervisees' gender on his practice. Mark notes that in contrast to his previous group, these aspects of self seem to be less significant. This group includes male and female supervisees of different ages and cultural origin which leads him to look for similarities rather than differences. Mark notes:

**“So I think it is that mixture and a commitment to openness and umm, if there are any issues that come up in relation to power in relation to how we position ourselves politically in terms of political awareness and things in relation to the social GRRRAACCEESSS \* then they’ll be talked about openly so when people respond to that .... That seems to make a difference .. so ...people appear to me feel safe and secure enough which is always my objective about creating that context.” (M 313-319).**

Neil offers a narrative about gender in relation to power. As a black male supervisor he reflects on issues of fairness and power. He is interested in the effect of his gender on his supervisees. In his mixed gendered group, of two females and two males, he feels he must attend to the possibility of dominant male voices. As other supervisors, Neil takes responsibility for introducing such conversations which he frames as demonstrating reflexive abilities. He uses the word power in his

position as supervisor and his preference for fast pacing and active talk and wonders if this inadvertently marginalises female voices. He openly considers his activity from a gendered position as potentially perpetuating a discourse of talkative and active men and quiet and passive women. He talks about each person in the group mutually influencing one another though he is clear that this is not an equal influence as the authority in the sessions rests with him.

Christopher also constructs gender in terms of power. He speaks from the position of a white male supervisor who comes from a different culture to most of the supervisees. He uses the phrase of “not homogenous” to describe his supervision group which has male and female supervisees. He believes this invites him as supervisor to facilitate marginalized voices. It becomes clear that Christopher is talking about male and female supervisees as he reflects on his gendered position which he suggests has the potential to discriminate against women. In light of this Christopher notes:

**“I have got to appear to be fair and that sense of participation with all. ....that part of me will always be supportive to those who are less able. So it’s about bringing fairness and equality into the system and it might be that I try to bring more type of balance into it.” (C 341-345).**

Elizabeth shares the position set forth by Mark and offers a range of ideas in addition to gender that she feels shapes her supervisory activity, although like the others, gender does seem to be influential. She notes the cultural mix in her group, the ages and the previous employment history, the personal positions of parent, couple relationships amongst other things. All of these aspects of personhood form part of the narrative Elizabeth offers about connection and richness in her group. In considering her position as a white female supervisor, Elizabeth talks of feeling more aligned with females in the group but not to the detriment of her relationship

with males. Like Jane she uses relational words such as ‘sympathetic, warm and comfortable’ with females.

**“I feel slightly more aligned with women in some ways and I would acknowledge that.” (E 250-251).**

### **Interpretation**

The stories that emerge in this theme provide a range of ideas about gender from connecting experiences of same gendered groups to alertness on the part of the male supervisees to actively promote marginalized voices. They talk of their awareness of discourses around gender that may influence their supervisees’ view of them as male supervisors. There seem to be high levels of understanding of the implicit, if not explicit discourses around gender that pervade all relationships with the male supervisors actively responding to create an alternative narrative and experience for the female supervisees.

#### **4.1.7 Theme: 7 Co- constructed supervisory identity**

This theme concludes the emphasis on supervisors’ narratives from different vantage points with some explicit descriptions from the supervisors about their perception of their supervisees’ views about them and their activity.

### **Similarities**

All of the supervisors have some perception of their supervisory practice from the point of view of the supervisees. Without exception the descriptions they give begin to strengthen the earlier themes of style and characteristic practice. Each

account is different although there is more common ground between the female supervisors than any other combination.

Jane believes the supervisees appreciate her knowledge, ability to listen and the connections she makes between practice and theory, although she counters this suggesting that she could offer more challenge and direct information during the sessions. This firms up the story of using social constructionist ideas which she thinks supervisees want whilst preferring structural approaches which might lead to more directive and interventionist practice. It seems that she holds to the preference of the supervisees as one way of developing and promoting the connecting relationships that she believes to be important to supervision.

Elizabeth's narrative is somewhat similar in that she focuses on the notion that the supervisees' construction of her is engaging rather than challenging, once again offering a relational frame.

**“I think they'd see me as very encouraging ... so that I had an encouraging style rather than a confrontational style.” (E 292-293).**

Like Jane she continues with some reflexive comments about taking a firmer, more challenging stance when required. This strengthens the social constructionist frame of reference that Elizabeth uses to approach supervision with its collaborative practices, reflecting coherence with the model.

**“I suppose I'd be thinking about joining with .....enter the grammar a bit but then start to think of other ways of doing things and bringing my own style.” (E 419-421).**

## **Differences**

Neil imagines his supervisees would consider him to be rigorous and fair. He takes the view that he would not ask his supervisees to do anything that he would not do

himself and as such he believes they have confidence in him to encourage their practice development.

Mark explicitly returns to attachment theory when talking about his supervisees' view of him. He talks of emerging identities in which he includes his own development as a supervisor through his relationship with the supervisees. Mark monitors this through a personal learning journal which he writes following the supervision sessions as an active way of recalibrating his practice.

**“So for me attachment theory and its various ways of being present is something that is ever present for me and because I use that framework to make sense of how people get on with their lives, I tend to think there is something about contributing to people’s emerging identities both personal and professional and what I do matters. It matters very much and I try to give people a positive experience, challenging sometimes but still something that’s positive.” (M 527-534).**

In Christopher’s account he returns to the theme of power and authority in terms of his responsibility for assessment. He links this with time, in the sense of running out of time for supervisees to learn competent practice and systemic skills, thus he fears that his group might not be so complimentary about him. He suggests this is due to his insistence that each of them takes ownership of their work which reconnects to the themes of agency, responsibility, fairness and intentionality in making therapeutic decisions. Once again this is coherent with Christopher’s preference for promoting the ethical positions in therapy and his emphasis on process rather than content.

**“The first term would be really just sitting with the case and thinking about it. The second term would be thinking more systemically and**

**exploring hypotheses and the third term should be thinking things like the process of therapy, where is that leading them, where are they intending to go with the family and the shape of the team.” (C 468-472).**

### **Interpretation**

All of the supervisors articulate their perception of the mutual influencing process, some highlighting potential tension with their preferred positions. Jane holds the tension of responding to supervisees with a social constructionist approach when she prefers structural ideas and she wonders if some elements of that approach might be useful but hesitates to use them. Elizabeth embeds her social constructionist preferences of collaboration as an effective supervisory intervention that she constructs as more useful than confrontation. It is evident that this does not mean she avoids challenge but creates a picture of intervening to bring forth ideas from supervisees rather than implant them. Both female supervisors reflect preference for non-confrontational relationships.

For the male supervisors this does not seem to be important. Although Mark is keen that supervisees have a positive experience he is clear that he will challenge and this may affect the positive relationship and so be it. Christopher is more forthright on this issue and he states that his insistence about certain practices may contribute to less appreciative comments about him. He is unmoved by this returning to his notions of fairness, autonomy and agency which he believes is achieved through rigour and structure in training even if this is at a relational cost.

#### **4.1.8 Rare themes**

These are exceptions that appear in some texts and seem significant.

#### **4.1.9 Theme 1: Supervisees’ professional experience**

This theme includes the female supervisors' relationship with supervisees' professional experience and the relational effect on their supervisory practice. This does not appear in the male supervisors' accounts.

Both female supervisors introduce the notion that the supervisees' current and previous professional experience and training is relevant to their supervisory practice. Jane steers away from naming professional positions but talks of practice experience and skill in supervisees' employment contexts. She links this with her confidence to improvise and take more supervisory risks as she is satisfied that their practice is already competent.

Elizabeth similarly offers an idea that supervisees' previous experience enables her to encourage movement away from their familiar comfort zone in order to stretch practice. She gives an example in which she invites one supervisee to step away from her usual professional position and adopt a different frame of reference. As Jane, Elizabeth constructs this professional experience as creating affordances to her in supervision as she believes the supervisees can incorporate a range of new ideas due to their high level of competency. She gives an example of a supervisee with a social work background and her efforts to encourage a change in position, knowing that the supervisee brings expertise in risk assessment that may in some situations hide other ideas.

**“to help them reach their potential and help them to stretch and hopefully challenge in a way that’s not putting down..” (E 298-299).**

**...how would it be if you just left that to one side for a minute and come with, you know leave some of that behind? I guess it is about inviting people to try out different positions.” (E 338-341).**

## **Interpretation**

This rare theme contributes to the overarching narrative in which the female supervisors look at the live supervision group through a wide angled lens by incorporating all aspects of their supervisees including their professional contexts and levels of experience. They take this as an indication that they can take more risks and use a broader supervisory repertoire.

#### **4.1.10 Theme 2: Time**

This theme appears in some form across all of the texts but the effect of time, which is time available to attend to the different levels of supervisory responsibility is confined to one supervisor and it appears to have an organising effect and thus gives meaning to much of his activity. This can be linked to the stage of training and thus part of main theme two although there is no consistent articulation of time outside of the stage of training by any other supervisor.

Christopher's view of time appears to be a reflection of his common theme of agency on the part of the supervisees to take responsibility for the therapy they offer. He also makes connections with the constraining effect on his practice in terms of giving time to supervisees in a fair and equitable manner. He is clear that his supervision is in part organised by the supervisees achieving the required number of therapy hours over the course. He notes that this is likely to lead him into domain of production interventions rather than acting aesthetically (Lang, Little and Cronen, 1990). He talks of splitting the group to achieve therapy hours.

**“pressure of hours that actually takes away the kind of communal of collective spirit of working together.” (C 462-462).**

**“.....this year I would say that we have had very little time to rest and reflect whereas other times we would have some no shows and we'd do things that would be collaborative and exercises and also we would**

**explore ways of making more coherent narrative about therapy but time seems to be..... there is a scarcity there.”(C 530-534).**

Mark and Elizabeth both talk about the practice of splitting the group, called doubling up, but whereas Christopher concentrates on practice hours, Elizabeth and Mark seem keener on the notion of keeping the whole group together for at least one of the two sessions available for each live supervision event. The number of hours are a secondary consideration after the group cohesion.

### **Interpretation**

The issue of practice hours can be an issue for all of the supervisors, however, for Christopher it becomes a defining feature of the group. As he narrates this concern, he makes a comparison with previous groups in which hours were hard to achieve, persuading him of the urgency to split the group in the first term to ensure that supervisees get the required hours. Other supervisors may have had different experiences. Another aspect of this early splitting could relate to Christopher's attempts to encourage responsibility and accountability for individual practice or agency as he calls it. The other supervisors do some of this by splitting for one of the two evening sessions at this early stage of training but choose to remain together for the other.

The next section outlines the themes emerging from the supervisee interviews, inductive methods. Links with literature are identified in this section and fully explored in the discussion creating a deductive approach.

## 4.2 Supervisee narratives (year 1)

**Table 8: Summary of supervisee narratives: year 1**

| Common themes from data (inductive)  | Links between themes  | Rare themes from data (inductive) | Links with literature (deductive)  |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| <p>1. Training context and stage of training</p> <p>2. Learning styles / adult learning</p> <p>3. Session interventions/ practical and effect on supervisees</p> | <p>Practical elements of training and effects of assessment</p> | <p>1. Time</p>                    | <p>Gershenson &amp; Cohen (1978)<br/>           Friedman &amp; Kaslow (1986)<br/>           Schwartz (1988)<br/>           Markovic<br/>           Radovanovic (1993)<br/>           Atkins &amp; McGovern (2012)</p> <p>Dreyfus &amp; Dreyfus (1986)<br/>           Kolb (1984)<br/>           White &amp; Russell (1997)<br/>           Boyd Franklin (2001)<br/>           Burnham (2005 / 2010)<br/>           Bertrando (2008)<br/>           Boston (2010)<br/>           Daniel et al. (2010)<br/>           Chang &amp; Gaete (2014)</p> <p>Frankel &amp; Piercy (1990)<br/>           Smith et al. (1991)<br/>           McHale &amp; Carr (1998)<br/>           Moorhouse &amp; Carr (1999 / 2002)</p> |
| <p>4. 'fit'</p>  |   |                                   | <p>Von Foerster (1990)</p>   |

|  |  |                    |  |
|--|--|--------------------|--|
| <p>coordination between supervisees and supervisor</p> |  | <p>2. Emotions</p> | <p>Hawes (1992)<br/>Ungar (2006)<br/>Gergen (2012)<br/>Mason (2013)<br/>Sutherland et al. (2013)<br/>Chang &amp; Gaete (2014)</p>                |
| <p>5. Gender difference and similarity</p>             | <p>Relational aspects between supervisees and supervisors and learning</p> |                    | <p>Hardy &amp; Laszloffy (1995)<br/>Turner &amp; Fine (1997 / 2002)<br/>Karamat Ali (2001)<br/>Burnham &amp; Harris (2002)<br/>Aggett (2004)</p> |
| <p>6. Professional experience</p>                      |  |                    | <p>Dreyfus &amp; Dreyfus (1986) Nel (2006)</p>   |

Six main themes appear which can be grouped together. Coherence and difference with the supervisor interviews will be drawn out later.

Themes one to three emphasise the practical aspects between the supervisees and supervisors and the perceived effect this has on supervisees learning in the pressured environment of a training context. Themes four to six concern the relational elements of learning and the attendant emotional experiences.

There are two rare themes, time and emotion. Time is one rare theme which comes from Group 3 suggesting that time used and time available provides high levels of anxiety for the group. Emotion is the second rare theme beginning with Christine and filters through some of the other narratives.

#### 4.2.1 Theme 1: The training context / stage of training

This theme explores the complexity of the training context and the different expectations that supervisees have of the supervisors at different stages of training.

### **Similarities**

Supervisees all agree that each supervisor actively responds to their learning needs and has a practice competency framework in mind. They highlight the assessment context, securing clinical hours and the practice of doubling up.

### **Differences**

Differences relate directly to methods and techniques in supervisory action that suggests supervisors bring their own style to respond to the differing needs of the supervisees. Supervisees note evidence of responsive practice which is not common across all groups.

Christine (individual supervisee, preliminary interview) argues that the relationship between supervisee and supervisor in early stages of training is one of co-dependence which she suggests should include 'containment.' In action Christine looks for clarity and approval from her first supervisor that she is doing therapy 'right.'

**“the fact that we were being assessed , our supervisors were also our assessors and I think that does dramatically shape the relationships .....I’m thinking about how lots of our conversations were governed by those factors.” (C 158-165).**

Group 1 keeps in mind the assessment factor and concurs with Christine that the training context is a site of mutual influence. The group relates this to their explicit invitation to Jane to concentrate on making practice to theory links, connected with core practice competencies as systemic therapists. Even at this early stage they consider this to be preparation for the final viva examination.

**“I also think it is related to the course. You know how we name things that we did in the room because at some stage we are going to have to look at something and I actually think she is preparing us.” (Gp 1 851-854).**

Part of the assessment and learning for Group 1 hinges on the written feedback that Jane offers which is individual, specific and detailed in order that supervisees can review and recalibrate their work ready for the next session. They see this as progressive learning which provides a disciplined approach to their preparation for seeing families as well as the chance to articulate and explore theories that Jane suggests relevant to the family presentation.

Group 4 notes the practice and effect of written feedback as Elizabeth creates a recursive pattern with the supervisees as she requires them to engage in an e-mail exchange with her to develop ideas between sessions.

Group 3 offers less talk about the theory to practice connection and more about the process of training although this continues to focus on competent practice. They also describe this in relational and practical terms. Christopher takes the lead in directing the therapy with specific requirements relating to planning and hypothesizing ready for sessions. They credit Christopher with greater experience and knowledge in the field of systemic therapy. Although all groups allude to the experience and knowledge of the supervisors, Group 3 differs in their relationship to this through their positions as trainees.

**“I think as students you have a certain amount of respect for your supervisor, for their experience and knowledge and you know, not wanting to damage families at the end of the day, so to be guided by your supervisor and at the same time you are learning, you know it’s**

**between being directed but also finding out new things but trying them out carefully I suppose.” (Gp 3 407-414).**

This position of respect and deference is not so clear in other group narratives although it could be that some of the descriptions of failing to challenge supervisors’ ideas despite holding alternative views could be seen in the context of this deference to the supervisors’ experience. It is however consistent with Christine’s view of being slightly in awe of the experience of the supervisor.

Group 3 talks about the practice of doubling up which they view as an additional pressure as they have less time with their supervisor, although the alternative view is that he thinks they are capable of seeing families without his direct intervention. Group 3 seems to have mixed views about this at this early stage of training where they are more doubtful of their competence and confidence in the systemic model.

Group 2 approaches this differently. They see doubling up as evidence of Mark’s responsiveness to their learning, rather than frame this as the route to secure clinical hours. They note that Mark requires the group to stay together for new referrals and permits doubling up for ongoing work. They use phrases such as “we must be ready for it” as evidence that Mark tacitly understands their learning needs and is satisfied that they are competent enough to manage some sessions alone. Group 2 links this with course requirements. They also point out that Mark insists that they articulate their theory in action, to this end he suggests additional reading to expand practice. This concurs with other groups who believe that in different ways supervisors prepare them for assessment.

The suggestion that supervisors have a competency framework in mind is borne out by Group 4 when they say Elizabeth “is trying to get us all to a certain platform together.” They are clear that Elizabeth’s preference is to keep the group together for at least one session every week, doubling up for the other. They link this with

her view of their skill and development as well as her skill in containing their practice. Although they do not openly talk about the stage of training, it seems embedded in their notion that Elizabeth creates the kind of learning environment that provides security for them to develop in this first year of the course.

**“I guess there’s some uncertainty because this is a different level of learning in some way for us all. I don’t think any of us have done this kind of thing before. It is not just academic, it is very clinical learning, it’s very experiential and I wouldn’t want to have the safety net whipped away from under our feet and having to do it all ourselves.”**  
(Gp 4 206-210).

### **Interpretation**

The developing theme seems to be around the supervisors’ movement between using their practice experience to organise and shape the sessions in addition to offering suggestions and feedback in order to develop competency, confidence and identity as systemic therapists. This is coherent with the training context with an emphasis on developing practice skill and competence.

#### **4.2.2 Theme 2: Learning styles**

In some ways this theme is connected with theme 1 but is offered separately because individual supervisees appear to have different experiences of their supervisors that is not captured in the general theme of the stage of learning. This theme makes connections between supervisory action and the supervisees’ perceptions and responses to adult learning.

### **Similarities**

There is consensus across the groups that supervisors attempt to respond to supervisees' approach to learning with a range of methods that are in some way tailored to their individual requirements.

### **Differences**

The differences relate mostly to the style that supervisors use to support individual learning and the meaning that supervisees attach to their individual experience.

Group 1 is clear that Jane attends to their individual learning styles by treating them differently. They construct her as collaborative although they notice that she responds to them with different levels of intervention in sessions and different emphases in pre and post-sessions. This appears more fully in theme 6.

Group 1 and Group 4 cite written feedback as evidence that Jane and Elizabeth craft their supervisory interventions with individual and specific focus. They go into great detail about the efforts the supervisors make. Group 1 appreciates the notes that not only provide a contemporaneous record of the session but also indicate times on the DVD's that should be reviewed with suggestions from a supervisory position. They seem to be in awe of this ability and offer the following view:

**“...you can forget sometimes that she is really very experienced ..... you know she has got that experience. It is not like a neon light on her head but it's there.” (Gp 1 895-898).**

Group 4 supports the individualised approach and note that Elizabeth names specific skills that she expects to see develop as a result of reviewing DVD's and preparing for sessions. They talk of her expectation that they engage in dialogue about ideas for ongoing sessions through e-mail conversations which they consider to be evidence of adult learning.

They construct Elizabeth as collaborative with them as a group whilst attending to individual approaches through direct conversation in each session about their preferred way of being interrupted in sessions. This is reflected in one account in which a supervisee expressed concern about phone-in during early stages and other techniques were agreed.

Group 2 also talk about adult learning and Mark's positive expectations rather than high expectations and his belief in them and their professional development. This is enhanced by Mark's passion and commitment to them as a group. One striking feature of Mark's input at individual level is his frequent recommendation of additional specific and focused reading which they link with adult learning and their responsibility to expand knowledge.

Group 3 returns to the theme of Christopher's directive interventions in the early stages of the group, the meaning around which they construct differently. Some come from an appreciative position and imagine that this is evidence that they need support in creating a structure that is familiar and helpful for therapy sessions through the use of a structured approach in supervision. Other are more frustrated with this approach and experience it as a kind of strait-jacket constraining their practice. At individual level Christopher requires planning between sessions in order to be ready for families which is consistent with other supervisors. What is different is the recurring emphasis on the process of therapy which some of the individual supervisees find confusing although the overarching view is that this meta-position in therapy is of great value.

### **Interpretation**

This theme shows the potential for tension between constructing the groups as homogenous, in that they are all learning to become systemic therapists with the individual needs of each person in the group. This can be expressed by working to

create a therapeutic team on one hand and trying to develop autonomous individual practitioners on the other. In navigating this dual purpose supervisees notice differences in the way that they are offered feedback which is understood in the context of the relationship with the supervisee and the group. The female supervisors use formal writing methods to feedback whilst the male supervisors choose informal verbal feedback. All supervisors provide written assessment at some points in the course. Some prefer open transparent methods that are direct and others appreciate the opportunity to review their work between sessions.

### **4.2.3 Theme 3: Session interventions**

This theme covers the whole session activity and the various patterns and habits that groups create as well as more flexible practices. In some senses this captures the stable supervisory activity, structure of the sessions and the flexible and creative activity within this structure.

There is consensus amongst the groups about the pattern of supervision groups and the use of phone-in interventions which is consistent with the supervisors' accounts.

#### **Similarities**

There is general agreement that the Milan method is common across all groups. Within this common method there are a number of similarities and differences at the level of supervisory intervention.

Some of the connections relate to the pre-session where there are remarkably few differences.

#### **Pre-session**

The focus is usually on the supervisee preparing to see the family. All groups follow a process of hypothesizing and planning which they transform into practical

options. They concur that supervisors generally take a lead in this process to the point of gathering ideas and deciding which will be taken into the session. They all notice that as they become more experienced their supervisors are less likely to be directive and more likely to encourage their voices.

### **Session interventions**

Supervisees describe supervisors' preference for phone-in interventions as the primary tool for adjusting practice during the session, although the number of interventions differs and this appears to be influenced by time and experience.

They concur that there are two major factors that lead to in-session interventions. One is risk assessment and the other case drift, directly relating to the hypothesizing process in the pre-session. If the trigger for intervention is risk, the supervisees feel they must act as the supervisor instructs. Group 3 notes that Christopher requires them to state that the intervention comes from the supervisor rather than the team. Other supervisors offer specific instructions that they require the supervisees to carry out word for word in the session.

All groups note that supervisors in their own way monitor the direction of therapy and if there are signs of stuck practice or repetition or pattern of themes, or neglected and marginalized family voices, these cue interventions. With case drift supervisees suggest that supervisors are more tentative in their interventions making them as invitations rather than instructions giving supervisees some leeway to use them or consider them as part of the post-session discussion.

### **Behind the screen**

Groups concur with quiet focus behind the screen, directly relevant to the family in session. They construct the supervisor as holding the authority to decide upon interventions and make phone calls or decisions to reflect. Supervisees agree that supervisors' language is usually tentative behind the screen inviting them to think

of alternative ideas whilst paying close attention to the content of the session. This reflects the common view that supervisors place the therapy to families as the highest context marker and learning that is not associated directly with the case is reserved for the post-session.

### **Post-session**

The similarity across the post-session is the focus on the supervisee who has seen the family. All groups declare much more freedom, creativity, flexibility and playfulness in the post-sessions. However, the techniques to achieve this differ.

### **Differences**

#### **Session interventions**

The frequency of phone-in differs between groups with Group 2 noting as many as ten interventions in the early sessions and as few as three in later ones, which are tailored to the specific learning needs of the supervisee. Other groups report far fewer interruptions.

Other differences relate to reflecting team practices. Groups 1, 2 and 4 use reflecting team approaches by either entering the therapy room as a group or alternatively swapping rooms with the family. They also use the option of taking a therapeutic break and going behind the screen for ideas to bring back to the family. Group 3 operates differently in that they always go behind the screen for a therapeutic break. They talk about practicing the reflecting team approach and planning to use it although this has not yet occurred in the first term. They anticipate that this will be a development when they experiment more. In some ways they link this with competency and experience as a learning process.

The notion of experimentation emerges from Groups 2 and 4 through descriptions of wider ranges of supervisory options in-session and post-session. This creates

continual movement both physically and practically through the introduction of new ideas. This is characterised by changing rooms, including supervisors in the reflecting team, staying outside of the session and encouraging the supervisee group to reflect and using reflexive questions to reflect on practice. The style of intervention is co-created and agreed prior to the session. Both groups offer examples to support this co-created practice. Group 2 gives an example of Mark suggesting that one supervisee try a particular narrative approach about which the supervisee hesitated. The supervisee remembers declining the invitation without adverse consequence and notes that the effect was to read up on the approach in order to introduce it in another session.

Group 4 in a similar vein talks of Elizabeth's practice of negotiating with the group about interventions to support their development. They recall specific conversation during which Elizabeth would ask,

**“what do you think would be best for you?” (Gp 4 98-99).**

### **Behind the screen**

Despite many similarities the differences behind the screen are more to do with the supervisory style and posture during the session. For Groups 1 and 2 the supervisor assumes the lead position in making interventions and deciding upon which interventions will be offered, sometimes to the point of not discussing them with supervisees.

Group 3 and 4 suggest the responsibility for interventions largely rests with them. For Group 3 this is associated with the practice of doubling up as their supervisor moves between two sessions making their supervisee colleagues their consistent in-session resource. This provides one explanation for the delay in using the reflecting team as it is possible that only one person is behind the screen, whereas for a

therapeutic break, they can call upon Christopher as he moves between two simultaneous sessions.

Group 4 directly connect interventions to Elizabeth's style. They largely describe Elizabeth making the interventions but suggest that decisions about them are co-constructed. They also talk of the practice of holding back as something jointly made.

**“Sometimes we would gate-keep Elizabeth when we would say just give him a minute he is going to get there. So we'd kind of encourage Elizabeth to hold off so I think there was a kind of process about that.”**  
**(Gp 4 122-125).**

### **Post-session**

The post-session is where the supervisees notice more creativity and freedom between them and their supervisors. Despite the overarching view that Jane is “laid back” Group 1 experience her in the post-session as more interventionist. They construct this as Jane's intention to expand their practice and are more likely to consider theory and practice links at this point with the freedom to develop widening conversations. This idea of more freedom is reflected in Group 2 although they are clear that they have routine in the structure which usually includes Mark interviewing the supervisee who has seen the family. However, all describe opportunities to be more playful and to offer a range of ideas from their reflecting positions. Group 3 continues the theme of creativity suggesting that post-sessions provide more chances to consider their activity and offer ideas for others. Group 3 routinely comes together for the post-sessions. Due to doubling up Christopher does not observe all of the sessions and thus needs to create some post-session activity that is useful but cannot focus on content. They describe an occasion when Christopher asked the two supervisees seeing families to talk to one

another about their experiences of the therapy they created. As they could not focus on content they focus on the process of therapy and the development of therapeutic identity which is a feature of the group's conversation. They talk about this as a very good learning experience and illustrative of the shift that they know Christopher encourages. They stop short of calling this isomorphism but as with other post-session activity there seems to be a deliberate intention to create specific learning.

Group 4 is by far the most experimental group in the post-session with explicit conversations about a range of practices that create movement within the supervision group in terms of ideas and actions. They include the supervisor as instrumental in making this possible and openly talk of the reciprocal processes between them and Elizabeth.

**“She was very creative in that she allowed us to choose what type of feedback we wanted and how we wanted feedback.” (Gp 4 357-358).**

**“The post-session, I don't think it was Elizabeth's voice any more dominant than others.” (Gp 4 367-368).**

### **Interpretation**

What seems to emerge within the consistent Milan method is varied accounts of supervisory practice. Some make links with their perception of supervisor preferences in orientation whilst others pay more attention to what they imagine supervisors are trying to achieve with them as both learners and developing therapists. They concur that supervisors make efforts to raise the profile of different aspects of systemic therapy.

#### **4.2.4 Theme 4: Fit / coordination**

This theme relates to the shared understanding between supervisees and their supervisors about live supervision and the various approaches that shape action. This can be described as coordination and flow in the sessions and coherence with a conceptual approach. It also incorporates feelings of connection / disconnection.

### **Similarities**

All groups highlight the importance of the relationship they build with the supervisor, the way that this affects practice and their feelings about the supervision groups. Fit appears to be about mutual understanding as well as any perception of theoretical orientation.

Two distinct narratives emerge about fit. The first focuses on the relationship between the group and supervisor and is articulated with feeling language. The second is more about conceptual and theoretical coherence. Both frames describe the relationship between feeling connected or disconnected to the supervisor or experiencing coherence and coordination in thinking and action. Groups 1 and 3 show some clear similarity in their emotional relational stance whilst Groups 2 and 4 use a cognitive theoretical orientation as their frame of reference.

Christine's description seems to straddle the two positions talking about emotion, theory and action. She uses fit to describe moments of connection with the supervisor when sharing interventions and ideas in a way that is accessible to the group. This seems to be a transitory story with her first supervisor whom she describes as mystifying which is coherent with other aspects of Christine's narrative of confusion and unfamiliarity in the early stages of training. Christine overlays her own preference for clarity which she wishes her supervisor shared

thus creating better fit. Another important feature for Christine is the supervisors' capacity to offer feedback without appearing to criticise.

Group 1, female supervisor and four female supervisees and Group 3, male supervisor and mixed gender group enrich the description of feelings created between supervisor and supervisees.

For Group 1 the overarching narrative is one of the supervisor caring for them although they are keen to note that there is also supervisory rigour. The group offers phrases such as "knowledgeable and caring," "a nurturing encourager," "I think she likes us." In creating this story about fit, the group extends this into supervisory action describing Jane's open style of communication which encourages them to experiment. They introduce the word trust as a component of open communication and make this relational as they say:

**"She kind of knows where we are at and there's something about her trusting cos if someone was really really struggling they would say."  
(Gp 1 572-574).**

Group 3 shares some similarity with Group 1 through their use of feeling language to articulate their experience of fit with Christopher. Unlike Group 1 this takes a different turn with phrases such as "I haven't always felt comfortable" and "I feel that I have been misunderstood." This story of disconnection contrasts with Group 1's story of connection and thus some sections of Group 3's narrative appear in the section about differences.

The second approach which sees Groups 2 and 4 pairing relates to experiences of their supervisor's orientation which can be articulated as theory. Group 2 comprises male and female supervisees with Mark as supervisor. In this case without exception they spontaneously use words associated with attachment theory such as "creating a safe and secure base," "containment," "someone is holding you

in mind,” and “someone is actually with you, someone is present,” although they do not declare attachment theory as Mark’s preferred orientation. Inside this story of attachment, they are clear that this does not translate into agreement but they note that their ability to take risks in their work is encouraged through Mark’s approach which they call “compassionate.” They offer the following ideas about their relational coordination with Mark which captures both feeling and practical elements.

**“There are times when I want to take a risk or I am a couple of steps ahead and that’s OK and I know that Mark is still there if I fall down.” (Gp 2 130-132).**

Group 4, a mixed gender group with Elizabeth as supervisor, is similar to Group 2 in that they use words associated with a theoretical orientation such as “collaboration,” “co-construction” and “feedback loops”. Unlike other groups they are much more explicit about linking this with Elizabeth’s social constructionist leaning. They give example after example of collaborative practices. One such example is Elizabeth’s practice of exploring supervisory preferences with supervisees about in-session interventions.

**“This kind of ties in with what I was thinking earlier and it is the process of supervision and I think the way that it has been done has allowed us to develop as individuals. You know if Elizabeth has just come in with pearls of wisdom then we would become little Elizabeth’s and I think that you know we’ve blossomed into lots of different people.” (Gp 4 528-533).**

### **Differences**

The consistent story is one of connection between groups and supervisor. Group 3 takes a different stance by offering a story of disconnection. This seems to intrigue

them and creates some curiosity about what they make with their supervisor and seems to initiate some reflexive conversations that lead to four different readings of the feeling of disconnection.

Initially a gendered explanation is offered with the male supervisee noting discomfort with Christopher's style of feedback to him which he constructs as critical. This resonates with Christine's view that if there is lack of fit with the supervisor feedback can sound critical. The group recognises the description although not all have the same experience. It may be that there are some features of the relationship between the male supervisor and male supervisee that creates the level of discomfort that the supervisee experiences. This may be to do with gender or orientation, age, experience or other defining features that influence their participation in the group. These are all issues that the group consider.

A second reading by the group relates to their confusion about Christopher's emphasis on process rather than content in sessions in the early stages of training. This seems to be a key issue defining lack of fit as each of the group members enjoys and understands the stories that families bring at the level of content and talk of the challenge of making the shift to process. Intellectually they concur that this shift is required as they develop their practice and do not offer this as a criticism of Christopher but talk of confusion and misunderstanding and their emotional struggle with process.

**“I have enjoyed making that shift and latterly it has showed in my family that I have been more aware of process.” (Gp 3 233-235).**

The third reading they offer is more obviously relational. The male supervisee offers one possible explanation as he notes that the group can be quiet which Christopher might understand as a lack of enthusiasm which may then influence his supervisory interventions and supervisory style, making him more likely to instruct

and direct and less likely to pursue collaborative conversations. They posit another view about the potential recursive effect of their quietness that Christopher might develop the idea that his supervision is not good enough.

The fourth reading relates to the effect of doubling up on the development of relationships. Doubling up is mentioned by other groups but more as a piece of information rather than a defining relational feature. Group 3 offers this as one reason for feeling less like a team as they construct their sessions as pressured for time thus affecting their relationship with Christopher and one another which provides another explanation for the narrative of disconnection. This is expanded in the rare theme of time.

### **Interpretation**

This theme seems to strengthen a developing narrative that supervisors' actions, feedback and commentary on practice is understood inside a relational frame. For example, on those occasions when supervisees have not established a good relationship with their supervisor, they hear feedback as critical. There is no suggestion that the feedback is unwarranted or unnecessary which suggests the response is more to do with the relationship becoming a context for the episodes of feedback. Alternatively it may be that the frequency of the episodes of feedback define the relationship.

#### **4.2.5 Theme 5: Gender / difference and similarity**

This theme introduces and describes the potential effects of gender, although unlike the supervisors where gender appears to be an important defining element of their relationship with supervisees, the supervisees hold this as only one context marker amongst many. Therefore this theme expands to incorporate any issues of diversity and similarity to include ethnicity, age, culture and other defining features of personhood.

## **Similarities**

All groups mention gender as one feature that shapes the group and provides some explanations for their relationships and actions. This is in sharper focus in Group 1 than others which may be to do with the all-female group. They support and extend this femaleness through descriptions of chatting before getting down to work which they feel creates “a kind of communicative atmosphere.” They include Jane in this story talking about her as a “fifth woman” and “one of us.” This perception creates Jane as part of the group and they take great care to articulate that she “isn’t on her own.” They do not go as far as to talk about consensus between the females in the group but they do construct a story of all women together in the endeavour of live supervision and make less distinctions between themselves and Jane, although they are clear that Jane has overall responsibility and they appreciate the way that this is held very lightly.

Christine similarly uses gender as a frame for making sense of her supervision group although she concentrates more on the effect of the gender of the supervisees and her perception of gendered discourses played out in a mixed gender group. She makes an explicit statement from her experience that female supervisees have less confidence than males which in turn invites different supervisory activity. Christine recalls occasions when a pattern of competition forms part of the relationship between a female supervisor and a male supervisee. As a consequence of this, Christine notes that she and another female supervisee felt marginalized in the group. She primarily offers this as a gender story although it is evident from her conversation that stage of training and perceptions of relevant professional experience in the work place are also influential factors.

Group 3 express interest in the male gender of the supervisor and his attempts to create some balance between male and female supervisees. They do however note that there seems to be some element of competition between the male supervisee

and supervisor which includes noticeably more feedback. They choose not to maintain a single explanation for this and introduce ideas about culture and theoretical preference. These differences appear to be more influential in creating some tension rather than the sameness in gender, creating connection. The female supervisees concur with this construction and reflect this back to the groups' struggle with process and content. They talk about the group process rather than separate elements of it.

### **Differences**

Group 2 makes very little comment about gender, noting the differences in their professional contexts outside of the training group as more significant. They create a story of more or less experience with opportunities to practice systemic therapy. Although the group has male and female supervisees, this seems to be secondary to the group process which reaffirms the notion of nurturing as a description not only of the supervisor but also between group members. Interestingly it is this group that explicitly explores issues of diversity and similarity as part of their hypothesizing process which is not highlighted in the same way with other groups.

Group 4 is balanced in terms of two female and two male supervisees. They make some comment about gender but once more this is not a defining feature for them. They offer age and stage of life cycle as more significant. Unlike the other groups, they explicitly talk of moments when Elizabeth creates opportunities to learn more about their professional and personal selves with one another through the use of a cultural genogram. They give many examples of feeling very connected to one another and to Elizabeth either through femaleness or age or stage of their own family life cycle. This is the only group that talks about making professional connection due to personal knowledge of one another. They posit ideas about openness as an explanation for this.

Despite both Mark and Elizabeth noting the differences in gender and ethnicity in their narratives their groups, 2 and 4 do not highlight these features as significant although they note the disciplined inclusion of the Social GRRRAACCEEESSS (Burnham 2012) in their hypothesizing process in relation to families.

### **Interpretation**

Supervisees construct a more complex explanation for their relationships with supervisors including a range of ideas that construct their own identity and their perception of their supervisor's identity. Although gendered explanations are part of the narrative, it is evident that this explanation is too narrow for the supervisees who use many other contexts to account for their connection and disconnection with their supervisor. This may reflect the need for further attention to such issues in live supervision.

#### **4.2.6 Theme 6: Professional experience**

This theme includes perceptions about the value and utility of experience outside of the training context and the different ways in which this is considered and used by the supervisors. One recurring feature appears to be the tension between high levels of professional experience and competence in supervisees' places of work and the relative inexperience and lack of competence in the training environment and the consequent effect on the supervisees' activity. Although there are many links between this theme and the training context and stage of training, sufficient weight was given to previous and current experience to offer it as a separate theme.

### **Similarities**

Three of the four groups introduce the context of previous and current professional experience as one way of comparing and contrasting their experiences in live

supervision. Christine makes a compelling story of lack of experience in systemic therapy that contrasts with considerable experience as a child protection social worker. It seems that the supervisor in her first year did not appreciate and utilize her professional experience choosing to construct her as an inexperienced therapist thus not adjusting her supervision to take account of skills from another context. She recalls the tension between them and a tendency for Christine to feel marginalised so much so that when a child protection issue emerged in a case, she remembers feeling unable to speak with the benefit of her experience and recalls a bruising experience.

**“...I kept on thinking she just doesn’t understand what this is really like for me... you know I’ve just never done this before.” (C 468-469).**

Group 4 follows this theme of tension between professional experience in employment and inexperience in the training context. One male supervisee observes that in his usual place of work he may challenge ideas more often. This is a coherent story across the group who then begin to frame their lack of challenge with the position of trainee, citing they have more to learn as well as being experienced professionals. In this instance the supervisees appear to set aside their professional capacity in favour of the student position. However, one supervisee makes an explicit link with the power and authority of the supervisor as assessing practice which has a constraining effect.

**“For me I think some of the ideas she may have held about a particular family, I wished I had challenged them but again the context of being a trainee it felt quite disempowering.” (Gp 4 266-268).**

This seems to make distinctions between Elizabeth’s social constructionist orientation and her responsibilities and position as supervisor in a training context. This is the only group to make this point in relation to professional experience

though other groups introduce power and inequality as part of the training narrative.

Group 3 confirms the potential for tension created through experience in work places and inexperience in systemic therapy. They describe the effect as constraining their ability to improvise and adapt in sessions. Unlike other groups they link this with pressure of time and worries that the training context may become more important than the service to families. Group 3 is the only group to consider their experience from the family point of view.

### **Differences**

In contrast to Christine's position, Group 1 suggests that Jane explicitly uses their professional experience in making her decisions about how to supervise each of them and to bring forth ideas from their professional positions during the post-sessions. One of the supervisee's posits the idea that supervisors also have different experience to call upon that is not comprehensive of every practice context and so sometimes the supervisees have more to offer in a post-session conversation, which is possible due to the open appreciation of their view.

Group 1 articulates this ongoing inclusion of professional experience. One supervisee offers the view that Jane pays more attention to her especially in relation to child protection and risk assessment as a result of having less experience than others in the group in this area of work. She describes Jane's action as caring. One supervisee notices that Jane may construct her as very able and give less feedback as a consequence. An overarching theme comes across as Jane's ability to bring out ideas from the group in ways that use their professional resources whether this is in pre-sessions or other parts of the session. They concur that they view Jane as very experienced which enables them to relax into the sessions knowing that she will respond if needed.

Group 2 comments on their range of professional contexts and they are more occupied with the relationships in the group rather than experience they bring from outside. They construct themselves as a group that is greater than the separate individuals. In this way they reflect the notions of family system and ideas about connection rather than distinctions.

### **Interpretation**

It is clear that supervisees are very experienced professionals who have much to contribute to supervision groups. However, the attraction to the position of learner, whether constructed by the supervisors or supervisees, seems to affect the use of their experience. Some supervisees share inner dialogue about this and seem curious that they do not utilize their professional confidence and competence as a resource to the group and a legitimate position from which to challenge the supervisor. This could link to power, assessment and the overwhelming view that in spite of their experience, in this context they are novices.

#### **4.2.7 Rare themes**

#### **4.2.8 Theme 1: Time**

The theme of time filters through all of the texts in some way but the decision to offer this as a marginal theme is largely to do with the particular expression and influence of time that appears to constrain one group's learning.

A shared description of time across all of the groups is in relation to the stage of training, the timing of doubling up, the constraints of time in live supervision and the pressure to see families to achieve the required practice hours. However, Group 3 is the only group for which this is an enduring narrative. They talk of feeling rushed throughout the supervision session either by virtue of taking too long to do

the pre-session, using in-session behind the screen conversations rather than in the room reflecting team activity creating a knock-on effect of never catching up, resulting in families not receiving their allotted therapy time. This construction and experience of time seems to influence their ability to learn under pressure. They openly wonder about their stage of experience which also contributes to anxiety.

#### **4.2.9 Theme 2: Emotions**

This theme deals with the emotional effects, typically anxiety in live supervision. For one or two supervisees this becomes an influential experience through which they understand their relationships with their supervisors. There is no consensus across the groups about emotions. This appears to be at individual level. However for some emotional somatic experiences define the current relationship and the perception of the future relationship with their supervisor. This then becomes the meaning they attach to supervisory interventions.

Feeling language appears in many of the group narratives with words and phrases such as “comfortable,” “we like her and she likes us,” and “we feel safe and nurtured.” Christine in her individual interview describes her feelings in much stronger and sometimes deficit terms. She uses phrases such as “absolutely terrified,” as a generalised term about the relationship with her first supervisor then goes on to make some specific comments that connect to episodes of supervision. It is this aspect that has some resonance with individuals in the groups.

One of the male supervisees in Group 3 offers something similar as he discusses his perception of being misunderstood and treated differently to the female members of the group. This continues to have an impact on his view of his own ability and confidence in sessions which he has raised with the supervisor. In Group 4, one of the male supervisees openly wonders why he does not challenge

more when he disagrees with Elizabeth. This hesitancy to act or ability to discuss seems to be part of the complex interaction between assessment and the position of trainee connected with the power and authority invested in the supervisor. All of these emotional experiences in some way begin to define the supervisees as they prepare to change supervisors for the second year.

### **Interpretation**

A common element of the rare themes is an ongoing preoccupation with time and emotion as defining supervisory relationships which leads to some concern that this may compromise learning for some supervisees. It may be that some supervisees use their somatic experience to make sense of their interactions and relationships and this supervisory context is no exception.

### **4.3 Supervisee narratives (year 2)**

It is common practice for the groups to change supervisors for the second year of the course to enrich the training experience. In order to consider the effect of time on the experiences between supervisors and supervisees I planned to re-interview two groups who had swapped supervisors. I hoped to learn whether the narratives that supervisors tell about their practice is consistent over time with different groups as well as tracking the relational effect of the supervisees on the supervisors' practices, the co-constructed element of supervision.

This plan did not materialise as two of the supervisors in the first wave of data collection in 2013 withdrew from groups in 2014. Out of the four supervisors interviewed in year one, only Mark and Elizabeth continued with second year groups. I decided to interview their second year groups. Group 3 participated previously moving from Christopher to Mark for their second year. Group 5 participated for the first time, although they were supervised by Elizabeth whose group had participated in a previous group interview (see table 4 in methodology). The consistency is the groups are giving accounts relating to two supervisors from the original wave of data collection.

The interviews were recorded on DVD. I assume that Mark and Elizabeth continue to use their characteristic approaches to supervision. This is not intended to be a comparison with year 1, but an attempt to understand any effect of time on the range of supervisee narratives.

**Table 9: Summary of supervisee narratives: year two**

| Common themes from data (inductive)  | Links between themes   | Rare themes from data (inductive)                                     | Links with literature (deductive)  |
|--|--|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sessions and interventions</li> <li>2. Training context and learning styles</li> <li>3. Supervisor's language</li> </ol> | <p>Practical elements of training and effects of assessment</p>            | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Change no change</li> </ol> | <p>See table 6</p> <p>See table 6</p> <p>Liddle et al. (1988)<br/>Hawes (1992)<br/>Haber (1997)</p>  |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Co-ordination and fit</li> <li>5. Time</li> </ol>  | <p>Relational aspects between supervisees and supervisors and learning</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Gender</li> </ol>           | <p>Liddle, Davidson &amp; Barrett (1988)<br/>Garret &amp; Dent (1997)<br/>Edwards &amp; Miocevic (1999)<br/>Murphy &amp; Wright (2005)</p> <p>Dreyfus &amp; Dreyfus (1986)<br/>Boscolo &amp; Bertrando (1993)<br/>Chua (2006)<br/>Morgan &amp; Sprenkle (2007)</p> |

Five themes emerge. The overarching supervisee narrative is one of comparison between the experience in year one and year two. There is considerable overlap with themes from year one which will be explored in the discussion.

#### **4.3.1 Theme 1: Structure of sessions and interventions**

The Milan approach continues to be the consistent structure for sessions as does the supervisors' expectation that supervisees review DVD's and prepare for each session of therapy. The groups note that phone-in remains the most common form of intervention but the supervisees' talk of more flexibility about making decisions about interventions rather than waiting for the supervisor to take the lead. Group 5 note that Elizabeth is less likely to come into the therapy room and more likely to monitor practice and resist making interventions. This contrasts with their experience in year 1 where the supervisor's interventions were immediate.

Group 3 names the link with Mark's attachment approach and go on to describe his practice of providing a secure base from which they can experiment. This is consistent with the experience of Mark's first group. The effect this seems to have on the group is to be more relaxed and creative in their own practice. This could also be to do with time and experience.

They reiterate that Mark offers points of learning behind the screen and suggests reading relevant to the cases they see. This is in contrast with year one when they note that they were so occupied with course reading and not able to expand into new areas. This makes a direct link with the stage of training and time. Group 5 reflects on Elizabeth's practice of thinking, waiting and not interrupting and they wonder if this is a gender story, evidence of her relaxed style or indeed about the stage of training.

As with year one, post-sessions continue to be the most flexible and creative points in the sessions. Group 3 notes that Mark can be very direct in his feedback. They

suggest that as they become more skilled and confident, they experience direct feedback as enabling rather than critical. Group 3 considers this as evidence that they now know how to do therapy (process) and are refining their practice skill and understanding of the different issues that families bring. In many ways this narrative is consistent with Group 5 as they suggest that in the post-session they are learning a variety of methods to give and receive feedback. One of the supervisees constructs this as moving towards autonomous practice and developing therapeutic resourcefulness.

#### **4.3.2 Theme 2: The training context and learning styles**

The pressure of the training context does not change over time, although the supervisees worry about different aspects of assessments. One difference in practice is the shift from knowing what to do in therapy sessions to knowing how to do therapy. Group 3 talks of year one providing the foundation and structure whilst year two provides refinement and flexibility to incorporate and integrate different ideas and practices. This is characterised by their perception that in year one they worried about whether they were getting things right to year two where they are interested in whether they are being useful. This is consistent with Christine's change over the two years from high anxiety about getting it right to embracing experimentation and maximising her development as a therapist. Group 5 concurs with this view. One supervisee uses the phrases, "spreading our wings" and "there is better fit between me and the discipline." These phrases capture the movement from doing therapy and becoming a therapist. This links with stages of learning and movement from novice to proficient or anxiety to calm and collegiate.

Group 3 talk of acting more like adult learners, taking responsibility for reading in contrast to acting as children with homework to complete. Their narrative follows the family metaphors that both Christopher their first supervisor and Mark, their second year supervisor use. They reflect this positional shift from the supervisor as

teacher to facilitator in year two. As a result they feel more able to reposition themselves to act as confident practitioners capable of expressing their own views knowing this kind of challenge will be welcome. They view Mark's approach as encouraging assertiveness and curiosity. Group 5 notices growing confidence as therapists reflected in less interventions.

### **4.3.3 Theme 3: Supervisor's language**

Group 3 describes Mark's language as dialogical, facilitating and encouraging of independent practice. Christine reflects this in her account of her second supervisor becoming more invitational and collaborative and relational.

**“there was an invitation with our second supervisor that she would adapt and do things differently according to what our preferences umm and whilst still being absolutely explicit that she had a duty of ensure that our clinical practice was of an appropriate standard.” (C 134-138).**

Group 5 makes little comment about the style of language reiterating the idea that Elizabeth is less directive and more reflective, taking time to intervene.

### **4.3.4 Theme 4: Coordination and fit**

This theme provides some insight into the relational aspects between Group 3 and Mark and Group 5 and Elizabeth. Group 3 recalls the conversation about their contribution to the relationship they made with Christopher and reconnect with it as they describe their relationship with Mark. They refresh their view that their previous supervisor might have appeared distant due to their levels of anxiety and confusion about making sense of the course and therapy practice which may have seen them retreat from Christopher thus affecting his response. They contrast this confusion in year one with clarity in year two and credit Mark's ability to give focused feedback in ways that engage them.

As in year one Group 3 continues to use feeling language to illustrate fit with their supervisor. They relate to Mark's approach as a warm, clear and focused supervisor. They also note their own shifts in confidence with different theories leading to a slight reduction in anxiety during sessions.

Group 5 contrasts their experiences over the two years suggesting that the first year provides them and the supervisor with an opportunity to shape one another in action. In the second year they highlight the emergence of therapist identity. Group 5 talks in very intimate ways about their group ethos and considers the challenge of a new supervisor entering such a close and intimate group. They describe this as unsettling. This reflects Christopher's notion of step parenting. Group 5 immediately make links with this which gives some meaning to their experience.

#### **4.3.5 Theme 5: Time**

For Group 3 time remains an important context in a way that is not shared with other groups. However, their relationship with time is different as they realise that the emphasis from Christopher in year one to secure as many practice hours as possible creates more freedom to use time differently in year two. Group 3 now talks of time as an asset rather than a constraint to practice with conversations of time to introduce new ideas into the session, time to concentrate on issues of diversity and difference as a core practice, time to relax and enjoy their learning and 'raise their game'. This is in contrast to their earlier versions of time which they remember as a constraint. They connect this difference to Mark's relaxed style which seems to have a recursive effect on their view of time and use of time. It may also link to the security of knowing that they are achieving their practice hours reducing pressure on time. Another reading is that the time elapsing leads to review of their first year experience in the light of their second year.

For Group 5 time links more clearly to their ability to include new facets of self into practice. One example is that there is an implicit and explicit understanding that they can do systemic therapy and can now incorporate their own experience and ideas from other contexts to widen their repertoire. They reflect less concern about whether they are practicing systemically and more confidence in their own abilities. This also connects with their openness as a group and willingness to give one another feedback.

#### **4.3.6 Rare themes**

#### **4.3.7 Theme 1: Change no change**

This theme only appears in Group 5 as they question the practice of changing supervisors. Their thoughts on this are to do with the intimacy they develop when forming the group, something that the second supervisor can never know. They talk of deeply textured stories within the group that creates cohesiveness and knowing from within in terms of language and rituals around the supervision sessions. This narrative of belonging which is in part as a consequence of their first supervisor's interactions with them leads them to hesitate about including a second supervisor in the same intimate way, hence the connection with the idea of step-parenting. Group 5 are open to the notion that the strength of their connection may be hard to join. They also share comments about loss of their first supervisor.

#### **4.3.8 Theme 2: Gender**

Group 5 make some observations not articulated by Group 3 (who have experience only of male supervisors) that there are differences in style which they attribute in part to gender. This concerns speed and style of interventions. The overall view is that their previous male supervisor intervened immediately in relation to an idea and might say to the supervisees that he would give feedback that could be painful

but that is the process of learning. Elizabeth on the other hand does not intervene immediately preferring to monitor, and wait and never interrupts a client.

There is another story that in some ways is constructed by gender relating to feedback. Group 5's first male supervisor, like Jane and Elizabeth offers detailed and specific feedback with the DVD for supervisees to review. What is different is the practice of making this public with the rest of the group which fits with Group 5's version of their cohesive group and attending to group learning. They contrast this with Elizabeth's feedback which is given to each supervisee at individual level. They wonder if this is about developing individual learning and moving towards independent practice, rather than the group experience which characterises their first year.

## 4.4 Observation of one live supervision group

**Table 10: Themes from observation**

| <b>Themes from observation (inductive)</b>                   |
|--|
| 1. Structure of sessions                                     |
| 2. Connection between supervisor and supervisees             |
| 3. Effects of the stage of training and the learning context |
| 4. Supervisor's approach / style                             |

This section reports on an observation over one evening with one group seeing two families during the second term of the first year of the MSc. This is intended to complement the themes from the interviews and makes no claim to be representative of all groups or even consistent with this group across different meetings.

Themes reflected in the observation are structure of sessions which includes pre, in-session and post session activities, the notion of fit and coordination between the group members and supervisor, the training / learning context including the supervisor's use of language.

### 4.4.1 Theme 1: Structure of sessions

Consistent with the descriptions from supervisors and supervisees, the group uses the traditional Milan five part session as the consistent framework.

#### **Pre-session**

This pre-session activity is consistent with that reported in interviews. The supervisor takes the lead in directing the flow of conversation.

**“I need to bring you back down again, how do you want to start with this family, why are we here? Holding on to other ideas might be something we do over a number of sessions.” (J 55-61).**

Although this style could be described as directive, the supervisor creates opportunities for broader hypothesizing only assuming an authoritative stance immediately prior to the session when the family arrives. She then uses collaborative interactions with conversations about session interventions giving several options to the therapist in the room. This includes a statement about allowing about 20 minutes before the first interventions. This is consistent with other supervisors and seems to be a feature of systemic live supervision.

Jane constantly negotiates with supervisees about how they want to contribute to the session, what learning points they wish to achieve that will influence their next sessions and whether or not to offer a reflecting team. This style of collaboration fits with the notions of social constructionism which is favoured by the female supervisors interviewed.

This movement between encouraging broad hypotheses and inviting collaborative interventions and creating a structure to harness ideas from a directive position captures the pattern that appears in other pre-sessions with supervisors taking a wide angled lens then moving to a sharper focus as the families arrive. This is consistent across all of the pre-sessions. This directive posture relates to the construction and process of therapy.

Jane reflects positions of responsibility for the direction of the pre-session and offers sixteen interventions in the first pre-session and seven in the second in contrast with the supervisees who offer ten and five respectively. This seems to support the supervisory emphasis on preparing supervisees to provide good therapy to clients as the highest context and taking responsibility for focusing the direction

of the conversations with therapy in mind. It also appears to be an attempt to create some clarity that the supervisee can utilize in session without being confused by too many ideas.

### **In-session**

The most commonly used intervention is phone-in which is consistent with most groups. However, Jane offers six interventions in the first session and two in the second. Other supervisors notes one to three interventions which suggests that six interventions in one session is less common. It could be that this relates to the family presentation as it is the same supervisor and supervisee in the second session, which suggests that it is less about competence and process and more about content. The interventions were instructive with suggestions for moving conversations in to new directions.

Jane also uses the reflecting team. This sees Jane move between offering ideas for the family whilst incorporating supervisory direction through hypothesizing as part of the reflection. Jane begins both reflecting conversations which seems to fit with the group at this stage where they look for guidance in shaping their reflecting team contribution by building on Jane's first utterance.

Jane makes only one or two observations behind the screen but like most other supervisors she remains quiet unless as Mark and Neil suggest there is a specific learning point. Jane takes responsibility for both making the decision to phone in and phoning in. This is consistent across the supervision groups at this stage of training, although some groups flirt with the idea of supervisee led phone-in as a developmental context marker and an indication of more refined practice. Jane reflects the overall consensus that in the early stages of training the supervisor maintains an educative role. This could coincide with the stages of learning for the

supervisees who may, despite experience elsewhere, feel novice in this context and require a more active instructional stance.

True to Jane's account of providing additional learning opportunities, she makes extensive notes during the session, looking at the clock to note the timing that she marks on the DVD for supervisee review. Like other supervisors' accounts, behind the screen she shows less obvious activity but the high levels of concentration are unmistakable with the emphasis on providing good therapy to families and supervisee development. Jane introduces the notion of taking a meta-position to therapy which in many ways reflects the ideas that Christopher promotes with his emphasis on process of therapy rather than content, believing that as supervisees skilfully navigate therapy sessions, they will then be free to concentrate on the specific content in the confidence that the process is second nature.

### **Post-session**

The post-session activity reflects a shift in position from instructive and directive to creative, invitational and collaborative. As with all of the supervisors, Jane focuses on the supervisee seeing the family using the rest of the group as supportive learners. During the post-session Jane openly wonders if she is too directive with the group and in addition to discussing specific interventions and themes coming out of the family session, she invites the group to give feedback about her supervisory activity in order to make changes during the next session. This could be a response to being observed or an indication that she is committed to reflexive practice. Jane actively seeks feedback about her contribution to adjust her position. This captures the beginning of co-construction between supervisor and supervisees.

#### **4.4.2 Theme 2: Connection between supervisor and supervisees**

During the observation it is clear that Jane encourages the group to offer multiple hypotheses without constraining their imagination. This creates a lively debate

between the group members and engenders quite a lot of humour as the hypotheses become ever more expansive. Jane appears to monitor this levity and brings the conversation back to a practice focus when she notices that the supervisee seeing the family is becoming quieter. She articulates her observation as she says:

**“We have quite a lot of ideas there (everyone is still laughing), let’s get specific and focus.” (J 54-55).**

The supervisee seeing the family clearly appreciates this intervention as she says:

**“It feels like it is getting complicated now and I feel crowded.” (Gp 1 55).**

In this instance Jane relationally responds to the supervisees and moves back into a more directive stance.

Neil, Mark and Christopher all say something about monitoring the breadth of ideas and seeing it as a supervisory responsibility to bring them into sharper focus. Mark uses the phrase overwhelming and cautions against too many ideas at the early stages of training as rather than expand people’s horizons, it may create confusion.

Jane’s activity to create clarity supports relational reflexivity as a supervisory posture in response to the needs of the supervisee which could be presented in language as the example above or through emotion such as anxiety.

#### **4.4.3 Theme 3: Effects of the stage of training and the learning context**

Jane explicitly introduces the stage of training in her post-session conversations. She uses the content of the session and the supervisees’ activity to identify and discuss systemic theory in action as well as theory and research about the presenting issues. This is the dance between process and content.

Jane actively promotes feedback skills in inviting each group member to comment on the practice they have seen. She provides focused and specific feedback to the supervisee using appreciative comments about certain practices previously identified as learning points for that supervisee via notes and DVD review. She gives specific examples so that the supervisee can identify their own developing practice. She then follows this with explicit points about gaps in practice and work in progress. This is consistent with other supervisors' explicit attempts to give feedback about practice development. Mark also offers directed reading in relation to session content as well as an insistence that supervisees conceptualise their activity through systemic theory. This illustrates the collaborative educational style which incorporates the views of the supervisees in constructing the learning context and responds to an adult learning environment.

#### **4.4.4 Theme 4: Supervisor's approach / style**

Jane's posture is predominantly collaborative with invitational language which is characterised by the use of circular and reflexive questions that create openings for supervisees to share ideas. The exception to this is in the pre-session where she uses significantly more instructional language using statements when preparing supervisees to see families. Another exception is a conversation about risk which emerges in pre-session and immediately positions Jane as directive effectively closing down options.

This is consistent with other supervisors who all highlight risk as their primary driver to intervene with direct and specific interventions. They all suggest that supervisees are clear about the difference with Neil, Jane and Christopher going as far as to give a specific set of words that they would use and expect the supervisees to recreate with families. Jane's activity captures the dance that between collaborative practices and instructional practices to do with their responsibility for risk assessment as well as practice development. The supervisees seem to be very

sympathetic with this clarity during risk assessment which creates confidence in the group.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Discussion**

This chapter provides a distillation of the factors that contribute to similarities and differences in the narratives offered by supervisees and supervisors over the two year MSc course. This is illustrated through practical and relational processes that shape supervisory style. Bracketed references indicate links to the findings section and current literature.

In order to distil the themes into meta-themes that appear in tables 11 and 12, I return to tables 7 and 8 which reflect common themes from the inductive data analysis for both supervisors and supervisees. Table 8 reflects six common themes from supervisee narratives and table 7 reflects seven from supervisor narratives. These group together and connect to deductive data from literature to form meta-themes. The relevant literature expresses activity in live supervision in terms of first and second order cybernetics which creates a frame within which to understand and report themes from the data (McCann, 2000). In practice the emergent themes are distilled into meta-themes reflecting categories of action and relationships that incorporate the range of experience described through the interviews. The meta-theme for supervisors in the first order category of action that houses the seven common themes is 'technical requirements of live supervision'. This is described with three layers of associated practical activity. This activity responds to the meta-theme from supervisees of 'the practical elements of training and the effects of assessment' which incorporates the six common themes and as such demonstrates the recursive element of live supervision in terms of construction of interventions and development of practice. This meta-theme is

articulated through figure 1 which illustrates coherence and coordination between supervisors and supervisees in relation to development of technical skill, a first order position.

The second meta-theme from the supervisors reflects a second order position of 'the co-construction and importance of the relationship with supervisees'. This is described through two types of supervisory activity which focus on relationship construction through communication styles and the development of shared meaning in relation to the supervisory context. These approaches respond to the second meta-theme from supervisees of 'the relational aspects between supervisees and supervisors and learning' shown through episodes of supervisory interventions that either confirm secure relationships or define critical relationships. This meta-theme is illustrated through figures 2 and 3 which show both coordinated and uncoordinated positions in relation to joint action between supervisors and supervisees in an episode of supervisory intervention based on relational experiences in live supervision.

To reiterate, two overarching themes emerge that capture first and second order positions. The first is technical competence and skill acquisition shown in practical terms (Table 11). The second is joint action which shows relational patterns (Table 12).

Figures 1 to 3 show the recursive nature of the practical and relational processes from the position of supervisees and supervisors.

Figure 1 shows the activity in relation to technical competence in the systemic model and coordinated action between supervisees and supervisors when they share higher context markers for action. This links to first order positions as set out by McCann (2000).

Figures 2 and 3 show two different responses when supervisees and supervisors have different higher context markers for meaning and action. This may relate to second order positions which contribute to the emergence of both supervisor and supervisee identity through episodes of live supervision.

Figure 2 shows the supervisory style as placing the relationship between supervisees and supervisor as the higher context marker than episodes of intervention which recursively influences supervisees' responses and thus feeds back into supervisory style.

Figure 3 illustrates supervisory style of placing episodes of supervisory intervention based on assessment of competence as a higher context marker which influences the supervisees' responses and the ongoing supervisory style.

### **5.1 Factors that contribute to supervisory style – similarities**

Two major themes emerge. The first is the effect of the training context and the development of technical competence. This is shown through skill acquisition on the part of supervisees leading to first order supervisory actions based on theory of the taught model, the ability to provide useful feedback through interventions that enhance development, confidence in managing risk, knowledge and experience in the field of systemic therapy. (4.1.3, 4.2.1, 4.2.3).

The second shared theme is the development of the relationship between supervisees and supervisors through joint action. This is more clearly relational and characterised by supervisees noting the effects of the relationship with their supervisor on their levels of confidence and experience of learning. This invites second order actions which are less tangible and organised in part through collaborative relationships. This includes the recursive influence on communication styles, supervisors' ability to step back, making less interventions due to confidence in supervisees' abilities, changing the emphasis of supervisory

conversations from content to the process of therapy and therapist development and increasingly shifting the focus from supervisor interventions to supervisees' interventions in all elements of the session. (4.1.1, 4.2.3, 4.2.4).

**Table 11: Technical competence – first order positions**

| Supervisee themes   | Supervisor themes  |
|---|--|
| The practical elements of training and the effect of the training context, including assessment | <p>The technical requirements of live supervision and supervisor postures/style</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Taken for granted style – Milan models/ isomorphism/ education</li> <li>2. Characteristic supervisory style – approach regardless of context</li> <li>3. Communication and intervention style</li> </ol> |

Table 11 shows the primary driver for supervisees and supervisors as technical competence in the model which leads to supervisory postures that show consistency in the Milan structure and coherence in the supervisor's version of systemic therapy, with attempts to be practically and relationally responsive to supervisees' learning needs in the training context. Each element of the supervisors themes will be addressed separately although all respond to the practical invitation of learning systemic skills through teaching and action.

## **5.2 Technical competence – first order positions**

Technical competence is characterised by first order practices that supervisors use to ensure that supervisees reach the required practice standard as set out by AFT in the Blue Book at qualifying level. These practical resources do not occur in isolation and as such include the potential for reciprocal influence. From the

findings and literature it seems that the emphasis on technical competence is most likely to show supervisors using their core practice model in their supervisory context which leads to greater levels of consistency between supervisors in the same theoretical orientation, at least in terms of supervision structures. Supervisors are occupied with two issues at this stage, the service to families and development of supervisees as practical therapists through skill acquisition. (4.1.1, 4.1.3, 4.1.4).

This is consistent with Bertrando (2008), Boston (2010), Fruggeri (2013), Inskipp and Proctor (2001) and McCann (2000) who concur that technical competency relates to first order approaches that ensure security with the taught model of therapy. Supervisory practices are based on teaching therapy, instructive interactions, directive language, and specific directions in sessions, less flexibility and high levels of responsibility for the therapy provided in the context of the training agency. Fruggeri (2013) goes as far as to say that instructive interaction is legitimized by the training context and the supervisors' higher levels of experience and competence.

### **5.2.1 Taken for granted style- Milan models/isomorphism and education**

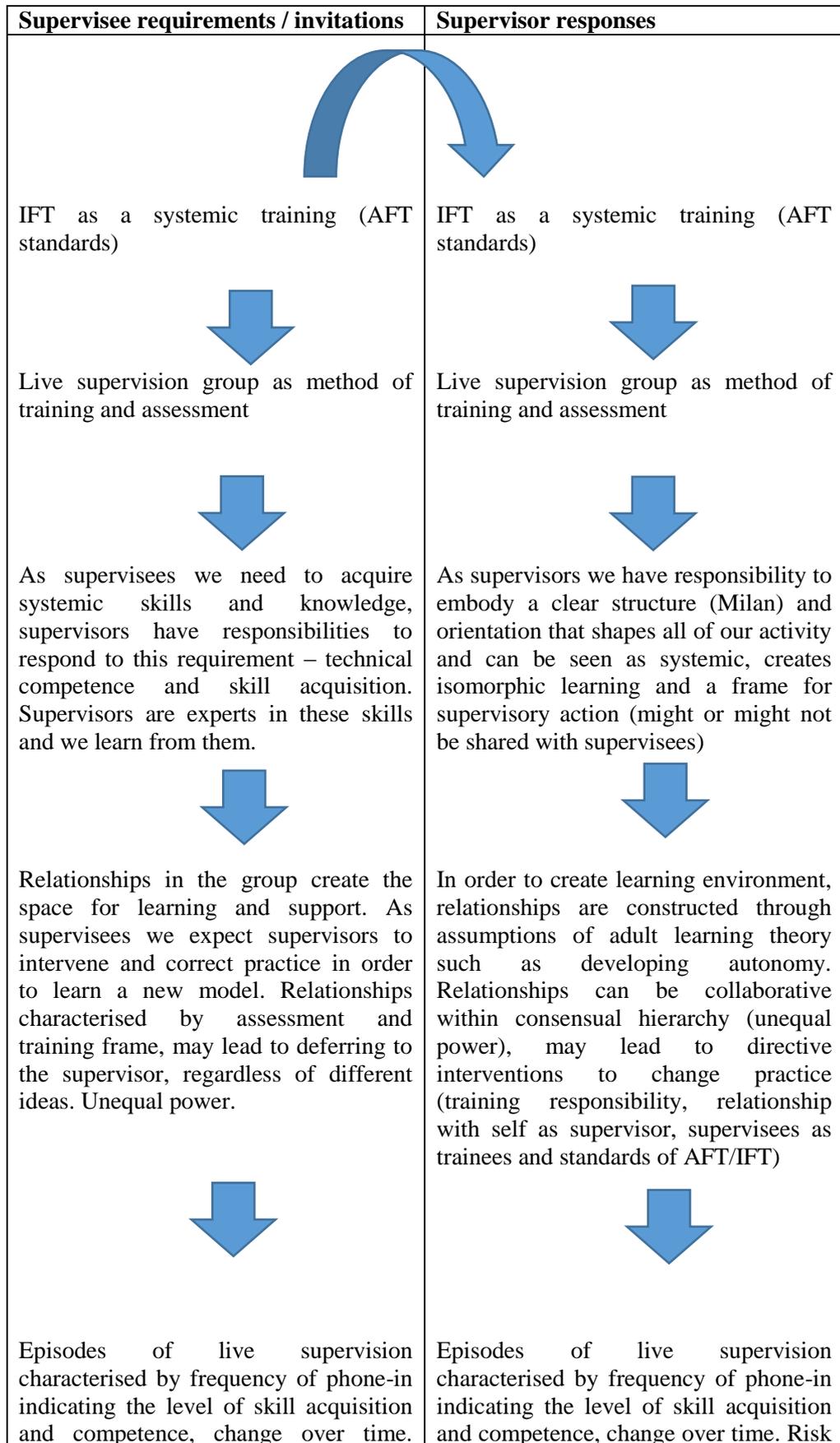
This relates to supervisory activity in relation to the taught model which highlights the educational function of supervision, constructing supervisors' style as educators and supervisees and students. Supervisees and supervisors agree that the educational element requires specific supervisory action such as naming theory, developing disciplined systemic hypothesizing prior to a session, understanding the content of sessions, insisting on planned interventions linked to hypotheses, developing ideas about the practical aspects and process of therapy, trying to ensure that all supervisees reach the same level of competence through either written or verbal feedback and encouraging reading beyond the course (4.1.3).

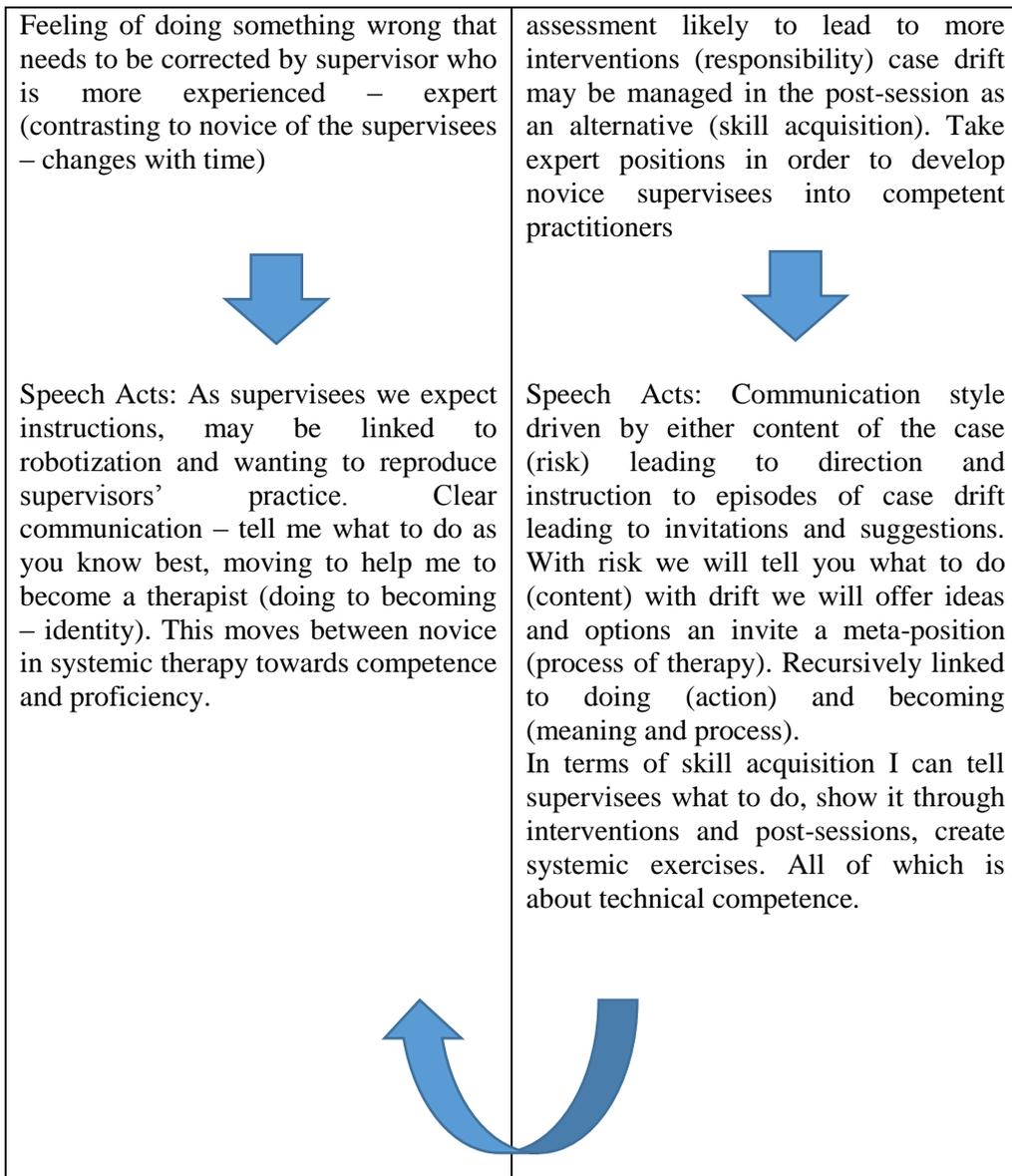
Supervision that enhances technical competence in the taught model is reflected by several writers who suggest that coherence between the therapy and supervision models is common. This is linked to the apprenticeship model of supervision (Bertrando, 2008; Bertrando and Gilli, 2010; Colapinto, 1988; McCann, 2000).

Other writers posit that supervisors often begin with competence and experience in their modality as a starting point for creating supervisory skill and as they become more competent they can include more variation and experimentation secure in their knowledge of systemic therapy. This is the shift to meta-positions (Burnham, 2010; Wilson, 2011).

Figure 1 illustrates coordinated action with supervisees and supervisors sharing the same higher context markers of technical competence thus confirming the relationship built on skill acquisition with the attendant supervisory response of teaching and educating in the taught model. Arrows indicate recursive processes.

**Figure 1: Technical competence: first order positions (episodes of live supervision)**





### 5.2.2 Characteristic supervisory style – approach regardless of context

Each supervisor offers a characteristic style of supervision which they apply across contexts. This seems to be one area unaffected by supervisees. However, it appears that within a core approach, supervisors show flexibility as a response to different supervisee needs, suggesting that all have the ability to improvise although this appears to remain within their preferred frame of reference. Two supervisors name social constructionism as their preferred approach, another attachment theory and finally the therapeutic relationship. These preferences show in every aspect of supervision at the level of meaning and action. These preferences begin to define

the supervisors' style and influence the responses they make with supervisees (4.1.1). The relational aspects that show these characteristics appear in figures 2 and 3.

### **5.2.3 Communication and intervention styles**

Supervisors and supervisees agree that in-session interventions are likely to be triggered by two different drivers. The first is risk assessment and the second is case drift.

Risk assessment leads supervisors to step into positions of responsibility on behalf of the agency. In this instance they respond to case content to ensure that the therapeutic response is appropriate and that risk is being assessed and addressed. This is constructed as an ethical posture on behalf of the agency and the profession. All supervisors use direct instructions and specific sentences to use with families. This seems to hold true regardless of preferred style of communication which could illustrate the point that two of the supervisors make, that they are the most experienced therapists in the room and as such need to take responsibility for good ethical practice. This style might be that of experienced therapist, agency representative and the embodiment of professional standards (4.1.4 and 4.2.3).

This is consistent with literature that highlights the clear multiple layers of responsibility vested in the supervisor (Charles et al. 2005; Fruggeri, 2013; Lang, Little and Cronen, 1990; Liddle and Schwartz, 1983; McCann, 2000).

The second reason for intervening is more interesting. Apart from risk assessment, supervisors respond to what they call 'case drift.' This links directly with the process of therapy. Supervisors move into action as a response to supervisees neglecting to explore hypotheses agreed in the pre-session, failing to notice a change of direction in the session, seeming to marginalize any family member or showing lack of focus. These responses are more likely to be characterised by

invitational language, reminders about the pre-session plan and suggestions about alternative practice options and seem more subjective than the risk assessment interventions and thus more likely to reflect supervisory style (4.1.4, 4.2.3).

These practices are coherent with supervisors taking a meta-position to the therapy system and supporting skills that transcend individual session content. Several writers capture this movement from technical skill to therapeutic sensibility, moving from doing systemic therapy to thinking systemically (Bertrando, 2008; Fruggeri, 2013; Gilbert and Evans, 2000).

Supervisees connect both reasons for intervening with assessment on the course as well as the development of practice.

Phone-in remains the most common form of intervention although supervisors seem to use it differently either through frequency or style of talk. Some are keen that messages should be short and to the point to avoid confusion, others use them to offer a range of alternatives or observations and some to call supervisees out for a short therapeutic break to reduce the possibility of fracturing the boundary between the family system and the supervisory system. All supervisors are proactive in the early stages of training, although the balance changes in later stages when it is increasingly common for supervisees to take this responsibility (4.1.2, 4.2.3).

Whilst supervisors may construct phone-in as one method of intervening to adjust the therapy, supervisees overlay this with more complex meaning. The first is at a practical level with supervisees constructing interventions as an immediate correction of practice. Some members of Group 1 understand this as evidence of care and support, constructing the action inside the description of the supervisor as, “knowledgeable and caring” and “nurturing encourager” (4.2.4). In this instance

interventions confirm their connected relationship. This may also be linked to gender with an all-female group.

The second meaning is more subtle and to do with relationship fit created through the frequency of interventions. Christine (individual supervisee in preliminary interview) and some of Group 3 reflect this aspect. Christine uses phrases like, “mystifying” and “confusion.” One member of Group 3 notes, “I haven’t always felt comfortable” and “I feel I have been misunderstood” (4.2.4). In these instances the interventions may be understood in the context of these relationship descriptions.

There are several possible readings such as male supervisee and supervisor engaging in competition rather than collaboration or it may reflect more supervisory emphasis on the assessment element of the training context rather than the relational.

### **Interpretation**

The distinctions between coordination and relationship fit may be important in deconstructing the supervisees experience and the supervisory interventions and intentions.

If the relationship is seen as connected or secure, interventions are defined as helpful feedback, no matter what the frequency. Supervisees feel encouraged to improvise and take therapeutic risks (4.2.4). This does not neglect the assessment context but plays down this aspect of the relationship.

If the relationship is defined more through the monitoring and assessment focus, supervisees may understand the frequency of interruptions as further evidence that they require correction and misunderstand the therapy process, thus experience criticism and confusion.

Several writers echo these findings, although few introduce a relational focus. Some note the critical and confusing effect of frequent phone-in (Bobele et al. 1995; Frankel and Piercy, 1990; Moorhouse and Carr, 1999, 2002).

### 5.3 Joint action – second order positions

**Table 12: Joint action – second order positions**

| Supervisee themes   | Supervisor themes   |
|---|---|
| The relationship between supervisees and supervisors and the effect on learning (relationship and episodes of live supervision) | <p>The relationship with supervisees</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Communication style – changing talk in relation to competence and time (assessment)</li> <li>2. Co-constructed style through coherent conversations with shared meaning</li> </ol> |

Table 12 shows the second main driver for supervisees and supervisors which is the importance of good relationships. Supervisors respond to this invitation in various ways which begins to illustrate the differences in style. Once again there is consensus in relation to post-session activity but less agreement about the effect of in-session interventions on the construction of supervisory relationships. Each supervisory theme will be addressed separately.

#### 5.3.1 Communication style in live supervision and post-sessions

The post-session is the place where practice meets theory more clearly. In the absence of families supervisees and supervisors alike talk of adaptable, innovative, creative and flexible practices in the post-session although the caveat is that it must be coherent with systemic models or be seen through a systemic lens. This aspect is

more about joint action in that supervisors provide post-session interventions based on their perception of individual learning needs and thus use an increased repertoire. It is most likely that these interventions will reflect some kind of systemic practice such as various methods of interviewing, creating exercises to develop ideas about the experience of the family from different positions, to offer alternative practices from other available theories (4.1.3, 4.2.3). This is consistent with Boston (2010) and Burnham (2010) who posit that replicating theory in action supports learning and encourages variety over time.

The overarching style of communication during such interventions is exploratory, encouraging, supportive and invitational. Some of the second year students use words such as dialogical and facilitative which moves away from directive and instructional as first year practices (4.2.13).

Some supervisors talk of deliberately using isomorphism in the post-session to encourage further systemic development whilst others provide written focused feedback. The intentional use of isomorphism is reflected in the literature as one way of intervening that bridges the patterns across the therapy and supervisory system in order to change practice (Berger and Dammann, 1982; Boyd Franklin, 2001; Gershenson and Cohen, 1978; Hawkins and Shohet, 1989; Lo, 2014; Ormond, 2009).

All supervisors talk of giving choice and freedom to be more playful and irreverent. The second year groups build on this recursive practice describing the movement in emphasis from the supervisor to supervisees in terms of deciding how to create the post-session. They talk of variety between supervisors thus supporting the notion of individual supervisory style. Supervisees also note the subtle move towards independent and autonomous practice (4.3.12). This could be evidence of embedded isomorphism as set out by Chang and Gaete (2014) and the move towards proficiency (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986).

What supervisors have in common is a rationale for their choice of post-session interventions that responds to either the group as a whole or individuals within it thus making it relationally responsive to the feedback from supervisees in the context of time and stage of training. These can be described as second order positions about the emergence of therapist identity.

### **5.3.2 Co-constructed style in live supervision**

Supervisees and supervisors offer two different descriptions of co-construction. The first is reflected in perceptions of the quality of the relationship and the consequent effect of supervisory interventions. The second is reflected in the meaning of interventions and the consequent perception of the relationship. Both relate to supervisory style.

Without exception supervisors talk of the relationship building aspect of practice. Some supervisors create close relationships through collaborative approaches (Jane and Elizabeth) or attachment practices (Mark) as the context for their interventions and feedback. This containment leads to more creativity and experimentation in practice (4.2.3) and an ability to hear episodes of feedback as relating directly to practice adjustment. The more supervisors observe supervisees responding to interventions, the more they step back and show patience by waiting longer (Jane, Christopher and Elizabeth), giving a “long rope” (Mark) or making fewer interventions (4.1.3).

From the supervisees’ points of view, they talk of safety, containment and security which create a context for feedback as:

**“It’s just so subtle, direct without being brutal and it seems to be based on lots of generosity, compassion and .....(Gp2 117-118).**

**“coming from a place of being really considerate and really thoughtful.....It doesn’t come across as critical you know...” (Gp 1 292-294).**

The more encouraged supervisees feel, the more likely they are to take therapeutic risks and the more they take such risks, the more supervisors feel able to give more freedom and stretch their practice through more rigorous feedback with suggestions for wider reading. This is reflected in different stages models of learning with supervisees moving from novice towards proficient practice and autonomy (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986; Markovic Radovanovic 1993).

An alternative view emerges from Christopher who appears to highlight two different aspects of supervisory intervention that influence the relationship with supervisees. These are time and assessment (autonomous and responsible practice) as high context markers in the training institute (4.1.7, 4.1.10). He notes the following about standards of practice;

**“ (standards) I think in a training institution they are (articulated) so that makes me think of the role to mentor people, .....that they have a kind of reference point of standards where competencies relate to that.” (C 37-42).**

In the context of these two drivers, Christopher suggests that he often uses the framework of the domain of production rather than aesthetics (Lang, Little and Cronen, 1990) insisting that supervisees articulate their intentional plans for sessions based on previous hypotheses. He connects this directly with responsibility for developing autonomous practice linked to stages of training and is aware that this has not been universally welcomed. These direct corrective interventions are made in the context of practice competency and assessment of practice standards which Christopher calls “achieving therapy” (4.1.2).

From the supervisees points of view the assessment frame seems to inhibit their practice confidence in contrast to confidence and expertise in their places of work. They note the requirement to provide session plans which they appreciate although this is tinged with some concern that they may become fixed. They are sympathetic with the idea of taking responsibility although they seem confused by the notion of process over content, an important developmental milestone for Christopher (4.2.1).

This confusion appears to lead supervisees to become less able to identify therapeutic process, leading to increased concentration on session content which is familiar and reassuring. In an attempt to develop practice competence Christopher intervenes to illustrate the significance of process to encourage more autonomous practice. This may have the effect of confirming supervisees' lack of confidence in the therapy context thus shaping the relationship with the supervisor through interventions seen as corrective and critical. This may lead to the feeling of discomfort for some and begin to define the relationship (4.2.4).

The quality of the supervisory relationship appears in most of the literature as a precursor to any supervisory action (Chang and Gaete, 2014; Edwards and Miocevic, 1999; Mason, 2005, 2013; Wilson, 1993).

### **5.3.3 Coherence with orientation**

It seems that regardless of supervisee feedback, supervisors' distinctive practice remains coherent with their stated model. In fact it seems that supervisees are more likely to begin to adopt features of the supervisor's style. In their descriptions of their relationships with supervisors, they reflect similar language in defining their preferred approaches to the extent that some of the supervisor's phrases are repeated. This shows a high degree of acceptance of the supervisory approach during the first year (Markovic Radovanovic, 1993; Schwartz, 1988). However, as

supervisees move into the second year of the course they begin to critique supervisory approaches and invite alternative methods. In this sense they move towards embodying their own preferred practice and feel more confident in experimentation (Boston, 2010).

This movement towards supervisees constructing supervisory action, albeit within their preferred model, is consistent with writers who describe supervision through a process of feedback loops between supervisors and supervisees creating joint knowledge and coordinated resources that encourage supervisors to shift their positions and actions. This suggests a relational capacity as a high context marker (Burnham, 2005; Chang and Gaete, 2014; Pearce, 2004, 2007; Shotter, 2005, 2010; Wilson, 2011).

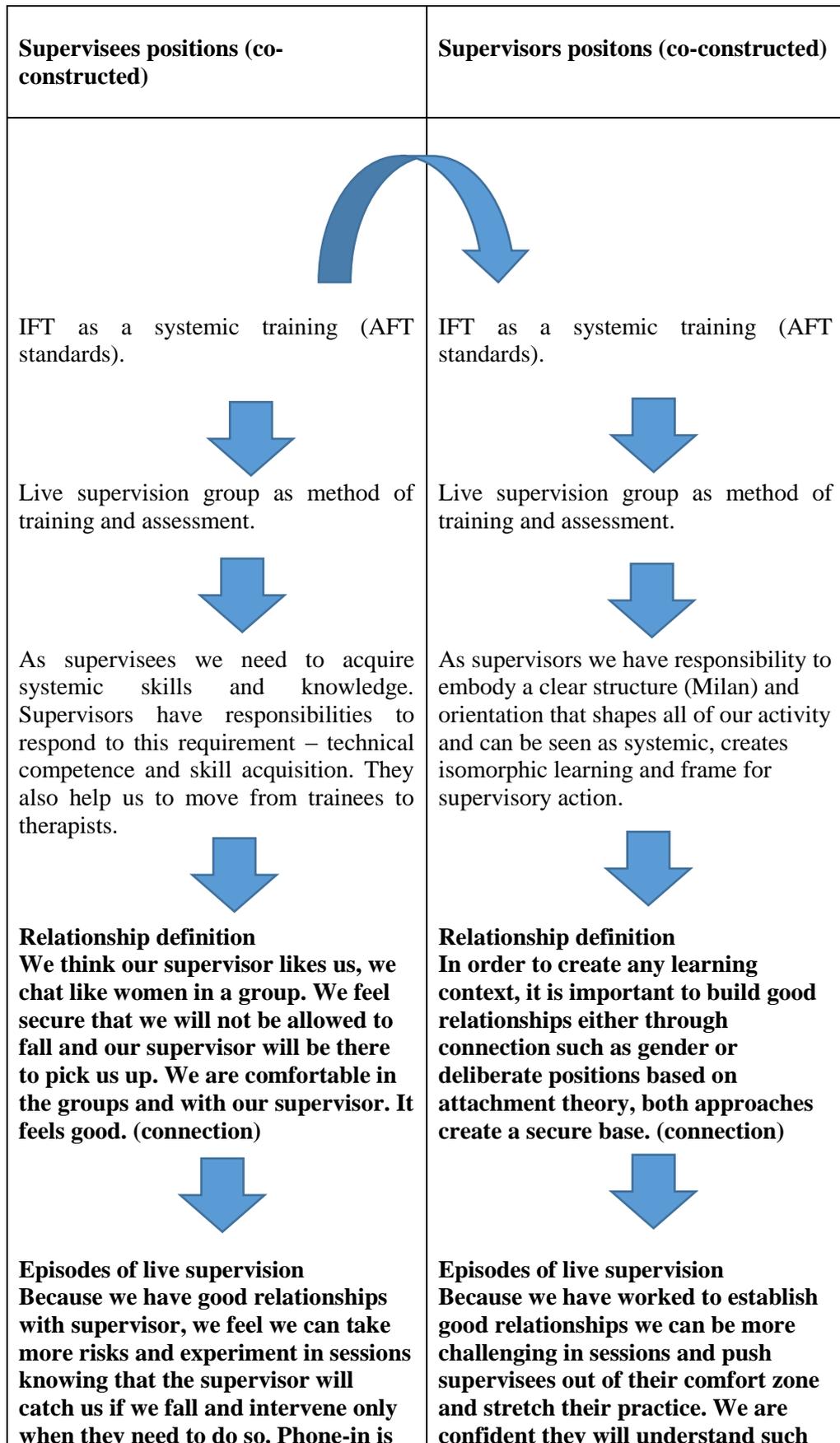
The notion of joint action reflected above is illustrated in figures 2 and 3 which capture the relational dance between supervisees and supervisors, showing that their characteristic supervisory styles are likely to shape episodes of live supervision.

Figure 2 tracks the significance of the episodes of live supervision when the supervisory orientation is influenced by notions of secure relationships through attachment theory or social constructionist collaborative approaches (characteristic styles). In this instance the relationship defines the episodes of live supervision. Arrows denote recursive processes.

Figure 3 tracks the co-construction of the relationships when supervisory interventions are based on understanding the therapeutic process and assessment of competence (characteristic style). This begins to define the relationship between supervisor and supervisees. Arrows denote recursive processes.

Both supervisory postures are legitimate positions.

**Figure 2: Joint action: the relationship defines the episodes of intervention.**



**an opportunity to have more ideas to use with families and considered feedback.**



**Speech Acts**

**We sound more confident and participate more fully in sessions and take more therapeutic risks. We will experiment even with ideas that are not that familiar as we talk about them in the pre-session. We are talking more like systemic therapists and understand feedback about practice and ideas as encouraging us to refine and develop further leading to autonomous practice and expertise with increasing knowledge.**

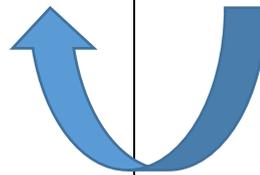
**experimental and innovative invitations as an expression of confidence and not as a criticism, even though we may encourage them to change direction or include new interventions.**

**We begin to step back and invite supervisees to organise sessions.**

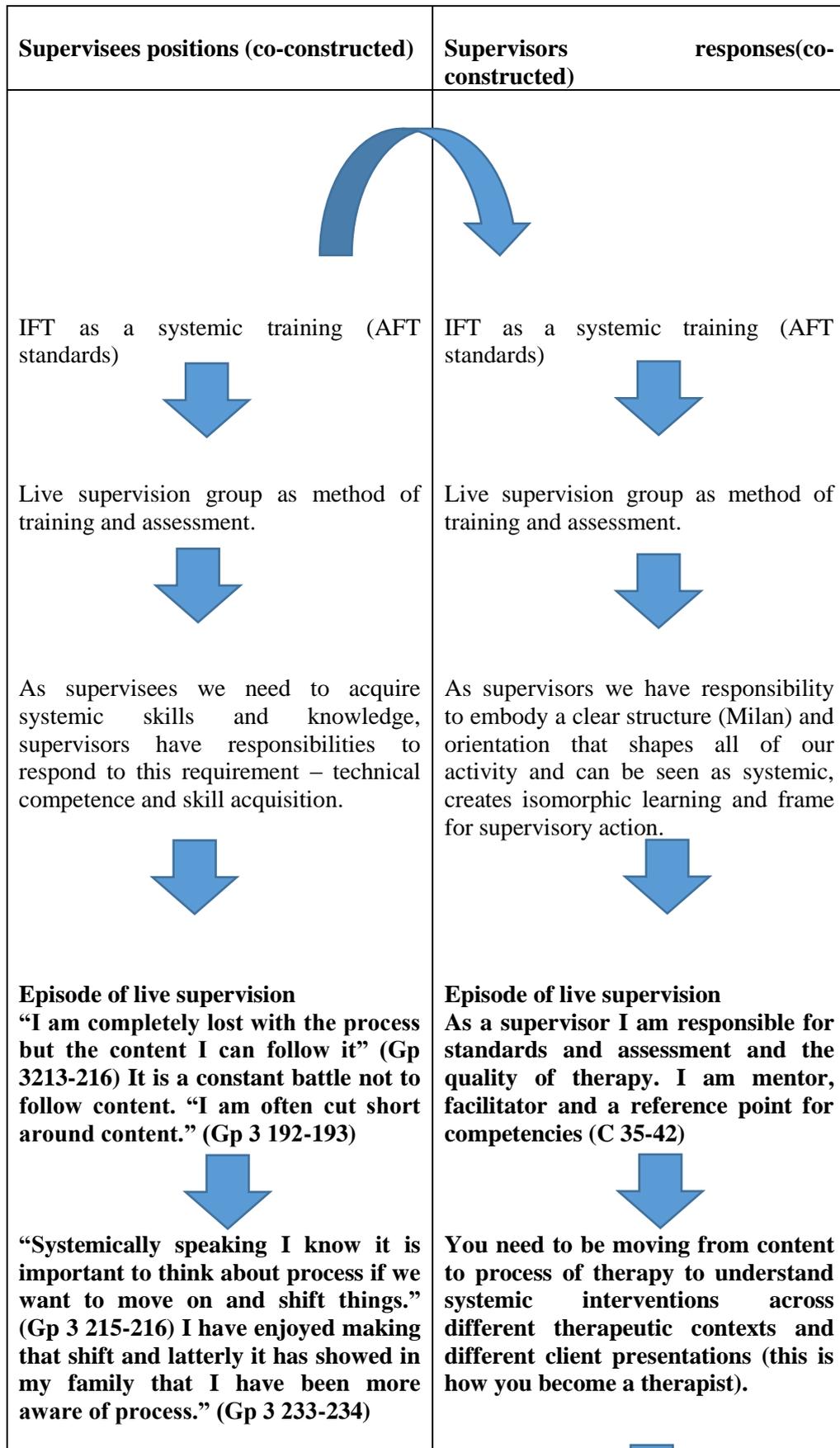


**Speech Acts**

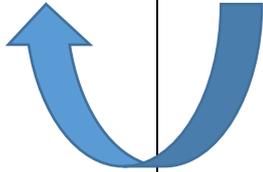
**We can be very direct and also creative either through verbal or written feedback as they know that this is intended to be useful as well as challenging. We co-construct interventions and as supervisors offer ideas about reading as they seem engaged and committed to expanding practice.**



**Figure 3: Joint action: episodes of intervention (assessment) define the relationship.**



|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Relationship definition</b><br/>         “I might have experienced a bit more tension, maybe a bit more challenging or questioning of me which then led me to confirm my hypothesis that there is something going on so I withdraw a bit more so there might have been a circular process going on.” (Gp 3 45-50)<br/>         “I can be a bit abrupt or just speak it before I think....I think sometimes it have led to misunderstanding which can shut a whole conversation down.” (Gp 3 66-70)</p> | <p><b>Relationship definition</b><br/>         I am responsible for mentoring, facilitating, developing and assessing practice in relation to standards of competence. Some of my interventions have not been experienced well but they (supervisees) need to take more responsibility for what they do. (C 465-467). Pressure of hours has affected the communal or collective spirit of working together. (462-463)</p> |
|--|---|



**5.4 Factors that contribute to supervisory style - differences**

There are a number of differences between supervisees and supervisors, some of which appear to influence supervisory style but do not seem to define each supervisor’s actions in the same way. Some of the issues are barely mentioned by supervisees at all. Some of the issues are interrelated.

**5.4.1 Power**

This is only mentioned explicitly by the male supervisors who all articulate their awareness of male discourses of power and privilege which shapes their supervision through monitoring their own interventions or deliberately making sure that female supervisees have the chance to speak first (4.1.6). The supervisees seem not to notice this practice described in terms of fairness and equality by supervisors.

In terms of groups with female supervisors, power seems to be a tacit theme hinging on supervisees' hesitancy about challenging supervisors in the context of assessment. There are some narratives about competition either between supervisees or between one supervisor and supervisee that are constructed through the lens of power but this is not common across the groups. It could be that the consensual hierarchy in the training context is so embedded that power within the groups and between the supervisees and supervisors is accepted (4.2.1).

From the supervisee perspective power appears to be highlighted more in the assessment frame which results in deferring to the supervisor on some occasions despite feeling confident in usual places of work (4.2.1).

This notion of power is made explicit in some of the literature (Caust et al., 1981; Burck, 2010; Daniel, 2013; Garret and Dent, 1997; Murphy and Wright, 2005).

#### **5.4.2 Gender**

This is an interesting feature as with the exception of one group, all are mixed gender with male and female supervisors. Most supervisors and supervisees mention gender in passing with the exception of the female group which defines itself and supervisor as women together. It may be that gender is not articulated as an explanation for some of the practice styles but it could be that male and female supervisors inadvertently reflect gendered discourses about relationships and communication (Kaiser, 1997; Tannen, 1990; Turner and Fine, 1997, 2002).

One practice alluded to in the previous section is male supervisors' practice of bringing out female voices as an act of redressing the gender discourses about power. Some of the literature suggests that far from achieving this ambition, the action might inadvertently confirm the discourse that females need males to create openings for their contribution (Turner and Fine, 1997, 2002).

To take the gender issue further, the two female supervisors note that their supervisory action is influenced by the gender of the supervisees. They believe they feel more connection with female supervisees and respond more collaboratively than with male supervisees. This leads to some notion of having to step out of their familiar supervisory practices to accommodate what they believe to be males' preferred ways of learning, constructed as more directive and practical rather than their preferred relational approach (4.1.6).

It is possible that supervisors reflect gendered discourses in their activity such as the male supervisors using more directive and interventionist methods, at least in the early stages of groups, whereas the female supervisors concentrate on building relationships as the first priority (Aggett, 2004; Carr and McHale, 1998; Gerhart et al. 2001; Kaiser, 1997; Tannen, 1990; Turner and Fine, 1997, 2002).

### **5.4.3 Time**

Time is another theme that has different meaning for each group. It seems to be the meaning of time, relationship with time and time passing that is more influential than the number of hours in the groups. For some this links to an emotional experience of feeling anxious about time, for some it is about a perception of not having enough time to grasp the learning and feeling rushed (4.1.10, 4.2.8). There is no consensus about the effect of time other than a view that over the two years supervisors feel more able to encourage supervisees to organise sessions in preparation for independent practice which is a response to the increasing skill of the supervisees, a recursive process. (Boscolo and Bertrando, 1993; McGovern, 2012; Morgan and Sprenkle, 2007; Nel, 2006; Schwartz, 1988; Wilson, 1993).

However through the lens of educational theory the effect of time seems to be important with supervisors adjusting their practice to respond to developing skill in

the supervisees practice (Berger and Dammann, 1982; Breunlin *et al.* 1988; Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986; Kolb, 1984; Markovic Radovanovic, 1993).

#### **5.4.4 Cultural competence**

Despite some of the supervisors using the cultural genogram as an entry point into conversations about culture and difference, few of the supervisees note this as a defining feature of their supervisor and say little to suggest that supervisors respond to them through their culture or ethnicity or from their culture and ethnicity. Neil and Mark, black supervisors more actively promote discussions about culture and ethnicity. This may reflect their experience as black systemic therapists and supervisors in a predominantly white profession (Ayo, 2010; Bond, 2010; Burck, 2010; Hardy and Laszloffy, 1995; Karamat Ali 2011).

The literature reflects this neglected area in supervision. Despite routinely using the mnemonic the Social GRRRAACCEEESSS (Burnham, 2012; Totsuka, 2014) to conceptualise families' experience, there seems to be less emphasis with regard to the supervision groups as system. It may be that this is another tacit feature that is less articulated. This concurs with views as expressed by several writers who seek to promote issues of culture and diversity in supervision (Boyd Franklin, 2001; Burnham and Harris, 2002; Karamat Ali, 2001; Pendry, 2013).

#### **5.4.5 Experience of supervisees**

It seems that experience is seen differently by supervisees and supervisors. Supervisees construct narratives that contain ideas of inexperience in systemic therapy despite having considerable professional experience in other contexts. This is shared by some supervisors leading to instructive and directive interaction. For other supervisors professional experience provides a significant context marker that contributes to their supervision of individual supervisees. This is especially so for Jane and Elizabeth (4.1.8, 4.2.6).

Nel (2006) recognises this underutilization of previous professional experience and knowledge which appears to be another neglected area.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Conclusions**

This chapter draws together supervisee and supervisor narratives to explore connections and collisions with some feed forward suggestions. However, the overall findings suggest that despite some differences in views, supervisors and supervisees describe groups appreciatively. This means that examples of poor supervisory practice have not emerged. This could be to do with my position as Director of the Institute and a perception of monitoring during the research from all participants. This may be a starting point for other research that broadens the reach beyond one institution and perhaps across disciplines which could lead to a richer picture of both helpful and unhelpful examples of supervision.

Some marginal themes will be considered as crucial for the future construction of groups and supervision training.

#### **6.1: Connections**

##### **6.1.1: Structure**

The Milan structure threads through all groups. Although this reflects the core theoretical orientation of the institution and consistency in supervisor training it does limit the research in that other supervisory structures and approaches are not considered. Therefore no claims will be made that the findings can be generalised across different live supervision contexts, even in the systemic field. Additional research in these areas would provide an interesting balance to the current study.

##### **6.1.2: Technical competence and skill acquisition**

This is a common overarching and occupying theme although supervisors and supervisees see it differently. Supervisors use their characteristic approach as the

basis for their supervisory rituals and practices. These range from social constructionism with collaborative practices to attachment theory with containment practices to more abstract ideas such as responsibility and agency in the therapeutic relationship leading to practices based on the development of autonomy. Although most of the supervisees recognise a characteristic practice, it is not always the case that this is articulated by the supervisor. Where it is made transparent, it appears to support a framework for making sense of supervisory activity. This could be an argument for encouraging supervisors to be increasingly open about their characteristic orientation as this forms the basis for all of their interventions and could help supervisees both make sense of supervisory activity and manage the transition from one supervisor to another.

### **6.1.3: Interventions**

There is consensus on two levels. The first is general agreement that phone-in is the most common method of intervention. From the supervisors' points of view this is immediate and less intrusive as a method and can be understood in terms of mentoring in the moment. At the level of action supervisees agree that the method is intended to recalibrate practice. At the level of meaning this becomes more complex depending on the frequency of interruptions and the quality of the relationship with their supervisor leading to both connection and collision.

Supervisors and supervisees alike talk about the primary driver for interventions as risk assessment. This entitles the supervisor to intervene with directive language and focused statements. Even these situations are not clear cut. One supervisor notes her regret in waiting too long assuming the supervisee would manage the risk. This reflects her social constructionist approach. One supervisee talks of her child protection expertise and hesitancy in using it during live supervision. This strengthens the story that supervisees' experience appears to be under-utilized in

live supervision and invites further consideration of the wider professional landscape (later section).

The second driver of “case drift” and “stuttering” is more complex and will appear in the collisions section.

#### **6.1.4: Assessment**

Although supervisors are responsible for assessment of competence against the AFT criteria through informal week by week assessment and formal assessment reports that contribute to the final course grades, they do not elevate this theme in the same way as supervisees. Supervisors undoubtedly respond through weekly written feedback or verbal feedback during sessions (through interventions) as well as in post-session exercises and reflections which often include suggestions for wider reading to expand knowledge and practice. This is achieved at individual and group level.

Supervisees emphasize assessment much more than supervisors. They record anxiety about getting things right against a measure that supervisors have about course requirements which could be spelled out more fully. In the early stages of live supervision this seems to create high levels of dependency and need for clarity from the supervisor. This may be based on an assumption that there is one way of doing systemic therapy. Many supervisees talk of live supervision and systemic therapy as new territory. It could be that supervisors in the early stages could provide clarity about practice, perhaps demonstrating a session prior to supervisees seeing families. This could have helpful and unhelpful consequences. One could be that supervisees feel they will never reach the observed standard, others might welcome the chance to see examples of systemic techniques in action. This could link with supervisors’ relationship with the educational aspects of live supervision.

### **6.1.5: Educational theory / isomorphism**

Supervisors either embed isomorphic practices or introduce adult learning theory into their supervision. It could be argued this achieves the outcome of practice competence through demonstration, coherent practice, discussions and exercises. This seems to be more available during the post-session with consistent accounts from supervisees and supervisors of more experimental, creative and playful practice in the post-session. Supervisees in year two share the fullest descriptions of this with one group noting adult learning as their understanding of the change in positions between supervisor and supervisees with more emphasis on supervisees organising post-sessions with supervisors stepping back.

It may be that this feature of supervision could be made more transparent and expanded as a helpful frame for tracking assessment and providing feedback to supervisees through the rigorous use of Kolb's learning theory (1984) which attends to individual learning styles and transformative practices through concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation.

## **6.2: Collisions**

### **6.2.1: Relationships**

There is much consensus between supervisees and supervisors about the quality of their relationships to the point that they often share common language. For many this includes ideas of nurturing, containment, compassion and collaboration whilst for others it is discomfort and misunderstanding. It is evident that this is a reciprocal process with supervisees and supervisors accepting their contribution to the overall description, although there could be an argument made for supervisors paying closer attention to this from their privileged position of power and authority. The point here is not to suggest that one form of relationship is

necessarily better than another in terms of live supervision as each can be mapped onto systemic ethical frameworks. However good relationships do appear to contribute to more open learning. It seems useful to highlight that any relational definition can become a significant context for understanding supervisory interventions from the position of supervisor and supervisees. Perhaps what would be useful to avoid relational collisions becoming an overarching theme in a group would be for supervisors to create opportunities to attend to the group process either during personal and professional development sessions or as a disciplined activity in the post-session. This could be an area for further attention and perhaps more active exploration of other theoretical orientations' approaches to group processes.

### **6.2.2: Time**

Time features most clearly in one group, although part of the study was to explore the effect of time in relation to developmental learning. There is some suggestion that over the two year course there is a tipping point such that the number of supervisory interventions decreases and the attention to supervisees' ideas increases. What is less clear is whether this change is a result of time and the increased number of therapy hours. An apprentice model suggest that this would be the case although it could be the impact of a second supervisor.

One point of collision is in relation to the practice of doubling up necessary to ensure the required training hours within the course time limits. Some supervisors engage with this challenge through doubling up in the first term whereas others delay until the second term of the first year. It is likely that there are several factors at play here. One could be the supervisors' previous experience of achieving or not achieving hours. The consequence for the supervisees is that they must continue seeing families into the summer months often with an unfamiliar supervisor. Another could be the supervisors' preference for creating more security in the

group, having practice hours as less of an organising feature. Others could be influenced by the experience and attitude to learning using splitting the group as a signal of confidence. Another could be the reality that supervisees in their places of work will need to become more autonomous working as lone therapists. All are legitimate positions which places responsibility on the supervisor for articulating the reasons for any decision retaining the option to review depending on the group experience and therapy hours.

Another point of collision is the emotional and practical effect of perceived lack of time, leading to less creative practice from the supervisor and more anxiety from the supervisees. It may be useful to encourage supervisors to outline their relationship between time for training and time for therapy and their preferences for the use of time during the live supervision groups and outside of them. Some supervisors encourage written responses to feedback and others written planned hypotheses to operationalise in sessions. This movement between what can be achieved in and outside of sessions could be more structured and consistent across groups.

### **6.3: Rare (marginal) themes**

#### **6.3.1: Experience (supervisees)**

This could appear as a collision with some indication that supervisees have intentionally withheld their expertise deferring to the supervisor, even when they disagree with the decisions or direction of therapy. However, it seems useful to consider the inclusion of experience. It is the case that all supervisees are professionally qualified in some prior discipline (AFT requirements for course entry). Few supervisors seem to make use of this although there is some evidence that it affects the level of supervisory intervention. One explanation for this gap could be a supervisory assumption that the training group provides a level playing

field for developing systemic skills rather than promote one discipline as more relevant than others. This could be an attempt to flatten the group in terms of power and discourses about different disciplines. Another could be supervisors' attempts to encourage supervisees to hold their expertise more lightly in order to be available to new perspectives about familiar issues thus creating multiple views about family presentations. To take this notion of multiple perspectives further, supervisors may wish to avoid possible alignment with supervisees of similar professions or distance with those of different disciplines.

For the future it would be helpful for supervisors to include more curiosity about supervisees' previous professional experience (and training) to find ways of harnessing this in the service of families at the level of content and contributing to the construction of individual learning, shaping supervisory interventions and educational opportunities.

### **6.3.2: The Social GRRRAACCEESSS (SG) (Burnham, 2012)**

Despite groups including male and female supervisees and supervisors who have different ethnic heritage, ages and levels of experience, the social GRRRAACCEESSS seems to be an area worthy of further consideration. Currently there is little 'matching' between supervisees and supervisors with allocation to groups based on supervisee availability. Although the supervisors use frames of reference in relation to supervisees that incorporate the SG's, these seem to be linked to age and gender rather than other contexts. Only the black supervisors talk about ethnicity and the disciplined inclusion of the SG's although all groups are expected to complete their cultural genogram. The emphasis appears to be more focused on the effects of difference and similarity with families. That does not mean that this is neglected in supervision groups but perhaps could be elevated for more active consideration as part of the group process including wider societal discourses. This is more likely to feature in personal and professional

development aspects of the training and in the power and diversity group, a central feature of the course.

Gender is another SG that seems important. It remains the case that systemic therapy courses attract more females than males. In terms of supervisors, out of the 7 possible groups, there were 4 female and 3 male supervisors. On the face of it this seems balanced and it is only when considering the effect of gender in supervision that this becomes interesting. Of the 3 male supervisors interviewed female gender was constructed in relation to male power and privilege. In some ways it is encouraging that male supervisors are cognisant of their position but in other ways this could be seen to diminish the position of females as individual and separate rather than in relation to males. This may confirm enduring discourses between men and women in the wider societal context and shape not only supervisory interventions but also the service to families.

In order to respond to the challenge of equality training courses may need to proactively consider the construction of supervision groups. It seems that same gender groups create more effective learning environments particularly for females where they seem freer to use a repertoire of interactions both consensus and challenge which appears not to be the case with mixed groups or with male supervisors. Male supervisees and male supervisors can sometimes achieve good relationships through a notion of mentoring although it seems more common that elements of competition may emerge.

Perhaps a more useful approach is to avoid the notion of matching which in some ways steps away from the challenge of considering the effects of difference and diversity and raise the profile of the SG's in supervisor training to encourage supervisors to be open about their personhood and their own constructions of others through the lens of the SG's. This makes explicit links with educational theory and supervisory interventions. This could then translate into a more

transparent and inclusive consideration in live supervision groups. Some suggestions follow.

#### **6.4 Suggested framework for supervisory and training practice**

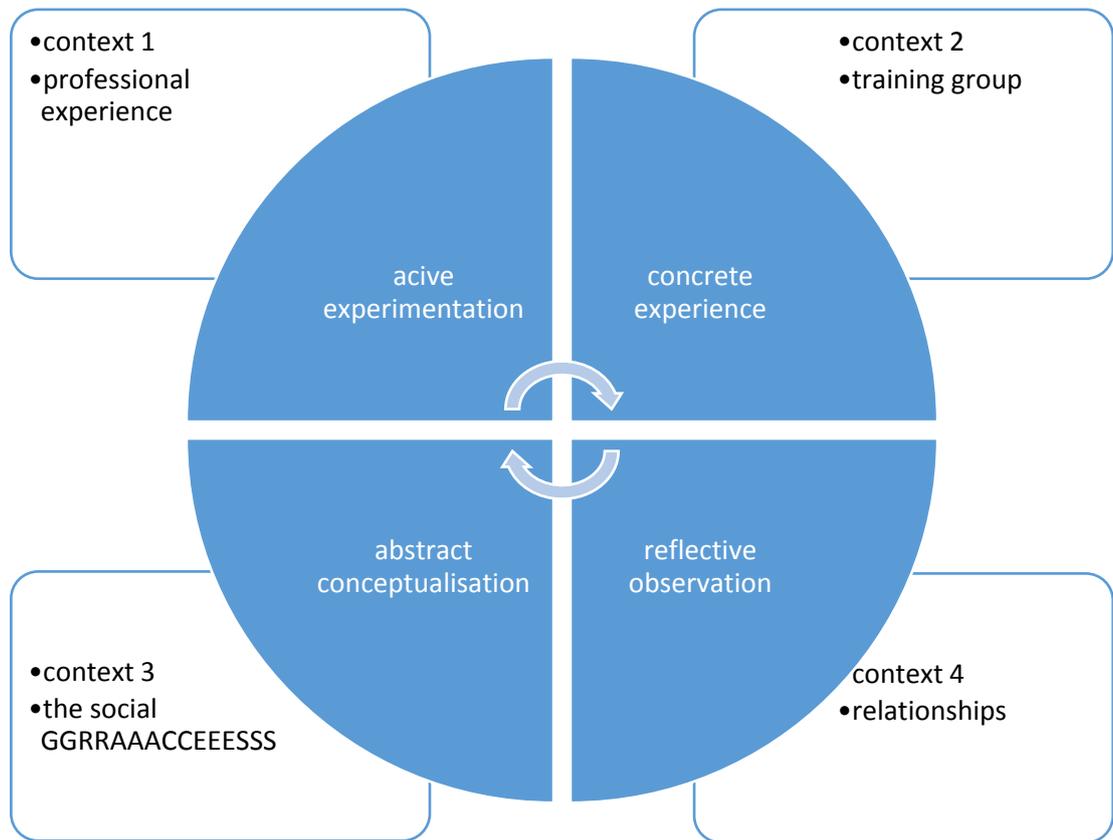
Figure 4 is intended to create a disciplined framework for developing open conversations in relation to the neglected areas identified in the study. It uses Kolb (1984) as the vehicle for enquiring, understanding and transforming ideas and practices into new and innovative ways of approaching supervisory and practice conversations thus enhancing and expanding the capacity in live supervision groups to attend to marginalised positions and themes.

Following the model is a range of questions that explore individual and relational possibilities in live supervision groups. The intention is to respond to the two main supervisory drivers emerging from the research of individual technical ability (individual) in taught model and creating connected and collaborative relationships in supervision groups (relational).

Questions are housed within the four contexts that have emerged from the study as worthy of further attention, namely professional experience, the training group, the social GRRRAAACCEEESSS and relationship building. It uses Kolb (1984) to contextualise the questions and create transformative possibilities by enabling conversational partners such as supervisors and supervisees to identify and respond to different learning styles by posing questions in a preferred context (or indeed intentionally posing questions in a less preferred context to stretch supervisees). For example enquiry from the position of concrete experience can be transformed through the other contexts into reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. Some examples follow that are indicative not prescriptive.

By placing supervisor / supervisee in the centre of the model, this enables questions to be directed from and to different positions and can focus on different approaches to learning with the discipline of transformative learning.

In choosing to use such a supervisory intervention, supervisors must remain attentive to supervisees' experiences of learning so as not to promote an approach that disadvantages any supervisee. They must also be willing to engage as conversational partners in ways that encourage and promote enquiry about supervisory choices and preferences in order to actively participate and contribute



to the mutual influencing process that characterises live supervision groups.

**Figure 4: Model for inclusive open supervision and practice**

## **Indicative questions.**

In order to take account of the individual and relational, questions should move between these positions and should be asked of supervisors and supervisees. The following ideas are intended to begin the conversation by offering one or two questions in each of the learning quadrants to respond to and harness the abilities that supervisees and supervisors bring to live supervision.

### **Context 1: Professional experience**

#### **Individual**

- What range / particular experience do you bring to this context that you hope to fully utilise?
- How does this show in action? (concrete experience)
- In what way does this influence your thinking? (reflective observation)
- How is this informed by evidence or theory in the area? (abstract conceptualisation)
- How do you want to use this experience in this new context to develop your competency? (active experimentation)

#### **Relational**

- What will you do to ensure that your experience enhances the practical development / competency of others?
- How will you monitor the effect of your contribution on others and adjust it accordingly?
- If you have information about a particular family presentation how do you want to offer this in ways that contribute rather than criticise others' gaps in knowledge?

- What risks do you hope to take in practicing new skills and what needs to be in place for this to be likely?

## **Context 2: Training group**

### **Individual**

- What do you know about your activity in groups that will help you in this one?
- What is your perception of how others see you in groups?
- What knowledge do you bring about group process or not that will be helpful?
- What do you want to do more / less of in this group to achieve practice competence?

### **Relational**

- How will you balance your participation with others in the group?
- In what way will you monitor others feedback – visible and verbal – to help you know how to adjust your contribution?
- How will you use the available knowledge in the group to expand your views?
- How would the group be organised for you and others to take practice and relational risks?

## **Context 3: The social GRRRAAACCEESSS (SG)**

### **Individual**

- What experiences of personhood have you had that you think will affect your learning or practice?
- What do you or have you noticed about others similarities and differences to you that affect your learning and practice?
- What discourses continue to have a legacy in your life and which have become less significant?
- What activities do you imagine you want to promote and step away from that might challenge or confirm discourses or personhood?

### **Relational**

- If you were to harness the multiple experiences of similarity and difference in the group, how do you hope this will respond to discourses or not?
- What positions do you want to take in relation to others to show a commitment to reflexive practice?
- If you feel as a group that you are inadvertently stepping into some patterns of interaction influenced by dominant discourses, how can you as a group recognise and attend to this?
- If as a group you took a risk to take alternative positions that the ones that define you, how might this open up new opportunities for relationship and practice?

### **Context 4: Relationships (education / social /professional)**

#### **Individual**

- What experience do you bring from other relationships that might constrain your participation or enhance it?
- What do you notice about others in groups that inspires / challenges you?

- In your reading about relationships in therapy and groups, what do you find attracts you most?
- What do you do in action or interaction in relationships that invites others to connect or distance?

### **Relational**

- If you were to take the best of what you have experienced in groups or alternatively practice a new approach to groups, what effect do you hope this would have on others?
- If you and others agreed to give constructive and open feedback how do you think this would enhance your group learning and contribute to group relationships?
- Knowing that you have been part of other groups (family, education, religious, gender) what commitment do you want to make in this group that harnesses the best of your relational ability and contributes to others as they do with you?
- How do you imagine that you will arrive at good enough group relationships to risk innovative and creative practices together that steps outside of your comfort zones?

With the inclusion of such forms of enquiry, it seems that the challenges and the joys of live supervision groups can be explored and appreciated and neglected areas of mutual influence can be made more visible.

The study shows that in live supervision, which remains a core element of systemic training, supervisors and supervisees navigate complex and sometimes competing

demands. In order to achieve the common high context markers of ethical and safe practice through technical competence and develop and utilize coordinated relationships that enhance learning, supervisors and supervisees would benefit from more open conversations about the challenges of the learning context, appreciation of prior skills, overt descriptions of the supervisor's preferred approach and clear intention behind interventions that encourage mutual enquiry and curiosity.

## Chapter Seven

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# **Chapter Eight**

## **Appendices**

## **Appendix 1: Information sheet to Director of MSc. in Family and Systemic Psychotherapy**

Judy Gray

Director of the MSc in Family and Systemic Psychotherapy

Institute of Family Therapy

24-32 Stephenson Way,

London NW1 2HX

Dear Judy,

Re: Doctoral Research

Following our recent conversation, I am writing to you as Director of the qualifying training in Systemic Psychotherapy with a specific request that I would like you to consider.

I am currently enrolled on the clinical doctorate programme with Birkbeck College. My area of interest is the training and development of systemic practice, which is a broad area. I have decided to limit my area of enquiry to the context of live supervision, about which there is much literature written from the position of the supervisees but little specifically from the position of supervisors. As a supervisor myself who has been involved in live supervision, I have become interested in the mutual influencing process between supervisors and supervisees and the ways in which this shapes supervisory style amongst other influences such as gender, experience and other variables.

The research will incorporate several methods of data collection. I wish to observe a live supervision group, the data from which will be used to develop informal interview schedules for both supervisors and supervisees. I will then interview supervisors individually in relation to their supervisory practice and interview the supervisee groups about their contribution to the developments of supervisory practice.

I would like your permission to approach supervisors who offer live supervision at the Institute of Family Therapy and invite them to permit me to observe their supervisory practice and follow up with individual interviews. I would like to include as many supervision groups as possible. I do however understand that some supervisors may be apprehensive about my presence as the Director of the Institute and therefore I want to be transparent in inviting people to decline without explanation should they wish and to reassure them that any decision not to participate will not affect employment with the Institute.

In order that both supervisors and supervisees understand the area of enquiry and the invitation to participate, I have attached two letters that outline the study and the requirements of their participation. I would like to send these to potential participants but will only do so with your written consent. I would also like to discuss any arrangements that IFT can make for any participants that may experience distress as a result, although this seems unlikely.

If supervisors agree to participate, I propose to begin the process as soon as practically possible.

I propose to observe a group, making notes to inform the interview schedules.  
Formal interviews with supervisors and their supervision groups will follow.

I hope that the data will be collected and transcribed between 2012 and 2013, ready for return to participants. If these research plans change I will inform you.

If you are agreeable to this proposal, I would like to approach supervisors in the first instance. I will not do so without your consent.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me and I will provide you with as much information as possible for you to make an informed decision.

Yours sincerely,

Barbara McKay

## **Appendix 2: Information sheet for supervisors**

Dear Supervisor

Re: Doctoral Research

I have secured consent from Judy Gray, Director of the MSc training in Family and Systemic Psychotherapy to approach you with an invitation to participate in my research study.

I am currently studying for a Clinical Doctorate with Birkbeck College, University of London. My area of interest is around what contributes to the development of supervisory style in the context of live supervision? In order to explore this I am interested in the co-construction in live supervision and the ways that supervisors and supervisees shape one another.

There is much literature on this subject from the position of supervisees but less from the position of the supervisor.

As someone engaged weekly in live supervision, I would welcome the chance to talk with you about the possibility of participating in the study. At this juncture I would like to take the opportunity to give a short account of my proposed study to give you the chance of considering your potential participation.

My proposed research title is: What contributes to the development of supervisory style in the context of live supervision? The points of enquiry are around the ways in which the supervisor might change his / her practice in response to the supervisees' needs and requirements over time or ways in which there might be some consistency in practice regardless of the context. In exploring this I am interested in learning more about the stories that supervisors tell of their practice as well as the stories supervisees tell of their supervisors' practice.

Current literature highlights the effect of the training context, the stage of training, cultural beliefs of the individuals and the group, gender balances in the group, the demands of the case being supervised and other aspects as highly influential in shaping the supervisors activity and approach. I am interested in the different perspectives that supervisors and supervisees have in relation to such issues as well as other ideas that might emerge.

As the training groups meet over a two year period, I hope to gather data at two points in order to consider the effect of time on the supervisory relationships. Data collection will be as follows:

2012 to 2013 first data collection

- Summer 2012 – preliminary interview with past supervisor - completed
- Summer 2012 – preliminary interview with past supervisee – completed
- February 2013 – observation of one live supervision group – completed
- February 2013 – pilot interview with one supervisor – completed
- March 2013 – pilot interview with one group of supervisees
- March – April 2013 – interviews with participating supervisors and supervisees

2014 second data collection

- January – March - Repeating interviews with participating supervisors and supervisees

### **Dual relationship**

One aspect of the research that is significant that has little to do with the practice of research is the dual relationship that I have in relation to all of the participants. It is possible that as Director of the Institute of Family Therapy, it may seem that potential participants have no freedom to decline to participate. I would like to attempt to reassure you that my primary interest is as a researcher and that although I will be exploring supervisory practice, this is not a monitoring exercise and no information will be passed to the Director of the MSc course. I will also provide the same reassurance to the students as they may feel as though they have to 'perform' during research interviews and this may constrain them. I am sure this may be a factor that I must consider but I hope that by being transparent we can manage this complexity.

If you are interested to know more about the research and you would like to participate or you would like to decline, you can contact Judy Gray on [judy@iftnet.plus.com](mailto:judy@iftnet.plus.com) who will pass on your enquiry to me.

If you would like to contact me directly, please feel free to ring on 020 7391 9150 and I am usually in the office Monday to Thursday or e-mail on [barbaramckay@iftnet.plus.com](mailto:barbaramckay@iftnet.plus.com)

If you feel that you have sufficient information to make a decision about participation or otherwise, I would appreciate it if you could complete the following consent form.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this invitation.

Yours sincerely,

Barbara McKay

**Appendix 3: Consent form for supervisors.**

**Research study**

**What contributes to the development of supervisory style in the context of live supervision?**

Ancillary working title : how is live supervision co-constructed between the supervisor and supervisees?

1. I agree that I have sufficient information to make a decision about participation in the study.

**Agree**

I have decided to consent to participate in the study which will take the form of 2 interviews between March 2013 and March 2014

**Agree to participate**

- ~~2. I have decided to decline the invitation to participate in the study.~~

**~~Decline to participate~~**

3. I understand that none of the information will be shared with the Director of the MSc and line manager.

**Agree**

4. I agree that information from the interviews can be used in the final study although there will be no identifying data included without additional permission.

**Agree**

5. I accept that I can withdraw at any stage of the research study by contacting Barbara McKay on [barbarmckay@iftnet.plus.com](mailto:barbarmckay@iftnet.plus.com)

**Agree**

- 7 I consent to the dissertation being used for publication

**Agree**

Name .....Date.....

## **Appendix 4: Information sheet for supervisees**

Dear MSc Student

### **Re: Research at the Institute of Family Therapy**

I am currently studying for a Clinical Doctorate with Birkbeck College, University of London and hope to engage in some empirical research in relation to live supervision.

My primary focus is the development of supervisory style and practice during live supervision. As you, supervisees, are significant participants in creating the context in which this occurs, I would like to include your perspective in the data collection.

At this juncture I would like to take the opportunity to give a short account of my proposed study to give you the chance of considering your potential participation.

My proposed research title is: What contributes to the development of supervisory style in the context of live supervision? The supplementary title is the co-construction of live supervision.

I hope to explore the mutual influencing process that occurs between supervisor and supervisees during the live supervision experience and the contribution this makes to the development of supervisory style. Although there is a structure to live supervision which is often a pre-session, session with a range of possible interventions and post session, the approach and actions within this framework can be very different with supervisors using a range of creative skills to bring forth supervisees' abilities and offer a good service to clients,.

Much literature suggests that the relationship between supervisor and supervisees is a complex one affected by the stage of training, cultural beliefs, gender, experience and practice preferences of the supervisor, and demands of the case in view, the requirements of the training institution and the moment to moment decision making during the live supervision experience. I am interested in exploring this complexity to better understand the way that this shapes style of practice.

The research process will be as follows:

2012 to 2013 first data collection

- Summer 2012 – preliminary interview with past supervisor - completed
- Summer 2012 – preliminary interview with past supervisee – completed
- February 2013 – observation of one live supervision group – completed
- February 2013 – pilot interview with one supervisor – completed
- March 2013 – pilot interview with one group of supervisees
- March – April 2013 – interviews with participating supervisors and supervisees

2014 second data collection

- January – March - Repeating interviews with participating supervisors and supervisees

### **Dual relationship**

One aspect of the research that is significant that has little to do with the practice of research is the dual relationship that I have in relation to all of the participants. It is possible that as Director of the Institute of Family Therapy, it may seem that potential participants have no freedom to decline to participate. I would like to attempt to reassure you that my primary interest is as a researcher and that although I will be exploring supervisory practice, this is not a monitoring exercise and no information will be passed to the Director of the MSc course. This is the same situation for students as no information will be passed to any staff members and interviews are for research purposes only.

If you are interested to know more about the research and you would like to participate or you would like to decline, you can contact Judy Gray on [judy@iftnet.plus.com](mailto:judy@iftnet.plus.com) who will pass on your enquiry to me.

If you would like to contact me directly, please feel free to ring on 020 7391 9150 and I am usually in the office Monday to Thursday or e-mail on [barbaramckay@iftnet.plus.com](mailto:barbaramckay@iftnet.plus.com)

If you feel that have sufficient information to make a decision about participation or otherwise, I would appreciate it if you could complete the following consent form.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this invitation.

Yours sincerely,

Barbara McKay

**Appendix 5: Consent form for supervisees.**

**Research study**

**What contributes to the development of supervisory style in the context of live supervision?**

Ancillary working title : how is live supervision co-constructed between the supervisor and supervisees?

- 6. I agree that I have sufficient information to make a decision about participation in the study.

**Agree information)**

**Disagree (I would like further information)**

- 7. I have decided to consent to participate in the study which will take the form of 2 interviews between March 2013 and March 2014

**Agree to participate**

- 8. I have decided to decline the invitation to participate in the study.

**Decline to participate**

- 9. I understand that none of the information will be shared with the Director of the MSc or any course staff.

**Agree**

- 10. I agree that information from the interviews can be used in the final study although there will be no identifying data included without additional permission.

**Agree**

- 11. I accept that I can withdraw at any stage of the research study by contacting Barbara McKay on [barbaramckay@iftnet.plus.com](mailto:barbaramckay@iftnet.plus.com)

**Agree**

- 7 I consent to the dissertation being used for publication

**Agree / disagree**

**Name .....Date.....**

## **Appendix 6: Interview schedule for supervisor interviews**

### **Interview schedule for supervisor in the live supervision context**

1. How would you describe your relationship with your supervisees at this stage of training? (effect of power, time, experience)
2. What supervisory actions do you make in the pre-session, in-session and post-session? (action in pre-session, in-session and post-session)
3. What critical moments lead to supervisory action? (Coordination, content of the case, clinical development, habit such as always intervening after certain time, time of the training?)
4. What critical moments lead to no action? (Coordination, confidence in supervisee, time of the training, covert attempt to control the session? (McCann 2000?))
5. How do offer your supervisory interventions, what preferred approach or style do you have? (Interpersonal approach, tone of voice, type of comment, directive, instructive, curious questioning?)
6. How does your supervisory action fit with the stories they have of your supervisory identity which might be across other contexts? (Stable, fixed, improvisational, responsive?)
7. In what way, if any, does your own sense of personhood contribute to your supervisory action and approach? (social GRRAACCEESS, Burnham (2012))
8. What effects do your interventions have on supervisees or in what was do your supervisees influence your interventions? (Intended, unintended, relational perspective, opens up conversation, closes down conversation?)
9. Any other comments you would like to make?

## **Appendix 7: Interview schedule for supervisee interviews**

### **Interview schedule for supervisees in the live supervision context**

1. How would you describe the relationship between you and your supervisor at this stage of training? (effect of power, assessment, group context, time)
2. What do you see your supervisors doing during the pre-session, in-session and post-session? (descriptions of action, interventions)
3. How do you understand your supervisors' decisions to make interventions such as timing, case content or other? (coordination, reflexivity)
4. What is it you notice about your activity in a session that you think leads to your supervisor intervening?
5. What do you think your supervisor hopes to achieve by the interventions? (education, development of skill)
6. In what way do you think you contribute to or shape the way your supervisor acts / responds in the live supervised context? (mutual influencing process)
7. How is your contribution influenced by your own personhood and that of your supervisor? (Social GRRACCEESS, Burnham 2012)
8. Any other comments that you wish to make?

1 **Appendix 8: Transcript of the interview with supervisor (Jane)**

2 B *Thank you for doing this, it is fantastic, it is going to help me*  
3 *enormously. Shall I just give you a little bit of a snapshot of what I*  
4 *am trying to do? Then I have got a range of questions but I am*  
5 *happy for you to go off in directions that you wish. What I am trying*  
6 *to look at is the kind of mutual influencing process between*  
7 *supervisor and supervisee in a live supervision context. My focus is*  
8 *much more on the supervisor rather than the supervisee but taking*  
9 *into account the supervisee perspective. So what I am interested in is*  
10 *how the supervisors preferred practice might be shaped by the*  
11 *supervisee or context or anything like that or ways in which the*  
12 *supervisors preferred practice overrides the context. I am looking at*  
13 *how a supervisors' style might be influenced and shaped by the*  
14 *training context and the supervisees. Do you have any questions?*

15 J No I think probably something about how we are co-constructing the  
16 process of supervision.

17 B *One of the reasons that I am trying the questions out with you is that*  
18 *I would like you to comment on the experience so that I can reshape*  
19 *this. So this could be part of the pilot. That suggestion of co-*  
20 *construction might be a better theme.*

21 *How would you describe your preferred supervisory style or*  
22 *preferred practices when you are practicing in the live supervision*  
23 *context?*

24 S I think that's a really interesting question. I think there are often  
25 times when I am not sure what my preferred style is ummm..i think  
26 what I find is that I...I think I tend toward naturally being a bit  
27 **structural really**. So I have to be aware that I don't sort of use that  
28 to shape...well I suppose to not ....to connect with the students  
29 really because most students these days do come from a more  
30 constructionist background or narrative perspective. So I suppose  
31 I've got that in mind when I am thinking about them....**and I**  
32 **suppose my first priority is to..well I suppose to..well it is to**  
33 **connect with them and to engage with each individually but also**  
34 **to create ummm to create an environment in which people feel**  
35 **safe enough to take a bit of a risk**. And for some students that risk  
36 might be something like being watched for the first time. So I  
37 suppose they are my two priorities, particularly at the beginning of  
38 supervision and then umm I suppose once they begin to start  
39 working with families I'm kind of looking just to see who they kind  
40 of manage that and what they do and how they respond to having  
41 more than one person in the room.

42 B *How do you think the individual supervisees or the group as a*  
43 *whole, how do you think they affect your practice/ You said that you*

44 *engage individually with them as well as a group? You might be*  
45 *thinking of particular individuals or other groups that you have been*  
46 *part of.*

47 S well I think...umm I am not sure why but this feels like...this **feels**  
48 **like the warmest group**... well I don't know if warm is the right  
49 word umm but it feels like **we have really connected well and**  
50 **that's been relatively easy**. And I don't know what the difference  
51 is, whether it is something about my style or that you know has  
52 become more confident so that I am more easily able to step out of  
53 ...well not step out of but to embrace my role as course chair and  
54 also as the supervisor and **to bring in more of myself**.

55 B *Ok do you think there is anything with the way the supervisees*  
56 *position themselves that makes that more or less possible?*

57 S I think there is a good feel in the group. It feels like they are all  
58 positioned to learn and they have very positive orientation to  
59 learning and to the whole experience of supervision so it feels like  
60 there's less of an imperative to do it right or to get it right. **So it's**  
61 **not only that they can make mistakes it's that I can make**  
62 **mistakes or I can make a joke or we can share something around**  
63 **humour or about ourselves and that feels somehow OK.**

64 B *Would there be any impact or influence...I think you said it's an all*  
65 *female group and I and I don't know of any of the cultural or age*  
66 *contexts of the students but I wondered if any of those contexts make*  
67 *any difference to the way that you co-construct supervision?*

68 S I think people do bring individual ...I don't know whether  
69 characteristics in the right word....but people are individuals and  
70 they do come with that sense of..with an individuality of their own.  
71 Um I was just thinking back to another group ...I'd need to go an  
72 check...I was just thinking of another group where there was much  
73 more of a competitive edge to it ummm.. and I think that is  
74 something that was going on between two women in the group  
75 where I think each of them wanted to be in the you know the best  
76 and I don't get that sense with this group. They are much more able  
77 to umm appreciate and value what each of them brings and to  
78 recognise that what they bring is different umm but that doesn't lead  
79 them into a competitive... I mean I think doing well is important to  
80 them so it's not about that, but I don't think there is such a need to  
81 compete and to be seen to be the best and I suppose thinking about  
82 that one of the students in particular is keen that she is not the one  
83 who is looked on as if you know ...going to be the one who knows it  
84 all...and I think she's probably got more experience than the rest of  
85 the group and I think from her background she does not want to be  
86 put in a position where she's got to carry that....that responsibility  
87 for the group.

- 88 B *So just moving to the structure of the live supervision sessions..I*  
 89 *noticed when I observed the group and other groups, there is often*  
 90 *the pre-session, session and post-session and sometimes the session*  
 91 *is handled differently depending on the reflecting team or whatever.*  
 92 *How would you describe your activity in the pre-session, what is it*  
 93 *you usually expect to do in the session and the post-session?*
- 94 S I would **expect** the student umm who is seeing the family to present  
 95 the case to the group and to start off the discussion, to share their  
 96 thoughts about what, either to start the discussion or if it was a new  
 97 family or already presented to umm update the group on what ideas  
 98 they had from watching their review of the tape you know of the  
 99 session, the last session so you know to bring in thoughts that they  
 100 have been developing about the work in the interim. So **I'd expect** it  
 101 to start there also ideally what I would also try and do is to try to  
 102 connect that up to theory. I'm not sure that we always manage that  
 103 as there is quite a time constraint. But but **I'd expect** them to be  
 104 doing that and possibly here but possibly later I'd try and get them to  
 105 think about what they are bringing to the work themselves. And I  
 106 think that's umm something that's kind of developing as we go  
 107 along really cos as you know we're doing our own genogram work  
 108 between ourselves and as that work develops you would feel .. be  
 109 more comfortable with sharing that but also more in a position to  
 110 recognise what the parallels might be or how they are positioning  
 111 themselves so **I would expect** and I would expect of myself to be  
 112 asking questions around how they are positioning themselves you  
 113 know in relation to their thinking. Having said that I am not always  
 114 sure that I do it.
- 115 B *And what about the in-session and post-session would there be*  
 116 *additional things that you would be thinking about?*
- 117 S sometimes I would **negotiate** with the student you know – what they  
 118 wanted from me and things around the phoning in and that sort of  
 119 thing umm we would also look at what the student would like from  
 120 the team **generally so I might** allocate tasks for students behind the  
 121 screen based on what the student, the student therapist is saying that  
 122 they'd like, they'd like from the team generally in the session. So  
 123 there would be a bit of structure to that umm we might at that  
 124 time..we probably will have had a discussion about whether umm to  
 125 think about having a reflecting team or whether the student will  
 126 come out and take a break and **I would generally leave that to the**  
 127 **student to decide**. We would look at how the session's gone and the  
 128 feeling at the time and I would expect that generally the student  
 129 would offer the family the choice.
- 130 B *Would there be what would lead you to make interventions in the*  
 131 *sessions. I mean what do you notice in the session that is more likely*

- 132 *to make you intervene or moments when you are likely to let a supervision*  
 133 *go on longer?*
- 134 S Generally speaking and I remember this from the supervision course  
 135 and Barry saying, you know, you know **I would generally wait if I**  
 136 **want to intervene.** I would generally wait a few minutes because  
 137 often you know umm the err, the therapist gets there on their own  
 138 and you don't have to intervene. But I suppose I would be looking  
 139 around perhaps you know the **use of language**, any significant use  
 140 of language in the family that the student may have missed or not  
 141 picked up on and it might be helpful. If there was a **theme** that had  
 142 been put to one side and I thought you know, it would be useful to  
 143 look at before they break or before the reflection I might intervene  
 144 for that umm or if there was some sort of **pattern** going on whereby  
 145 they were talking to one family member rather than others or  
 146 someone being left out, I might intervene for that. So it would be for  
 147 those practical things. And I suppose, it hasn't happened but if I felt  
 148 there was a **safety** issue, if there had been raised and you know not  
 149 looked at or not dealt with or picked up I would raise that.
- 150 B *And do you have an idea about how long you would like to leave*  
 151 *someone in the room with a family before you intervene or do you*  
 152 *just see how it goes?*
- 153 S I tend to see how it goes umm I suppose generally earlier in the work  
 154 I might intervene more but I also think I've got quite and able group  
 155 umm here and **I have really been quite impressed with their**  
 156 **ability you know to go with it and pick things up without**  
 157 **needing me to intervene so I think that has also organised me to**  
 158 **intervene less.**
- 159 B *so the ability of the group influences the way you supervise?*
- 160 S Absolutely yes
- 161 B *and when you do choose to intervene what is your preferred way of*  
 162 *doing that or preferred style of intervention*
- 163 S phoning in do you mean?
- 164 B *Well could be phone or knocking on the door or giving instructions*  
 165 *or inviting people to consider ..what what do you like to do?*
- 166 S Well we have not done any other way than phoning in umm **I try**  
 167 **and be concise but I might veer between giving an instruction**  
 168 **and or or it might be one or two key words like sort of just**  
 169 **saying – think about this theme or I'd like you to go back to this**  
 170 **theme** so I might give them an instruction but I might just make  
 171 umm I might just make a comment for them to pick up on. I think it  
 172 does vary actually.

- 173 B *Do you think that there is anything about the stage of the course,*  
 174 *because they are early in the course at the moment, do you think*  
 175 *there is anything about the stage of the course that influences the*  
 176 *way you supervise at the moment?*
- 177 S well I think it's interesting because generally speaking at an earlier  
 178 stage one might be inclined to say '**I would like you to do this**' **I**  
 179 **mean if you actually want them to do it you are not giving them**  
 180 **the choice and we have had a bit of discussion in the group** about  
 181 that. But I suppose what I also noticed is that if I phone in with very  
 182 definite instructions invariably they somehow get re-interpreted..
- 183 B *OK.*
- 184 S so I do think people think in their own way or they pick up what they  
 185 hear you saying you know.. it may not be what you are intending so  
 186 I think it is quite a tricky process this idea of phoning in and making  
 187 an intervention of that sort. And I am not quite sure that I always get  
 188 it right really .. sometimes I phone in with a very clear idea about  
 189 what I want and it goes off in a completely different direction or it  
 190 used or interpreted in a different way really.
- 191 B *so that's in front of the screen, is there anything that happens behind*  
 192 *the screen during sessions that you try to do with the supervisees,*  
 193 *how you act behind the screen as well as the front?*
- 194 S Well I tend to **be quieter behind the screen**, I might have a  
 195 conversation of comment on something that is going on in the room  
 196 about process or something like that or I might just say 'that's a nice  
 197 question' umm but I suppose **I tend to be quieter rather than**  
 198 **encouraging a lot of chatter behind the screen.**
- 199 B *Is there any particular reason for that?*
- 200 S Umm partly I think it is about respecting what the family is doing,  
 201 partly to allow space for people to develop their own ideas and also  
 202 sometimes I can't hear if there is a lot of talking going on behind the  
 203 screen umm I can't necessarily hear what's going on in the room. So  
 204 it's a bit of all of those I think.
- 205 B *OK thinking about your supervisory practice here in the live context,*  
 206 *how does your action or approach fit with the way you think about*  
 207 *yourself as a supervisor anywhere?*
- 208 S I think I have a much more conscious sense of being a supervisor  
 209 here. I mean I don't, in my workplace I don't very often go behind  
 210 the screen because we are quite a small team and I think we tend to  
 211 work in pairs which I think is quite unusual so even if there is a  
 212 bigger team than two umm we may end up working with two of us  
 213 in the room. But if we don't it's very rare that I am actually behind  
 214 the screen which is quite interesting really umm so in a way I think I

215 don't have that much experience of working in a supervisory role in  
216 my agency base as opposed to practice so it feels here that I can  
217 connect more as a supervisor and I think umm more of a learning  
218 role and I mean there are a few occasions when I've umm offered  
219 what I would call supervisory comments in my agency base, it's  
220 probably when I have not been present and I've watched a video  
221 afterwards to catch up with what's been going on and made some  
222 comments or suggestions about the process

223 B *Right*

224 S um I was thinking for instance there was an interview with a mother  
225 who was quite severely mentally umm had quite a severe mental  
226 illness and was also in a wheelchair which was to do with the  
227 medication she was taking but she was completely silent and  
228 silenced by everyone in the room and I did comment on that process  
229 that she needed to be brought in and given more of a voice.

230 B *Right*

231 S ...in a session and that sort of thing. And that felt as though it fitted  
232 really, you know I had a perspective that was different from other  
233 people in the room and it was a process that I had noticed and other  
234 people hadn't picked up on it umm but I think that would be umm  
235 fairly rare really in my agency.

236 B *Ok thinking about the social graces, is there anything that you know  
237 about your gender, or your age or your experience and all of the  
238 social graces that you think shapes the supervisory task and the way  
239 that you connect or don't connect with your group?*

240 S I suspect that my gender is quite significant and possibly my age in  
241 so far as it possible means that I've got a lot of experience to draw  
242 on umm but I think my gender in term of probably umm **probably  
243 um prioritizing the relationship probably taking a more gentle  
244 approach to giving feedback and to introducing umm  
245 suggestions for doing things differently.** I think one of the things  
246 that I, I think one of the things I have learned over the years is to be  
247 more positive and to couch things in positives and to start with what  
248 people are doing well first and I guess to phrase things that you  
249 might do differently rather than you know what you didn't do here  
250 or what you did wrong here umm and I suppose that's the sort of  
251 things that's come over the years really.

252 B *And do you think there is anything about the gender of the group  
253 that .. influences that or if you were working with male and female  
254 supervisees rather than just female?*

255 S I think probably the temptation is to have a more umm I don't know  
256 whether the word is **free flowing or maybe a bit less punchy**

257 **discussion.** I mean I was think about another group where I had two  
 258 men with quite different personalities umm and one of them  
 259 certainly **liked it to be focused and punchy and precise** and to the  
 260 point and I think the other one was probably a bit more waffly  
 261 actually so probably needed it to be a bit more structured and punchy  
 262 and the challenge was to to do that and to help him to do that.

263 B *Right and so you've just said that a man might have wanted more*  
 264 *structure and needed it to be a bit more punchy. Do you find that you*  
 265 *alter your supervisory style depending on what the supervisees want*  
 266 *from you in a teaching context or a supervision issue or...*

267 S umm that's an interesting one. I think I probably do umm (longish  
 268 pause) I'm not sure that I do in this group. I am conscious that **I**  
 269 **probably have adapted my style depending on the needs of the**  
 270 **students at various times** so umm I suppose introducing a bit more  
 271 challenge or a bit more activity or taking a bit more of a risk in terms  
 272 of maybe role playing or something like that whereas with the  
 273 current group that does not feel like it is such a risk. And I don't  
 274 whether that is because they are all women or whether, I don't know,  
 275 as a group they may be more umm in a similar place in terms of you  
 276 know with the work that they do and that's about where they come  
 277 from. Because I think they are all in environments in which they do  
 278 experiment a bit

279 B *OK, so thinking about the group that you are in, the supervision*  
 280 *group that you are part of, if I was talking to them, and I will talk to*  
 281 *them at some point, what do you think they would say about what*  
 282 *kind of supervisor they create in you? What do you think they would*  
 283 *say?*

284 S oooo, I suppose creating me into a kind of umm I suppose depends  
 285 on what they see me as in the first place umm

286 B *any idea what you think that might be?*

287 S I think probably **encouraging and positive** and I think probably  
 288 **quite gentle** umm I think when we have had the time to make theory  
 289 to practice connections I think they also value that as I think they  
 290 probably see me as probably **holding quite a bit of knowledge**  
 291 potentially to bring umm **prepared to listen** and **introducing a bit**  
 292 **of challenge. I am beginning to wonder whether there is enough,**  
 293 **whether what I do is introduce enough challenge. Umm and I**  
 294 **think maybe they would say that they want a bit more and**  
 295 **probably a bit more** feedback in terms of what they have done in  
 296 the session or umm about the work with the family. What I wonder  
 297 is whether I bring enough ideas to that or whether I rely on them to  
 298 do that for themselves.

- 299 B *Ok can you think of circumstances when you are more likely to be*  
300 *leading in that way?*
- 301 S ummm in specific circumstances no but I think it's quite umm I  
302 think it is connected to my sense of time umm and you know the  
303 time we've got to plan and explore things before a session so if there  
304 is more time I might be more inclined to ask questions to around  
305 where do you position yourself in this family or what theoretical  
306 ideas are ummm underpinning your thinking here? What I think I  
307 probably don't do as much is to say what I am thinking is that or  
308 what I and I think and that's also partly because I don't always make  
309 the time to go and look at you know to catch up with the last session  
310 and look through the notes and things to see what happened in the  
311 session before, I leave it to the students and that's the bit that I really  
312 don't do and I think I should. It might make my supervision a lot  
313 more focused and tight I think
- 314 B *OK so is there anything else about the live supervision context that*  
315 *you think I should be asking about or any areas that you think I*  
316 *should cover that we have not talked about?... The kinds of things*  
317 *that I have read about are the stages of training over a two year*  
318 *course or umm the kind of teaching element of the supervisory role*  
319 *or direction and collaboration umm and different stages of learning*  
320 *but I don't know whether any of those things are relevant to you*  
321 *working with this group or other groups*
- 322 S I umm think they probably are relevant I think I do see this group as  
323 fairly advanced in their practice. I do have to say that as all of them  
324 have dealt with tricky situations although all of them have various  
325 strengths and not all of them are in the same place in terms of their  
326 umm level of skills and you know their practice. I do think they are  
327 able to measure up to the moment if they need to so that it umm so  
328 that does organise so I so I would have had to intervene more in  
329 sessions. I was thinking particularly of (supervisee name) first  
330 session with a family, a mother who is coming with her three  
331 children who were just pre-adolescent up to nineteen and it was very  
332 clear that you know the children didn't want to be here they had  
333 been made to come and (supervisee name) just positioned herself  
334 really well in relation to that, without losing the mother so actually  
335 opened up a space for them to talk or actually to not talk which for  
336 most of the session they didn't do and so made it OK for them to say  
337 they did not want to come or go away to talk about that and make a  
338 decision about who would come and who wouldn't and I thought  
339 that she did that really well umm without putting them in a position  
340 where they felt they had to talk also without losing the mother who  
341 had made, who was the one who had made them come. And that  
342 may have been helped by the mother who is training as a  
343 psychotherapist but she's training in a different model so I think

344 umm its (supervisee name) brought to that her experience umm you  
345 know as a practitioner anyway you know contributed hugely to that.  
346 And I would have certainly have had to intervene in that session  
347 much more actively and indeed it felt not appropriate to intervene  
348 because you know they did not want to be there you know she had  
349 been through the whole process of explaining the session and so on  
350 and I think at that stage we hadn't got permission either to as I  
351 recollect to to record so there were the whole thing about this session  
352 and the the method of working umm which was quite tricky for her  
353 to handle so it would have been a real challenge to intervene in that  
354 in a way that wouldn't have also disrupted her process of  
355 engagement.

356 B *so there's something about the content of the case as well as*

357 S yes yes

358 B *that has an effect on whether you are more or less likely to*  
359 *intervene?*

360 S yes definitely, definitely. Umm we have another case where umm  
361 the couple were referred because the umm the male partner umm has  
362 quite a chronic mental dis umm mental illness that's been going on  
363 for years and I think his psychiatrist wanted them to come as a  
364 couple umm and I think, I see one of my roles as being able to hold  
365 on to umm his perspective and keep that in focus, in focus in the  
366 group. I think he, he does tend to dominate the conversation but the  
367 emotions I think in the room and behind the group and the  
368 sympathies lie very much more with his partner, who also has bouts  
369 of depression so umm so I think keeping umm helping the team to  
370 kind of think about how they position themselves in relation to their  
371 sympathies and the way they feel they are being drawn and to  
372 actually keep open you know a position of openness in relation to  
373 both of them.

374 B *uhuh uhuh*

375 S so umm I'll sometimes interject a comment sometimes from behind  
376 the screen umm in relation to that.

377 B *OK I mean the way that you are talking it sort of captures the*  
378 *experience and complexity, I mean all supervision, but the live*  
379 *supervision context where you are thinking about the clients, you are*  
380 *thinking about the students, you are thinking about the direct*  
381 *experience of therapy that is happening in the moment and all of the*  
382 *other responsibilities, that kind of captures that. I mean of all of the*  
383 *things, the levels of responsibility, is there anything that you think is*  
384 *more likely to shape your activity above others, I mean do you have*  
385 *a preference about the educational element or the clinical, I mean is*  
386 *there a preference in terms of who you are as a supervisor?*

- 387 S I think probably **I tend to prioritise the clinical practice** and the  
388 family and what's going on there but but **I do try in my role within**  
389 **the session to step back a bit and also think about what the**  
390 **student is doing and to make notes for them to look at**  
391 **afterwards so for instance I try and make a note of umm you**  
392 **know of any particular time in the session on on the DVD that it**  
393 **might be useful for them to go and look at in more detail** umm  
394 and for them to try and think what they were thinking about or try to  
395 say why they were doing what they were doing at that point or  
396 maybe to flag up something that they were doing well or I might just  
397 say how could you ask this differently what else could you do here?  
398 So I also try to do things like that so so I think I am kind of umm  
399 over between the focus on the session itself and what the student is  
400 doing and that's I find that quite a tricky balance sometimes  
401 particularly umm if we are going to go in and be a reflecting team
- 402 B *Uhu*
- 403 S because I also need to have a bit of a sense of the content of the  
404 session to pick up as well as the process you know to do that and  
405 contribute and I suppose generally in the groups if we do a reflecting  
406 team umm I think probably slightly less so with this group I have a  
407 sense that umm they are beginning to you know go in umm you  
408 know speak first but I think certainly with other groups my position  
409 has always was being to speak first umm to somehow get the  
410 conversation going
- 411 B *uhuh uhu*
- 412 S And I am not quite sure whether, I just think we did have a session  
413 on umm using reflecting teams and I wonder whether that in part has  
414 contributed and I think that's kind of where we were thinking about  
415 theory practice links
- 416 B *Oh yes*
- 417 S You know the purpose and intent behind a reflecting team kind of  
418 how we brought ourselves in and how we would be thinking about  
419 that process and what would we contributed to it and I'm just  
420 wonder whether maybe, and that's something I haven't done with  
421 previous groups.
- 422 B *OK OK, I think that is probably all of the areas I wanted to cover, is*  
423 *there anything else that that you think I should be paying attention to*  
424 *or you think – as a supervisor she did not ask about this?*
- 425 S no I don't think so but if I think of anything I'll come back to you
- 426 B *Yes please and was there anything about the questions that you*  
427 *thought was a bit cumbersome or maybe I'll write them up and you*  
428 *can look at them and comment on*

429 S I'll happily have a look at them, I mean it felt like a conversation so  
430 it did not feel like the questions intruded and it felt like they also  
431 provided a umm like a jumping off point to explore my thinking  
432 really

433 B *OK and do you think the questions enabled you to articulate and*  
434 *capture something of this reciprocal process between you and the*  
435 *supervisees? Do you think I gave you enough opportunity to think*  
436 *about that?*

437 S I think it's probably something I need to think about more generally  
438 anyway not that your questions didn't because they did. **I think it's**  
439 **something I don't think about often enough I mean at a**  
440 **conscious level that it is a reciprocal process and that I am umm**  
441 **how I do supervision is equally shaped by them and how they**  
442 **receive it so I think probably that in my head become clearer as**  
443 **I was thinking back to other groups**

444 B *OK that's interesting yeh – when comparing this to other groups*

445 S yes

446 B *OK thank you very much. Thank you*

447

448

449

450 **Appendix 9: transcript of interview with supervisee group 1**

451 B *So thank you again for participating in the research. Can I just ask*  
452 *each of you to declare that you are happy to continue to participate*  
453 *and that if there is anything that you are unhappy about we will stop*  
454 *the DVD immediately (all agree to participate) Excellent and I'll get*  
455 *something for you to sign (they had been sent the consent forms by e-*  
456 *mail but had not brought them back) I don't know if there is*  
457 *anything that you want to state that contextualizes things, your*  
458 *gender or previous professional identity or anything that you think*  
459 *influences the way that you participate in the live supervision*  
460 *context before we move to some of the questions*

461 3 umm I think they all do as there are all a part of who we are and how  
462 we see ourselves and that kind of thing. I don't know if that will  
463 come out more when we talk about the process. I guess it comes out  
464 frequently. I guess one thing is that we are all women and the  
465 supervisor is a woman too and I think that is sometimes something  
466 that stands out for people.

467 B *Do you think there is anything about being a group of women that*  
468 *shapes the way you act with one another and your supervisor?*

469 1 We use a lot of chat I think, we kind of go woobloo, we talk about  
470 what we've been doing, what kind of day we've had, a **kind of**  
471 **communicative atmosphere.**

472 2 I think maybe difference disappears to an extent and I'm not sure  
473 whether that is a good or bad thing, if we were talking in terms of  
474 good or bad but it sort of I don't know whether it sort of equalises or  
475 I don't know what I'm trying.... or whether you'd be... commenting  
476 more about difference if there was a man as a supervisor

477 B *OK*

478 2 Whether there is a bit more of a sameness and that could be my  
479 assumption as well being one of 5 women

480 3 One of the conversations we had last week was about how we  
481 haven't really spoken about the invisible differences, we've  
482 concentrated much more on the visible similarities. I guess  
483 differences we might have talked about in terms of age and religion  
484 maybe or spirituality, these are the differences we have talked about.

485 1 And a bit about sexuality

486 2 & 3 Sexuality yes

487 B *So when you are thinking of the live supervision context, how would*  
488 *you describe your supervisor's style or preferred way of supervising*  
489 *– do you have a sense of what that is?*

490 2 I thought it was going to be different because (supervisor name and  
491 position), I thought it was going to be quite tough and you know  
492 whoosh – direct umm but she hasn't been, for me she's been quiet  
493 laid back and and maybe sometimes sometimes too laid back umm  
494 but I think she's trusted us in our abilities to do the work and that's  
495 been very clear from the start so I think she is a very trusting  
496 supervisor. Yes.

497 1 I agreed and I think I expected more interventions as you were  
498 saying being direct and I thought being direct and I think sometimes  
499 not being directed makes me feel quite comfortable I think I would  
500 be quite interested to know what it would be like if I was given more  
501 direction and maybe getting as much learning as we might do if we  
502 were getting more direction. I wonder what stops Judy from  
503 directing a little but more then I think .. oh I am glad that she doesn't  
504 so I go in and out in waves.

505 B *do you have an explanation for the question you just posed, what*  
506 *stops (supervisor name) being more directive?*

507 1 umm I sometimes worry that she doesn't want to offend us which  
508 maybe just my own reason for not intervening with things. I think  
509 she wants to build trust and confidence with us and does not want to  
510 undermine us. That's one explanation

511 4 I just thought.. I just see her as quite gentle in her approach but quite  
512 watchful. So maybe it's a bit different cos I although she's quite laid  
513 back she not laid back to the extreme, she's quite watchful, so she's  
514 got her eye on us in a very quiet sort of way. So I am quite aware of  
515 her presence. I don't know if everyone else is but that's the way I  
516 feel about it so but maybe that's the style of supervisors, **maybe**  
517 **they want you to come to the understanding of knowledge and**  
518 **experience rather than them saying to you ... I'm going to teach**  
519 **you this.**

520 3 I wondered about that and the ideas of adult learning and the  
521 discourses around that and how much might influence... I have the  
522 sense of something .(supervisor's name) keeps really detailed notes  
523 of our sessions...

524 2 Yes Yes Yes incredibly detailed

525 3 Yes really detailed and and sometimes in the session I also get the  
526 sense of like .. nobody has rang in and its and there's lots of things  
527 that I could do differently but when you read (supervisor's name)  
528 notes afterwards you get so much feedback

529 2 Umm

530 3 From that I think that..

531 2 And she actually marks the texts for the DVD

532 3 Yes it kind of happens that way

533 B *So what sense do you make of that, cos I think that is interesting*  
534 *because it sounds like a bit of a contradiction with this very laid*  
535 *back interventive style and then you get notes that show some quite*  
536 *different experience. So what sense do you have.. . of what*  
537 *explanation for that?*

538 2 Maybe it's her experience because you know she allows things to  
539 flow and does not need to interrupt and then afterwards maybe that's  
540 the time to reflect .. I don't know.. yes sessions flow quite easily  
541 with our clients I think they are challenging often but I think she  
542 allows them to flow so that they become more coherent in the room.

543 B *Right, right ...*

544 2 And maybe the notes.. cos she does, she does make a note of the  
545 time on the DVD and makes a comment, it's amazing

546 1 It's not just for us but the family, if there's lots of chopping and  
547 changing, where are the families left with that? It's definitely about  
548 what's going on in the room

549 All Yeh yeh

550 B *I'm going to jump around a little bit so what is it that you think you*  
551 *do either individually or as a group that creates an environment in*  
552 *which (supervisor's name) can act like that? Someone mentioned*  
553 *experience, anything else that you think shapes (supervisor's name)*  
554 *ability to do what she does?*

555 4 I think we are quite open about what we would like help with and  
556 what we are not sure of. We're quite open aren't we .. in the pre-  
557 session we'll say what we are not sure of so it's not that she's  
558 thinking ..oh my God I'm not quite sure which way I'm going to go  
559 ...I think we are quite.. well it feels like we are quite trusting with  
560 each other and we'll say to her ... look I'd really like some help with  
561 this or something...so maybe she kind of gages it like that I don't  
562 know .. I'm guessing cos I don't know.

563 1 the straightforwardness in what we say

564 4 Yes I don't know but we are not like loose cannons and she is not  
565 worrying – oh my God what are they going to do now? But that's  
566 just you know my experience.

567 3 We do quite a lot of checking in with each other so we can a lot of  
568 this earlier when writing notes or to see how we are doing and when  
569 (supervisor's name) comes in we are very open about the discussion  
570 we have just had

- 571 All Yes
- 572 3 **She kind of knows where we are at and there's something about**  
573 **her trusting cos if someone was really really struggling they**  
574 **would say**
- 575 B *So that's the kind of style of conversation that you have got?*
- 576 All yeh
- 577 2 I also think that (supervisor's name) doesn't think she is on her own.  
578 I think we have set it up that she is part of our team and we are part  
579 of her team so behind the screen **she isn't on her own** I mean we'll  
580 pick up the phone now and ... I think she's enabled that for us and  
581 we have enabled that for her in a way
- 582 B *Thinking about the usual structure.. I could be wrong but I am*  
583 *guessing you do a pre-session, session and post-session, what do you*  
584 *notice about the way that you navigate each of those elements. How*  
585 *you participate, what (supervisor's name) takes responsibility for,*  
586 *how you engage ...what's the content of those kinds of structures*  
587 *like?*
- 588 3 I think the pre-session, we come, we already have ideas from  
589 reflecting on and watching the DVD so **I think we take**  
590 **responsibility for bringing ideas and putting them on the table**  
591 **and and (supervisor's name) takes responsibility for thinking**  
592 **about how are you going to take that into your session.** It feels a  
593 bit like we come and plonk it here (indicating the table) and  
594 (supervisor's name) comes and sorts it out to help us with what to  
595 take into the room
- 596 All Yeh yeh
- 597 B *How does she do that and how do you achieve that with her?*
- 598 2 She does have a whole questioning thing
- 599 B *So with direct questions – how are you going to do that?*
- 600 2 Yes she does she does
- 601 3 Or what might that look like in the room?
- 602 1 And tying it to theory as well, she's getting really good at saying to  
603 us ...what's the name of that and where does it come from?
- 604 2 We did ask.. we said we wanted a bit more of that and now we don't  
605 want it really – laughter
- 606 B *So there was an invitation that you made as a group to (supervisor's*  
607 *name) about theory?*
- 608 All Yeh yeh

- 609 B .... *So do you think it makes any difference if it is a new family or an*  
610 *ongoing case or do the pre-sessions pretty much go the same?*
- 611 3 I think we spend a lot more time if it is a new family don't we? For  
612 cases that are ongoing we the pre-sessions tend to be shorter, we  
613 tend to privilege thinking about new families. That's kind of just  
614 happened really
- 615 2 It has just happened
- 616 3 I can't think when
- 617 1 I'm sure (supervisor's name) is setting that out I her own head as an  
618 idea about what time we should spend
- 619 2 But why?
- 620 1 For a new family ... just to make sure that we are clear what we are  
621 thinking about ... I guess she needs to know how confident we are  
622 about a new family about what difficulties and things, issues of our  
623 own and
- 624 B *So do you think there's something else going on that ... I've not*  
625 *thought about this particularly but this idea about seeing how*  
626 *confident you are ... do you think there's something else going on in*  
627 *the pre-session that is not to do with the families? What else do you*  
628 *think is going on in terms of being a group?*
- 629 3 I think we are learning a lot about one another. I mean it's not that  
630 long ago that we started doing our genograms with one another and  
631 you know I think when you are working with a new family it raises  
632 such different things. It almost opens up a forum for ideas around  
633 differences and what our responses might be but I do worry  
634 sometimes about getting lost when families become more familiar I  
635 wonder about us getting tripped up and becoming too comfortable  
636 with ideas
- 637 B *And what about during the session, what kind of preferences do you*  
638 *notice, in front of the screen and behind the screen when to*  
639 *intervene, time and why someone might intervene, do you notice*  
640 *some pattern?*
- 641 4 Who had the family with the children last week, was it you (pointing  
642 to K) and it was before the holidays and I think it was you family  
643 and (supervisor's name) did ring in and she was talking to the  
644 children on the phone
- 645 All Oh yes Yes they were (pointing to L)
- 646 4 That was a different sort of session because (supervisor's name) was  
647 much more involved in phoning in and interacting with the children,

648 it did not overtake you but it was just a very different way of  
649 intervening

650 1 The children were asking questions and holding up paper – can you  
651 answer these questions? It was for behind the screen

652 4 She did model that in a way because I don't know if I was on my  
653 own would I have picked up the phone, I don't know, maybe a  
654 would have but she picked up a of of the things they said and they  
655 were quite small things and I thought oh yeh that was really good and  
656 I don't know if I would have picked on that

657 1 So it was a different use of the screen and communication. It was  
658 much more interactive

659 B *Do you think that was as a result of something you were doing in the*  
660 *room or something that was happening with the family because it is*  
661 *kind of interesting for me to think what is it that moves supervisors*  
662 *into action as well as what persuades them not to act?*

663 4 There was a lot going on in the room wasn't there cos we had  
664 mother, a couple so there was lots going on so I think she was  
665 attending to one part of it but it did not feel like she was jumping in  
666 there thought did it?

667 1 I think the kids were so eloquently asking for something – I want to  
668 know who you are and what you are doing behind there and what  
669 colour do you like and what is your favourite song. They were so  
670 direct that it would have been quite unethical not to respond to it so  
671 there was a response from behind the screen

672 3 But I think you set that up as well, you allowed that to be possible

673 4 Yeh you did didn't you?

674 3 You had an ideas about how these children get seen and responded  
675 to and I think you were very careful cos is it ...it was the first time  
676 that they had all come and so you were really careful about  
677 explaining to them why people were behind the screen and  
678 particularly the older girl, she had very good reason to be very  
679 cautious about people watching her and I think you really helped her  
680 to think it was OK to interact with the people watching her and I  
681 think then that gave Judy permission as well to take responsibility  
682 from behind the screen

683 1 It felt quite playful it was like the screen was opened up in some way

684 2 I think that was partly, you know before the session the idea in our  
685 hypothesis we came up with, maybe that spurred (supervisor's  
686 name) into thinking this is OK because of some of the ideas we had  
687 in the room about connecting with that girl who often got left on her  
688 own.

689 1 Yes

690 B *Something about content and something about the process. So what*  
691 *do you think usually persuades (supervisor's name) to.. I don't know*  
692 *whether your preference is to ring in or take a break or reflecting*  
693 *teams or ...*

694 2 Rings doesn't she?

695 3 She normally rings and then we either have a break when the  
696 therapist comes behind the screen or the team comes in and we have  
697 negotiated that with families. Families chose what happens around  
698 that, there's no kind of set structure

699 1 Sometimes we've made, once or twice we have made a decision on  
700 that

701 3 Oh we have actually

702 1 And it's only very rarely and I think it comes out very clearly that  
703 we want to take a break or ..it's not been (supervisor's name) choice  
704 it's been the group

705 2 But during a session (supervisor's name) will ring in won't she...  
706 that's

707 B *On average how many times would you anticipate ringing in, would*  
708 *there be a period of time when she would not ring in at all?*

709 2 Sometimes when she doesn't ring in you are thinking – will you .....

710 1 Oh help me out with a question (lots of laughter)

711 B *Are there times when you would welcome an intervention?*

712 2 Oh yes

713 B *And when she does ring in what is her style of interaction in the way*  
714 *that she offers, instruction, invitation what are you accustomed to*  
715 *and what do you expect and what would you prefer?*

716 1 It's as if she is very good a privileging each relationship, she'll say  
717 ...oh you are losing the Dad .. she's really good at noticing  
718 relationship patterns.

719 3 She's quite tentative isn't she? She's very careful with the words that  
720 she chooses so it comes, it always feels like it's a bit of a suggestion  
721 rather than.. when I think you are right she does notice those things  
722 but I don't get the sense of her saying ... I think you are losing the  
723 Dad ... I think she'll say .. I might have noticed that or maybe  
724 ....you might like to try and include the Dad or something like that  
725 umm

726 1 Yes because last time she phoned in I didn't take what she said I  
727 thought OK I am not sure I might do that but I'll do this first or  
728 something and I thought goodness I just said that and came back to it  
729 later on. I felt it was a choice actually not that I have to go down this  
730 line.

731 B *But it is interesting that you feel able to take a position because I*  
732 *was just wondering if that had been a different supervisor or*  
733 *different style would you have been able to take a position? I don't*  
734 *know the answer but I think it is an interesting question*

735 1 Knowing myself it is more likely for me not to take a position so for  
736 me to take a position, it is even more interesting than if it was  
737 someone else

738 B *So anything that you can kind of account for that enabled you to do*  
739 *it in that way?*

740 1 I don't know. I had a strong .. my own experience said that wouldn't  
741 work for me.. that is so different from my thinking that if I fall over  
742 (supervisor's name) will think I am falling off track anyway but  
743 because there was a mismatch between what we were thinking at  
744 that point we talked about it later on

745 2 We did have the discussion with (supervisor's name) about when she  
746 rings in do we have to do what she says. Do you remember that  
747 discussion?

748 4 She said..

749 2 She said...if I need you to do it you will know

750 1 I'd forgotten that

751 4 She said there are specific words.. I need you to.. I need you to

752 2 I need you to....

753 4 If you hear those words you know .....

754 2 But she doesn't tend to say that does she?

755 3 **I wonder what would happen if she did. It would be like ohhh**  
756 **(laughter) I wonder how we would respond oh gosh**

757 B *What about behind the screen, what kind of activity are you*  
758 *accustomed to behind the screen – conversation, quiet, lots of chat*  
759 *or?*

760 4 Quiet

761 1 It's a bit of both isn't it?

- 762 B *How do you know what is more likely or less likely, what makes the*  
763 *difference?*
- 764 3 I think partly how well we can hear the family. if the family are  
765 talking a lot we somehow reflect that and then behind the screen we  
766 tend to be a bit more tentative and think ..oh I wonder what's  
767 happening there. If they are very tentative and very quiet we are sat  
768 on the edge of our seats and we daren't talk to each other just in case  
769 we miss what they are saying I think. I wonder about the level of  
770 emotional intensity as well ... I think maybe that influences
- 771 B *By that do you mean the emotional intensity in the therapy room?*
- 772 3 Well coming from witnessing what's happening in the therapy room  
773 or if something very powerful is happening
- 774 2 And I think there is also behind the screen something about it for me  
775 about looking after your colleague in the room, about noticing about  
776 how they are and that's sometimes when we talk as well. It makes  
777 us relax you know and I think (supervisor's name) does as well.  
778 There's that looking after that happens behind the screen definitely.
- 779 1 Yes. A lot of it is tied up with.... I know that I start jabbering away  
780 about what I am stressed about or worried about and then I think  
781 "stop it" I was thinking afterwards what if we do talk too much  
782 sometimes. If you don't have the reflecting team .. pure kind of thing  
783 where we all keep our own accounts or where we come out with  
784 accounts that are definitely shared.
- 785 3 I really like that but sometimes I do kind of think we are all quite  
786 passionate and that comes over and when you are the therapist with  
787 a passionate reflecting team sometimes you think "OK now what I  
788 do with all this. But it all comes from.... **it feels like a very**  
789 **nurturing place and (supervisor's name) as well, I am including**  
790 **her in the whole team, it feels like people are coming from a**  
791 **place of being really considerate and really thoughtful so having**  
792 **lots of ideas as a wish to help. It doesn't come across as a critical**  
793 **you know – you could have done this or done this or this or this.**
- 794 2 Yes. We had that discussion, do you remember, when we said that  
795 we had to limit our ideas to one thing each.
- 796 4 One thing each, one thing each
- 797 1 It is interesting that we bounce off each other
- 798 B *It sounds as if threaded through this relaxed atmosphere there are*  
799 *some structural pointers that you introduce or describe such as "you*  
800 *remember that we have been told just one idea"*
- 801 2 Yeh

802 B *What about post-sessions then how do they go? Who leads them,*  
803 *how is the conversation managed, what do you talk about?*

804 4 We video them don't we

805 2 Yeh

806 4 (supervisor's name) kind of gets ...

807 2 She asks the therapist

808 4 It goes therapist then round so it is quite structured. So in that way it  
809 feels quite structured

810 1 Then if we are talking she will make sure that it is not juts focused –  
811 like this is your session – how do you feel?

812 B *So that would be the therapist in the room?*

813 4 Yeh

814 B *What kind of things do you think she is wanting from you or what is*  
815 *she responding to?*

816 2 I suppose it is about thinking in action. What was going on in the  
817 room for us and so that she gets some sense of connection between  
818 with the therapist in the Chair you know that we were actually  
819 linking to some theory somewhere and being aware of what was  
820 going on

821 1 And something about the emotional response and where we are up to  
822 in a session just for ourselves – where are you up to when she knows  
823 things might be a personal trigger she is very aware of that and that  
824 situation

825 B *right..... and when she is intervening or asking or inquiring in a*  
826 *post session ummm how do you know that you are responding in a*  
827 *way that she wants?*

828 ALL really good question!

829 B *Well I guess supervisory interventions are usually intentional so I'm*  
830 *interested in whether you have any sense of what her intention is*  
831 *when she is asking you things or intervenes in these kinds of*  
832 *moments?*

833 3 I have a hypothesis that it is partly about connected with moving you  
834 to the next session as well so think about a case rather than it being  
835 about this session it's about how do you want to take forward  
836 what's happened today and think about that. So there are certain  
837 things that like you know risk that's one that we think about quite a  
838 lot with the families that we work with so often she thinks about how  
839 we are managing that . **That feels quite interventive you know**

- 840 **checking out with us but I guess also checking out the legal**  
841 **framework around our work and I guess her being a social**  
842 **worker by background she is very experienced working with the**  
843 **legal framework so that feels really helpful and yeh** I have a sense  
844 that she is like trying to think about movement so keeping it kind of  
845 fluid so it doesn't become stilted and thinking about the transition  
846 from how are you going to take what happened today forward to the  
847 next session. I think she's thinking about the process of change as  
848 well about what are our agendas about change and what might the  
849 family's agenda around change be. So it feels like she is trying to  
850 make that more transparent
- 851 2 **I also think it is related to the course. You know how we name**  
852 **things that we did in the room because at some stage we are**  
853 **going to have to look at something and I actually think she is**  
854 **preparing us**
- 855 B *So it makes me think about, I'm interested in live supervision but this*  
856 *is live supervision in a training context what difference do you think*  
857 *it makes that it is a training context and the supervisor is responsible*  
858 *for different things and any additional complexity with (supervisor's*  
859 *name) being Chair of the course. How do you think those different*  
860 *layers affect the supervision and privileges certain conversations*  
861 *above others?*
- 862 3 I think she does something really clever with her position actually  
863 because I think it could have organised us and it doesn't organise us  
864 so I think she purposely does stuff, I don't know whether I am  
865 attributing intention where there isn't any but I really do feel as if  
866 she purposely tries to do something different around it but it  
867 definitely feels like umm she's very mindful of the competencies we  
868 have to meet and you know things that are coming up and you know  
869 how we can prepare for that and she's quite mindful of our practice  
870 so she's constantly asking us what do you want from me as a  
871 supervisor or how can we help you? I mean we are quite different
- 872 2 We are quite a powerful group. I wonder how that affects  
873 (supervisor's name). I don't mean powerful as in dominant but we  
874 are quite full on (laughter)
- 875 1 We've got personalities that are not behind they are kind of here.
- 876 2 I do wonder what impact that has on (supervisor's name).
- 877 3 We are much louder than (supervisor's name) aren't we?  
878 (supervisor's name) quite softly spoken and umm I am always  
879 intrigued about that
- 880 1 We are not softly spoken (laughter)

881 B *It is interesting the theme of individuality that you bring as well as*  
882 *the way that you are constructed as a group ... what do you think it*  
883 *is that you bring out in each other including (supervisor's name) and*  
884 *what she responds to with you as individuals because you mentioned*  
885 *that you had different learning styles? (very long pause) Do you see*  
886 *yourselves as different learners?*

887 2 I don't know that I have thought about that.

888 4 I suppose her questions are quite umm what's the word? Can't think  
889 of the word but she would question you in a different way to the way  
890 she would question me. She would know what sort of question  
891 would help you, you know come to that answer of provide that sort  
892 of thinking. I'm trying to think especially as she is very experienced  
893 and probably you know just as she is noticing families in the room  
894 she is noticing us isn't she, going around us in that way. **I forget**  
895 **sometimes, you can forget sometimes that she is really very**  
896 **experienced .....you know she has got that experience. It is not**  
897 **like a neon light on her head but it's there, do you know what I**  
898 **mean?**

899 1 **it's not like a power induced way, it's not an ego thing, it's just**  
900 **that's who she is**

901 2 I hadn't thought about her asking questions until you said that and  
902 treating us in different ways..

903 4 umm

904 3 I think she does. I agree with you that she asks questions in different  
905 ways. I think she's very mindful of our professions as well. I'm not  
906 sure how that might organise her but I know from my own personal  
907 thing that people position me too much in terms of my profession  
908 and not allowing things to happen that I would really like to happen  
909 umm

910 2 Do you think it does happen?

911 3 Well , I guess I was just thinking about.. do you remember when we  
912 did the umm sculpting and we were kind of positioning each other  
913 weren't we? It kind of got quite.. it was really interesting (one  
914 student name) put me and you higher than her and (another student  
915 name)

916 2 That's right.

917 3 Do you remember? It was good though but it was quite  
918 uncomfortable. It was that safe uncertainty in a way, stepping  
919 outside of your own comfort zone. Gosh how do people perceive me  
920 and what do I do that allows that and those kinds of things and like  
921 oh sometimes we really do ...I do reflect some of the discourses

- 922 around my profession, sometimes in ways that are really unhelpful to  
923 me. It really made me think about that. Whatever, the intention  
924 behind it was, it was helpful.
- 925 B *If we follow that theme, I don't know what your core, previous*  
926 *professions are, whether they are the same as (supervisor's name) or*  
927 *different...?.*
- 928 All No we are all different....
- 929 B So I am kind of thinking, what as individuals do you bring from that  
930 previous experience that influences and shapes the way that  
931 (supervisor's name) might interact with each of you to bring out  
932 different facets of your ability or to engage in your learning. What is  
933 it you make together?
- 934 2 In our individual relationship with (supervisor's name)?
- 935 B *Yeh*
- 936 3 Would it be helpful to tell you what our professions are or shall we  
937 think existentially? (laughter)
- 938 4 I am a teacher
- 939 3 I am a psychologist
- 940 2 I've got a few little ... I started at CAMHS today on placement. I am  
941 so excited I have got a family, oh private practitioner just finished  
942 with (agency name) last year and work for (agency name) with  
943 separated couples
- 944 1 I'm a nurse
- 945 B *And of course (supervisor's name) is a social worker so it is quite*  
946 *different. So just again... how does a teacher and social worker*  
947 *working in this environment ..how do they make each other and*  
948 *influence that way that you and (supervisor's name) might interact?*
- 949 4 It's funny cos I don't actually think... I know she is a social worker  
950 but I don't see her as a social worker, but she does talk about it. I see  
951 her more as a family therapist. I can't see her as a social worker  
952 although I know that she does it but I don't know here in that context  
953 so....i don't know how it shapes.....
- 954 B *Or do you think there is anything about you as a teacher that might*  
955 *shape the way she interacts with you?*
- 956 4 Well I don't know she might talk about risk or safeguarding or  
957 something like that maybe.. there will be a common thread or theme  
958 ... I'll have to think about it...
- 959 B *What about your position as a psychologist?*

- 960 3 I have a difficult relationship with my position as a  
961 psychologist...there difficult sense of identity around that just in  
962 terms of my profession and the idea that it is too cognitive and you  
963 are up in your own head and I guess..yeh and I think sometimes  
964 between me and (supervisors' name) is a bizarre dance and I can't  
965 quite describe it or what I think about it yet but it sometimes feels  
966 that we do go up there and I wonder how much of that is  
967 about...well I guess with the whole thing that happened in the NHS  
968 and people knowing exactly where people are positioned and how  
969 that gets valued and that created such a divide between professions.  
970 It was awful umm yeh I kind of wonder a lot about...I think  
971 sometimes that I might umm cos a few things have been said – like I  
972 should be good at the research or that I should be really familiar with  
973 therapy so (lots of group laughter) it then puts a pressure on me to  
974 perform and when I get that pressure I feel that I have to umm I have  
975 to conform to that so ..... I'm not that good trust me, I am really  
976 not. Yeh so I think there is something about that that then means it  
977 might be more difficult for (supervisor's name) to ask certain  
978 questions or for me to be vulnerable, not ... I don't think that has  
979 been unhelpful . I think we can both talk about it and bring it to the  
980 team as it happens in the room.
- 981 B *So what about your multiple professions?*
- 982 2 I actually -what do I think about (supervisor's name?) I actually  
983 think she holds me up quite a lot umm because umm I do have a  
984 sense of that I haven't really done much compared to everyone else  
985 and maybe don't have the ...I don't know... maybe it's a bit like  
986 your head stuff ..it sits in mind but I haven't done what brilliant  
987 things that everyone else has done like being a social worker umm  
988 and it's that kind of thing you know, counsellor – psychotherapist. I  
989 know that sits with me and I have talked with (supervisor's name)  
990 about that and I think she has taken a bit of a position with me  
991 where.... if I see her on the tube sometimes she'll come and talk to  
992 me. **I do feel.. it is lovely umm so I do think she takes quite a**  
993 **caring position to me umm yeh**
- 994 1 I'm struggling a bit like (student name). I don't feel like a nurse so I  
995 feel like a generic CAMHS professional who does a bit of family  
996 work, a bit of community work so I feel I don't really know where I  
997 stand anyway. I think I end up relating to (supervisor's name) from a  
998 CAMHS point of view because we both work in CAMHS so I think  
999 about context more than profession.
- 1000 B *Anything else you notice about your supervision group about how*  
1001 *things are changing and how things will change when you get a new*  
1002 *supervisor at the end of the year. Anything else that shapes the*  
1003 *relationships in this group that we have not talked about?*

1004 2 We make her laugh. She laughs a lot and I think she is quite  
1005 surprised. She's mentioned that she is quite surprised. Do we feel we  
1006 make her...

1007 1 It is quite powerful, the laughter and joviality is quite powerful.

1008 B *So it is interesting for me to talk with (supervisor's name) about*  
1009 *working with you as a group and whether this is different from*  
1010 *working with other groups and in different contexts because there is*  
1011 *something about the way that groups form that is unique and*  
1012 *different*

1013 1 What about the things that are talked about but not talked about?

1014 2 What do you mean?

1015 1 **Oh I don't know... I mean you know the thing you were saying**  
1016 **about (supervisor) caring for you....she does that for ma as well**  
1017 **and maybe there's something about vulnerability covered by**  
1018 **joviality that (supervisor's name) knows about yeh yeh...it is a**  
1019 **similar experience and it makes me wonder**

1020 B *So if there was one thread that you were pulling through all of the*  
1021 *descriptions that you think described (supervisor's name) or her*  
1022 *style what would it be?*

1023 2 Knowledgeable and caring

1024 1 A very good time keeper

1025 2 How can you say that? (laughter)

1026 3 That is something that has been quite hard to negotiate as we all  
1027 have different relationships with time umm but I wouldn't say that  
1028 describes (supervisor's name). It's not the one thing. I would kind of  
1029 go along with the kind of .... I see her as a kind of nurturing  
1030 encourager, a nurturing encourager of risk taking.

1031 1 She's kind

1032 B *How do you think she would describe you?*

1033 All Oh .... Oh my God

1034 4 Exhausting

1035 2 I think she likes us.. she likes us... that's you know you don't have  
1036 to, you could get a bunch where you say ... ugh

1037 4 I bet there are some who think – Oh my God I've got that group  
1038 tonight

1039 2 Yeh, it's like with clients, you are not necessarily going to like  
1040 everyone are you?

1041 4 Maybe she's pleasantly surprised because you just don't know what  
1042 you are going to get do you? You could think oh my God... I am not  
1043 sure I would like to be in her position. I don't know if I would like to  
1044 be a supervisor ... no..

1045 B *If we were to imagine that she was pleasantly surprised by your*  
1046 *group that might be the context for the way that she acts with you*  
1047 *and maybe that explains lots of things that you are describing. You*  
1048 *are right that when you walk through the door you have no ideas*  
1049 *what kind of group you are going to get. Any other descriptions that*  
1050 *you think she will have of you?*

1051 1 We might need to ask her when she gets here.

1052 2 I'm going to ask her now. I think she....

1053 3 I wonder what irritates her about us

1054 2 Do you?

1055 4 Don't ask her that she'll make a list

1056 3 You can like people and get irritated by certain things they do...

1057 2 She'd say, wouldn't she say?

1058 3 I am kind of intrigued. I guess she'd say if we were way of mark and  
1059 we needed to do something

1060 2 Yeh, yeh I don't know

1061 1 I think she would like up to be a bit more theory based ... to be a bit  
1062 more theory orientated

1063 2 I think she'd like that from me yeh

1064 4 I think she'd be amazed if she got it from me

1065 2 **I think she thinks we are all alright and pretty good at what we**  
1066 **do. That's my sense.. I do think that actually but maybe that's**  
1067 **because that's what I think of you lot**

1068 3 I think that about (supervisor's name). I think she's quite good at  
1069 that because we get a little bit ooo theory and umm and how will that  
1070 constrain us and she makes those links saying well your are drawing  
1071 from theory all the time in what you are doing and it's about making  
1072 that a bit more clear would be really helpful. I've forgotten what the  
1073 question was now..

1074 2 What does (supervisor's name) think of us?

1075 1 I could never have said what you have just said (to L) I would think  
1076 of all of the negative things. Maybe I'm just less self aware than you.

1077 Does she want us to be a bit more challenging of each other? Or be a  
1078 bit different or taking risks

1079 2 Maybe we should

1080 3 I wonder whether there is a bit of her waiting for us, I'm not saying  
1081 there's a definite process but maybe waiting for us to be a bit more  
1082 confident before we say .... Do you know what I kind of see where  
1083 you are coming from but I actually disagree with that. We are not  
1084 very good at that as a group are we?

1085 2 That we are not very good at it or that we haven't had to

1086 3 It's not about disagreeing but saying – do you what I am just going  
1087 to play Devil's advocate ...and say that's one idea but let's play  
1088 around with ...

1089 2 I wonder what she would like to hand over to the next supervisor?

1090 4 We don't even know who the next supervisor is, maybe we won't  
1091 get another one

1092 B *Thank you so much that was really interesting and I wonder what*  
1093 *kind of conversation you will have with (supervisor's name) next.*

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