Falender and Shafranske (2004) define supervision as:

a distinct professional activity in which education and training aimed at developing science-informed practice are facilitated through a collaborative interpersonal process. It involves observation, evaluation, feedback, and facilitation of supervisee self-assessment, and the acquisition of knowledge and skills by instruction, modeling, and mutual problem solving. In addition, by building on the recognition of the strengths and talents of the supervisee, supervision encourages self-efficacy...[and] is conducted in a competent manner in which ethical standards, legal prescriptions, and professional practices are used to promote and protect the welfare of the client, the profession, and society at large. (p. 3)

This paper seeks to articulate my personal philosophy surrounding my evolving professional position as a supervisor of supervisees/counsellors in training. The opening quote most closely aligns with my current understanding and definition of supervision, and this paper will personalize in greater detail my beliefs and understanding of the various aspects of the supervisory relationship.

**Supervisory purpose, goals and roles**

My primary purpose as a supervisor of graduate students in their practicum placements, centers around two overarching areas, with one influencing the other: the supervisory relationship, and the standards of practice that students are required to adhere to as they transition from a student into a practicing counsellor. These two areas inform my goals for the supervision process. Under the supervisory relationship, I aim to create a safe, collegial environment where supervisees feel they can willingly share and examine their personal, individual and collective characteristics that contribute to their learning and understanding of
their role as a counsellor. I would like to be known as a supervisor that delivers an effective voice of encouragement and care, while maintaining an appropriate balance of delivering constructive feedback that provides supervisees an opportunity to grow in their skills and challenge their learning. Taking into consideration the various standards of practice that beginning counsellors are expected to adhere to, I aim to be a supervisor that is current in both maintaining and continuing professional development within all areas of safe, ethical and legal practices of clinical counsellors throughout Canada, according to the various registration bodies that students will be expected to register with upon graduation. Furthermore, I seek to be aware of, and open to new understandings of multiple theoretical orientations, and to support supervisees in their evolving knowledge of the same.

My understanding of the various roles within my supervisory position are in accordance with the discrimination model (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). I have added the role of administrator to the three existing roles of teacher, counsellor, and consultant, as I believe none of the latter roles fully covers the key administrative tasks, required of a supervisor. Consistent with the discrimination model, I believe supervision—particularly with the level of supervisees that I am working with, given they are just finishing their graduate studies—requires more direction, modelling and structure that fit within an educative or teaching role. Additionally, within the teaching role it is important to acknowledge the evaluative component for the supervisees I work with. I am required to evaluate their learning in conjunction with other key supervisors to determine whether the student has met criteria to complete their practicum placement requirements, according to their graduate university standards. Within the counselling role, I will seek to challenge supervisees on personal bias, blind spots and areas where they may need to seek their own further therapeutic work outside of the supervisory and client/therapist
relationship. As a consultant, I will assist supervisees in thinking on their own and developing their own instincts with their clients, in addition to providing resources as appropriate. Finally, the administrative role covers all aspects of documentation, evaluation, and communication regarding the supervisees entry and completion of their practicum. The administrative tasks during this process cannot be understated and are, therefore, worthy of a separate role category.

**Person of the supervisor**

Prior to my supervisory work with graduate counselling students, I worked in a supervisory capacity with nursing students for many years. However, the role was far more articulately defined with little room for exploring personal themes with students. Having worked in the clinical counselling role with clients I am very comfortable fully deconstructing with the client, the "complete picture" of their presenting issues and concerns. Within the supervisory relationship there is a distinct need to have some clearly defined limits in "knowing" my supervisee. Metaphorically, this feels like touching jello. I am able to touch upon something of importance which may create movement (ie. the jello may jiggle in response to a careful touch) but I am not disturbing the overall consistency or underlying form (ie. the jello formation remains intact). As a counsellor I thoroughly enjoy getting "messy" and "breaking up the jello" with my client, however, I would define this process as therapy. The supervisory role requires careful articulation of these boundaries and one must ask key questions in their role as supervisor such as: What do I need to know about my supervisee that will most effectively support their clinical work with their clients? What personal work do I need to highlight or just "touch" upon from an external perspective so they can continue to move forward and seek deeper deconstruction elsewhere? What is being stirred up in me as a response to my supervisees experience? What work do I need to attend to personally, to ensure my biases aren't interfering
with the supervisory process? (In other words, how is my own jello?) Through my own personal supervision, I have discovered my highly competitive nature and need to appear competent. carefully monitor this drive to ensure I allow my supervisees the opportunity to experience their own competence and success without my "trying to beat them to the finish line". I believe continued supervision and personal counselling is essential components to being an ethical and accountable counsellor and supervisor. Unquestionably, I vow to continue seeking this support as long as I am working with 'others' in any capacity.

**Supervisory Models**

Originally trained from an Adlerian orientation, I still closely associate with many Adlerian approaches. However, it is here that I would argue that there is a difference between one's epistemology and the various strategies/theories that I might draw from as an integrative therapist and supervisor. Adler and Rogers are integral to my overarching epistemology of how I see people function and the ways I think all people deserve to be treated. For example, in accordance with Adler, I believe people are social beings that live within community and complex family systems and culture that are integral to one's sense of identity. I would also adhere to Adler's concepts of inferiority striving (constant seeking to better oneself) and the necessity of encouragement in human interactions. I most closely align with Roger's humanistic concepts of unconditional positive regard for all others (regardless of culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, etc) and his client-centered and relational approach to therapy. These overarching philosophies inform my epistemology of how I, equally, view my work with both clients and supervisees. I consider these non-negotiable components in my epistemology and I would admittedly struggle with a supervisee that didn't share these overarching philosophical assumptions. Aside from my personal epistemology, my diverse theoretical exposure throughout
my counselling career has demonstrated the importance of being open to theoretical integration, which I aim to encourage in working with supervisees, while acknowledging my supervisees personal theoretical approaches and orientation. The following psychotherapy models are approaches I competently integrate with my clients. Furthermore, their relevance is noted in the supervisory literature and, subsequently, I incorporate these models as part of my intervention toolbox with supervisees as long as the boundary between supervision and counselling is carefully maintained. References to the supervisory literature are included beside each model listed below.

Using Adlerian strategies with supervisees includes the use of early recollections, examining the importance of birth order, parenting styles, and life style inventories (Lemberger, Dollarhide, 2006). Other major psychotherapy models include family systems (Mackay & Brown, 2013), narrative therapy (Whiting, 2007), motivational interviewing (Clarke & Giordiano, 2013), the transtheoretical model for clinical supervision (Aten, Strain, & Gillespie, 2008), cognitive behavioral therapy (Beck, Sarnat, & Barenstein, 2008), and solution focused therapy (Hsu, 2009). One therapeutic model I use in counselling, is not currently identified in the supervisory literature: phototherapy (Weiser, 2001). I have found the profound benefits of this medium extend considerable relevance for navigating metaphorical themes with supervisees regarding their understanding of themselves and their relationship with their clients.

In regards to developmental models, I see much utility in the Integrated Developmental Model (IDM) (Stoltenberg, C, 1981, Bernard & Goodyear, 2014), in my present supervisory work with more novice clinicians. This particular model offers some specific interventions for the supervisor to meet the supervisee at a particular level of need and respond accordingly. For example, matching anxiety and challenge for a novice supervisee. Similarly, I aim to incorporate
aspects of the various reflective models (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014), as I consider reflection a necessity to the praxis of both counselling and supervision. Finally, within the various process models, as discussed previously, I most closely draw upon the discriminatory model (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014) in describing the multiple roles and processes that exist in the supervisory relationship. I believe this most closely and consistently outlines my current experiences with my supervisory role, interplaying between teacher, counsellor and consultant. I would also add the events-based supervision model as another model consistent with my work. Ladany, Friedlander, and Nelson (2005) describe the importance of managing events as a supervisor with a definitive beginning, middle and end. This is particularly salient with my work in group supervision, as I focus on specific task analysis of a contained event. Moreover, the model assists in putting some parameters around commonly occurring events for supervisees (the authors list seven of these) and how to intervene with greater depth than the discriminatory model.

**Modes of supervision**

I have the unique opportunity of employing several modes of supervision in my practice. This includes both large and small group supervision, case consultation, video and audio taping, and reflective journals. Essentially, there is also individual face to face and online supervision time allotted so the significant needs of the individual supervisee are recognized through more space, time and privacy. I believe there is a safety component for a novice counsellor where they need to feel completely comfortable in sharing their strengths and challenges which cannot always be facilitated in a group format.

**Ethical and legal considerations**

Any consideration of ethical and legal issues requires being prudent in adhering to standards and appropriate expectations for one's profession. In the supervisory relationship the
supervisor is responsible for maintaining their own ethical and legal standards while also ensuring their supervisee is aware and attending to theirs. I believe that managing ethical situations and adhering to legal requirements lies in careful preparation, knowledge of both applicable standards and legal requirements, in addition to a sound ethical decision making framework. Given that much of our work is done behind closed-doors, as a supervisor, my goal is to continue to cultivate ethical thinking and motivation in a supervisee. In the supervisory role, I am accountable to both the student's institution of academic study and my own governing registration body. Within these relationships, I maintain administrative excellence through record keeping, including careful documentation of the following: supervisee contract and informed consent, training education plan, supervision log of hours with client and supervisor, evaluations and areas of concerns. Additionally, ethical discussions and legal considerations are embedded throughout supervisory discourse with an expectation that both regular conversations and reflective practice will assist in developing close monitoring of ethical practice between both supervisee and supervisor. Simulation through ethical scenarios regularly assist in this discussion, in addition to exploring how there can be differing perceptions of how to approach and proceed through an ethical situation. Ethical and legal vulnerability is plentiful in the counselling field. Issues of dual relationships, confidentiality, competent practice, sexual attraction, liability, record keeping and client safety are just some of the potential areas for ethical and legal pitfalls that are discussed openly. Just as a supervisee needs to establish their own theoretical orientation, I feel it is pertinent that supervisees explore a variety of ethical decision making frameworks, and practice working through various models to choose one that works best for them. Cottone and Claus (2000) offer a succinct and thorough review of the
literature in this area, that I regularly utilize as essential reading for a supervisee to make an informed choice around ethical decision making frameworks.

Diversity

Central to my Rogerian epistemology of unconditional positive regard for clients, competent, diverse supervisory, and client care are a non-negotiable component to my supervision work. In this area, I draw upon Collins and Arthur's (2010) use and understanding of the term "culturally-infused counselling" where they have expanded the term 'culture' to include all aspects of influence on one's identity and worldview (gender, age, sexual orientation, spirituality, cultural experiences etc). In this context, I agree with the authors that all interactions between either clients or supervisees, are multicultural encounters that require competent attention. My practice in this area does not differ from supervisor to supervisee and in my expectations of my supervisees to their clients. To attend to a client and supervisee in this manner requires: 1) an awareness of self, their cultural experiences and influence, and; 2) awareness of the client's cultural experiences and influence. These two components form the basis for a culturally sensitive working alliance that as a supervisor, I base future interactions upon with careful judgment (using interventions that align with the supervisees cultural identity) and diligence (continued self-reflection and professional development around cultural competence).

Concluding comments

To conclude, I am passionate about teaching, supporting and thoroughly encouraging students as they progress from novice to registered clinician. I am a firm believer in a supervisor remaining proficient in the craft they are supervising. People are complex beings, and the various systems we are connected to, and move in, hold influence over our understandings, behavior and
worldviews. It is a privilege to work in a therapist/client relationship where one allows you the vulnerable insights into their emotions, thinking and behavior. When this relationship is extended to the supervisory level, it is essential to hold this privilege of sharing with due thoughtfulness, attention and the utmost care. Our clients deserve the very best care in their vulnerability, and as such our supervisees require the very best supervision to create the safest environments of care for clients. As a supervisor, I hold onto this privilege and responsibility with the solemn consideration it deserves. Finally, I think it is important to acknowledge that this philosophy of supervision is a living document and a reflection of my current supervisory position. As such, these beliefs and statements are consistently revisited to ensure this document continues to reflect my evolving understandings of my role as a supervisor of counselling supervisees.
References


