

Perspectives on Counselling Supervision in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract

This article is based on an invited keynote address delivered at the first New Zealand Association of Counsellors' National Supervision Conference Day in July 2017. It considers questions that have continued to be significant for professional supervision over time in counselling in Aotearoa New Zealand, noting considerations for contemporary practice. It reviews a range of research studies of supervision, highlighting recent contributions to discussions of culture and supervision and the use of e-technology in supervision.

long white cloud

our map

in the sky

(Robin Fry, 2008)¹

Keywords: supervision, supervision research, supervision and culture

“I did indeed grow up with a fault line running through me,” suggested New Zealand children’s author Margaret Mahy (2000, p. 33), in writing about herself as a reader and a writer. I first used these words of Mahy’s in my writing about supervision (Crocket, 2001, 2004a) before Christchurch, Kaikoura, Marlborough, and Wellington confronted us so viscerally with the radical implications of the fault lines and unstable geography of our country. Mahy’s piece continues:

I did indeed grow up with a fault line running through me, but that is a very New Zealandish feature when you consider that it is a country of earthquakes and volcanoes ... Perhaps the country has imposed its own unstable geography on my power to perceive. I don’t mind. I regret it only in the sense that one always regrets not being able to be everything all at once. (Mahy, 2000, p. 33)

Maybe that's a first point to notice about professional supervision: it may be called supervision, but it doesn't mean we can be, or see, everything all at once. That point holds for any particular supervision relationship, but also for supervision itself, here in Aotearoa and here in our profession of counselling.

Mahy's interest in fault lines as "a very New Zealandish feature" has relevance then for supervision. Philip McConkey—who contributed much to counselling supervision in New Zealand, particularly through his regular articles in the New Zealand Association of Counsellors' National Newsletter—was awarded a Winston Churchill Memorial Trust scholarship in the late 1990s to go to the United Kingdom to study supervision. In the report he wrote on his return (McConkey, 1999), he called for giving supervision more attention here in Aotearoa New Zealand, suggesting that "[i]t needs to be talked about, examined, read about and understood" (p. 82). He argued for a "genuine New Zealand-based version of the discipline, rather than merely 'transplanting' something from the northern hemisphere" (p. 82).

Two decades later it is no less relevant to ask questions about the situatedness of our professional practice—as counsellors or supervisors—here in Aotearoa New Zealand. For example, Joy Te Wiata's Master of Counselling thesis (2006) was a qualitative study where Joy explored with a group of Pākehā counsellors ways in which their counselling practices are shaped by their location in Aotearoa and so by whakaaro Māori—Māori thinking and ideas and practices. In teaching supervision, I invite students to ask each other the same question, one that is critical for any of us taking up the work of supervision. How are our practices of supervision shaped by the various systems of knowledge that come up against each other in Aotearoa New Zealand? Margaret Mahy's fault line draws attention to our positioning as not only internationally connected, but also local, particular.

In the learning and teaching of counselling theory, or supervision theory, the term "worldview" is often employed: this term seems to me now to be perhaps not robust enough, overly neutral, in describing the encounters between different systems of knowledge, different assumptions about what's taken to be true, about the nature of personhood, and understandings about how problems are produced and might be responded to. Does the term worldview sufficiently acknowledge difference, both between-group and within-group difference? Does it sufficiently acknowledge, for example, the harm done by colonisation, or ongoing experiences of colonisation trauma (see, for example, Pihama et al., 2014; Reid, Taylor-Moore, & Varona, 2014)? In its apparent neutrality the term may obscure practices of oppression and marginalisation.

There is the risk that in a settler culture we may continue to learn only *about* the other—and their worldview as an abstraction—rather than learning *with* and *from* the other—as Alison Jones and Kuni Jenkins (2008, p. 471) put it—and so being changed ourselves.

Margaret Mahy wrote of being an international reader—and as a supervisor and researcher I have reasonable familiarity with an international supervision literature. But in considering the situatedness of supervision, I position my contribution by acknowledging the karanga I hear as a Pākehā woman to open myself to explore the fault line that runs through me, and which shapes my life. If I have heard the wero, the challenge, the task is to honour and acknowledge the gifts of knowledge that Māori cultural ethics (see Hoskins, 2012; Swann et al., 2017) offer as partnership—to take up the wero and step forward into a discussion of supervision that is overtly located here in Aotearoa.

I can do this only in partnership: and so my next step in looking around is to highlight a story from a current co-authored chapter on supervision (Rewita, Swann, Swann, & Crocket, 2017), retold here with the support of my co-authors Titihuia, Huia and Brent. Titihuia Rewita contributed to the work of the NZAC national supervision committee over some years, and I acknowledge her contribution to my own learning, including in supervision. In our exploration of supervision and culture in the chapter, we tell a story of Titihuia’s supervision with a Pākehā counsellor, Sonya. This story illustrates a point Titihuia made in an earlier article about supervision and culture (Rewita, 2013):

As a practitioner who is often called into a position of cultural supervisor and consultant, for me it is important that supervision brings forward and appreciates difference, by engaging questions that will bring about a shared understanding. I am interested in the cultural knowledge that the counsellor brings. I am interested in an approach that allows for a mutual process, engagement with different world views, and appreciation of different values, so that the focus is on building a relationship with difference. (p. 88)

The supervision practice story builds from a point made earlier in our chapter about taking time to ask a series of questions as a supervision relationship is negotiated: “ko wai?” questions, “nō whea?” questions, and “what are your hopes for our supervision mahi?” questions (Rewita et al., 2017, p. 216). As well as asking Sonya about her knowledge of and connection with local services for Māori clients, Titihuia asked her about what she knew of the tangata whenua of the place where she had grown up.

Sonya's reply was that she knew little about the Māori world until her move north to the city where she has lived for the last twenty years.

Before hearing Titihuia's reply, I invite readers to imagine what she may have done in response, and what her purpose might have been.

"Mmm," Titihuia pondered aloud; "Do you have any thoughts about that?" (Rewita et al., 2017, p. 220).

Titihuia's pondering question was a gentle, elegantly nuanced supervisory invitation to Sonya to consider her own relationship to place, and to history. Sonya replied that Māori were not visible, naming a number of areas of her experience where this was the case. Rugby was the exception.

Again, a gently nuanced inquiry, an invitation to responsibility followed, as Titihuia asked again, "Do you have any thoughts about that, the invisibility?" (Rewita et al., 2017, p. 220). The call, the karanga, Titihuia offered Sonya was a call into responsibility, into partnership, into making meaning about what it means to practise counselling in Aotearoa New Zealand, and how we are shaped by our own histories and the history of our country. Titihuia's question offered Sonya an opportunity to grapple with the possibility that "history permeates the present, often in strange, subconscious or barely perceptible ways", as Manathunga (2014, p. 22) wrote in an exploration of postcolonial theory in intercultural research supervision.

Within the broader field of education there is an emerging scholarship focusing on a pedagogy of place, an approach to learning and teaching that considers the forms of knowledge that are available, the means by which particular knowledges become privileged, and that provides for renegotiating marginalised indigenous knowledges of that place (Connell, 2007; see, for example, Manathunga, 2014; Penetito, 2009; Somerville, 2010). *What* has come to be taken as true, and *by what means*? The question here, for Titihuia and Sonya, is about what it means to live in a settler culture, to live in this place, to practise counselling in this place. A place-based orientation to supervision invokes, as sociologist Avril Bell (2017) puts it in writing about university scholarship:

... a quality of working from an awareness of location and, along with that, an awareness of those others (human and/or non-human) with whom they share this location, and with other ways of being and knowing that exist alongside their own.
(p. 19)

Titihuia began the supervision relationship by asking Sonya, "Where are you from?"—*nō whea koe*? And with two further questions that asked Sonya to make meaning of and

take a position on her own lived experience—*do you have any thoughts about that?*—supervision opened up new territories of life and practice for Sonya. Titihuia’s questions invited an enhanced awareness of location. In response, Sonya went on to speak with family members who were still in the south, exploring the past and the present. Over time she discussed with Titihuia, in supervision, some aspects of what she learned from these family conversations.

In the next episode our chapter tells of Titihuia’s supervision story (Rewita et al., 2017) the supervision takes a significant turn. “Titihuia,” Sonya said, “the first time you asked me about the tangata whenua back home, I didn’t imagine how that was helpful for my practice. I just thought you wanted to get to know me, kind of on your terms. But here is a story that I would not have imagined.” Sonya went on to speak of a new client arriving in her practice, Janet, a Pākehā woman ten years older than Sonya. Janet’s marriage had recently ended after thirty years and her life seemed increasingly bleak. Sonya told Titihuia of having asked Janet’s permission to ask about her life before her marriage—and Janet had agreed to this suggestion. As Sonya continued to report the conversation that followed, Titihuia asked a question that highlights an important distinction in supervision, a focus on the therapist in the work (see Crocket, 2001, end of chapter 4) in contrast with what Lowe and Guy (1996, p. 31) characterise as “the drama of the case.”

“Sonya, it seems important to you today to report this conversation step by step, and you don’t usually do that in supervision. What’s the story here—there is something about place, that it was down south, or what is the significance for you?”

Again, Titihuia’s supervision practice demonstrates skilful inquiry that invited Sonya to theorise this counselling event and its significance to her as a practitioner. Knowledge for practice was being made as they spoke, as the dialogue that follows shows. Referring again to the *nō whea?* question that Titihuia had asked at their very first supervision meeting, Sonya continued, “It was such a surprising question, in a way, when you asked it—when you asked about where I was from and about tangata whenua—and now I see how it was about more than just getting to know me better. I may have missed something important for Janet had I not had the experience of you asking about my own history.”

After a pause, Titihuia asked quietly, “What seems important to you here?” A further pause, and Sonya replied, “I could have thought that it’s kind of just a ‘getting to know you’ thing, to ask about someone’s history, to ask about where I was from, and what connections I had with the local people. But it’s more than that, isn’t it?”

It's living a philosophy, a philosophy of connectedness, or of responsibility, somehow. It's the meaning of the practice. And the effect of the practice." (See Rewita et al., 2017, pp. 221–223.)

Supervision has provided the conditions of possibility for learning, for the generation of refined counselling practice. A number of scholars write about the kind of learning space and relationship at work here as a “contact zone” (see Somerville, 2010 for example), a place of encounter with difference, in dialogue with history and politics. The mode of encounter with difference is non-colonising, yet postcolonial, shaped by a colonial history and in this moment intentionally non-colonising.

Later in this article I refer to links between effective supervision and effective practice. The supervision story here offers a refined example of how effective supervision is productive for practice. There has been no didactic teaching. Rather, the values and knowledges that shape the supervision practice have provided the conditions for learning, which Sonya has transformed into actions in her client practice, actions that neither Sonya nor Titihuia had planned.

Writing about culture and supervision in psychotherapy in Aotearoa New Zealand, Margaret Pohatu Morice and Jonathon Fay (2013) suggested that supervision should “widen the scope of our imaginative capacities and transform our attitudes towards the Other and otherness” (p. 94). Titihuia, Huia, Brent and I tell this story in our chapter as though the learning was Sonya's—and it was, in part. I am not a disguised Sonya, but in co-writing this supervision chapter I gained a more nuanced appreciation of Māori cultural ethics at work. Disturbances in a taken-for-granted, familiar landscape become visible, and through this visibility I recognise my own cultural, historical, and philosophical locatedness—at the same time as new territories, philosophies, and relationships become available if I can find my way to respond to the call that is offered to me.

My position in this project is one of learner: I share with you all the wero, the call to find ways to produce a supervision that is of Aotearoa, that uses the images, sounds and scents of our place, that recognises and values the knowledge that is of this land and of this place, both for itself and in respectful dialogue with knowledge that is of other lands, other places, other people. My hope is that we find ways to ask each other the *nō whea* questions with the refined cultural ethics at work in Titihuia and Sonya's supervision story. Looking around.

This article turns now to some looking back, following through with my argument about the relevance of history, and holding in mind the question of a version of

supervision that takes location seriously. Margaret Mahy (2000) wrote of being a world reader—despite the dissonance of snow and robins in a South Pacific Christmas. I have continued to do “world-reading” as part of asking questions about local supervision. Some of these questions have been asked in the context of small, mostly exploratory, studies undertaken with practitioners studying in the postgraduate supervision qualification in which I teach. My intention in undertaking these supervision research projects has been for supervisors in our research groups to grapple with questions significant for the practice of supervision in Aotearoa New Zealand.

For example, our first study, published in 2004, investigated supervisory responsibility in New Zealand, in the light of significant differences within the international literature. In the United Kingdom, David King and Sue Wheeler (1999) had argued that “the extent of supervisor responsibility is unclear ethically, legally and practically” (p. 227). There was nothing unclear, however, about this statement from Borders and Leddick (1987), writing in a handbook published in the United States by the American Counseling Association: “you [the supervisor] are responsible for both a counselor and that counselor’s clients, and for the counselor’s learning and the counselor’s welfare” (p. 2).

In response to a discussion about supervisor responsibility in my PhD, the international, US-based examiner pointed out that Californian law required supervisors to be on-site 50% of the time while unlicensed practitioners were seeing clients, that is on-site and responsible for their practice, ethically and legally, the supervisor’s licence covering the work of the unlicensed counsellors for whom they held responsibility. Following licensure, however, supervision is neither mandated nor expected. We cannot, then, read North American supervision literature as though it directly applies in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In practice, asking questions about responsibility might mean considering carefully whether we sign, without modification, agency-initiated standard supervision agreements that state, for example, that supervision will “ensure” safe practice. What responsibilities are supervisors in New Zealand expected to take on? Do we have the same confusions that Wheeler and King (2001) reported about the responsibilities of supervisors? Since our 2004 study, NZAC has incrementally placed more responsibilities within supervision, the most recent example being planning, documenting, and reviewing the formal continuing professional development process. There are subtle shifts in supervisory responsibility with each of these moves, and I suggest that we need to keep asking about the implications for the practice of

supervision. I suggest this is an area ripe for research investigation: it's time to look around again in order to look forward.

The next two research studies undertaken in our postgraduate supervision programme focused on links between effective supervision and effective counselling (Crocket et al., 2007; Crocket, Pentecost, et al., 2009). How does the profession substantiate its claims for the benefits of supervision playing out as benefits for clients? Writing in the field of addictions, Kavanagh, Spence, Wilson and Crow (2002) suggested that "the literature on supervision is heavy on opinion, theory and recommendations, but very light on good evidence" (p. 248). What constitutes "good evidence" is of course a matter of debate, and not only in counselling or supervision (Banja, 2005; Beech, 2005; Busch, 2012; Daniel & McLeod, 2006; Goss & Rose, 2002; Porter & O'Halloran, 2009; Wampold & Bhati, 2004). And there are Feltham's (2000) questions about whether supervision serves the profession's self-interests more than clients' interests, and what research might tell us about such questions.

In our 2007 study we sought supervisor perspectives, and in our 2009 study practitioner perspectives, in investigating whether clients benefit from supervision, and if so, how. Highlighted by both studies was the potential for transparency between supervision and counselling; speaking with clients about ideas generated in supervision, for example; or a recorded interview in supervision where the practitioner reflects on developments in the client's life and takes the recording back to practice, witnessing to movements over time. These practices are not random actions, of course, but carry carefully theorised therapeutic purposes.

I recall the first time I made such a recording in supervision, a catalytic learning moment described briefly in a chapter on narrative approaches to supervision (Crocket, 2004b). The counsellor—I'll call her Jan—was beginning to wonder if the small change that had been achieved was all that was available to her client, a woman struggling with agoraphobia and living in a patriarchal, unhappy relationship. Was the counselling done, Jan wondered? In the face of Jan's sense of disappointment that she might have to settle for the client remaining in a place of struggle and oppression, I asked if I might interview her about what had come prior to the disappointment she was now experiencing, about what had transpired in the earlier phases of the counselling. This conversation might give some perspective on Jan's question of whether the counselling was done. We agreed to record the interview.

As Jan responded to my questions about the counselling so far, the changes the client had achieved, and how the counselling had contributed, while acknowledging also what the client was up against, Jan began to tell a story that carried a sense of

acknowledgement of and awe about the change that had been made, in the face of what the client was up against. In the telling, Jan began to load these steps of change with greater significance. In telling the steps that had already been taken by the client, and how the counselling had contributed to these steps, Jan regained some small sense of optimism for further change for her client: Jan thought that she knew enough about her client to think that she wouldn't give up on her hope for life to be less of a struggle. But, Jan wondered, did she herself want the change more than the client, or want more change than was enough for the client? Perhaps the client could see the change more clearly than Jan could, and this was as far as she wanted to go? As we explored these possibilities the idea developed between us that Jan would take the recording and play it to the client in the next counselling session, consulting her about how accurate Jan's understandings were, and how far they matched with the client's experience—of the counselling so far, the developments the client had made in her life, and what the client made of where things were now.

This review of a supervision recording served as an important staging post in the counselling. Hearing Jan's respectful story of all that she had done to break away from the oppressions of patriarchy and agoraphobia, the client was supported to stitch herself into a story of change, witnessed by the counsellor, and by my questions as supervisor. By taking the recording across the border, back from supervision to counselling, we three became members of a community of concern. As supervisor, I did not undertake the counselling work on behalf of the counsellor, but I did actively participate as part of the therapeutic system. Inquiring from a different perspective about the work that had been done in counselling already, I asked what Jan made of that; and through this inquiry our conversation entered into the possibility of restoring optimism, at the least consulting the client in a spirit of partnership about her hopes, fulfilled or continuing, for change in her life. As Kaethe Weingarten (2003) wrote: "Hope is something we do with others. Hope is too important—its effects on body and soul too significant—to leave to individuals alone" (p. 402).

I tell this supervision practice story in illustration of one of the findings of our studies, the suggestion that there may be benefit for clients when the links between supervision and counselling are made more explicit, more transparent, when such practices fit with the therapeutic understandings that shape both the counselling and the supervision (Crocket, 2004b).

Our studies asked, "What are the links between effective supervision and effective practice?" Having told one story from my practice, I imagine the rich practice stories

readers might have to tell that substantiate claims that supervision benefits clients. I invite you to pause for a moment in your reading, to reflect on what might come to mind. And next I imagine these moments, collected together, story after story after story, constituting a moving document of evidence about the effectiveness of supervision for counselling practice.

While each of these studies has been small and exploratory, over time we have canvassed major considerations for supervision in Aotearoa New Zealand. Our next focus identified and investigated two apparently contradictory directions current in supervision (Crocket, Cahill, et al., 2009):

In one direction, supervision has come to be understood as a discipline in its own right. This direction produces the possibility of inter-disciplinary, or cross-disciplinary, supervision. In the second direction, professional regulation and membership require within-discipline supervision. Within counselling, there has been little exploration of these apparently contradictory directions. (p. 25)

Through this study we came to think on more specific terms about forms of supervision: clinical supervision, professional supervision, cultural supervision, administrative supervision, personal supervision, consultative supervision. Yet, we noted, “We call it all supervision.” As well, “we all call it supervision” (p. 40), despite distinctions and differences between our practices. Interdisciplinary supervision, we found, might help us see beyond the limitations of our own professional horizons, and has the potential to enhance inter-professional respect—with the caveat that there is much to be negotiated and understood about difference.

The next study investigated culture and supervision (Crocket et al., 2013, 2015), the later article, in part, in response to one of the few Aotearoa New Zealand articles that address supervision and culture, quoted above for its suggestion that supervision should “widen the scope of our imaginative capacities and transform our attitudes towards the Other and otherness” (Pohatu Morice & Fay, 2013, p. 94).

In the 2013 article, we used the concept of the threshold for *the space between* in which we found ourselves. Ranginui Walker (2005) wrote of Tāne as the progenitor of research activity, in his pushing apart of Ranginui and Papatūānuku—and here we were in shared exploration of this *between* space of inquiry about supervision and culture, a space of both connection and separation. In separating, indeed wrenching apart, what was previously seen as inseparable, Tāne opened up space for new possibilities to emerge, in the between of light and life, in te ao mārama. Our research group wrote a

series of stories about the thresholds we found ourselves on, using the idea of the architectural threshold as a passageway in the middle of things, attached to things each different from itself.

For example, Brent and Bernard wrote:

Noticing an agricultural aspect of the threshold metaphor—the threshings are material left from harvest laid over mud in a doorway to provide an hospitable entrance—highlighted an appreciation for the threshings. We discussed the practical use and symbolic act of placing threshings over muddy and rough terrain (of relationship), communicating an intention to offer hospitality and a place to stand together. A fluid place of tentativeness, caution and tension, as well as a place of encounter where commonality and connection were sought—similar to the powhiri process of gathering at the waharoa and moving on to the marae atea. (Crocket et al., 2013, p. 75)

In this writing, Brent, Ngāti Porou, and Bernard, who identifies as Australian of convict heritage, each draw on a range of cultural practices and knowledges in their own histories and in shared histories—the threshings, the waharoa, the ātea, the threshold—to learn together in and from difference.

For each of us in the research group, the threshold metaphor took us directly to our struggles for and hopes of cultural partnership and supervision, with supervision a central site and relationship in which counsellors grapple with experiences of becoming, in the middle of things: in the midst of care, passion, frustration, hopes and fears, in the midst of the responsibilities encountered at the thresholds where clients invite us into their lives. We hope that the dialogic emphasis of these articles (Crocket et al., 2013, 2015), enhanced by Titihuia Rewita's (2013) response to the first, are making some contribution to thoughtful and responsible practices of supervision, in a spirit of learning with and from each other, with and from difference.

Our most recent study (Flanagan et al., 2017) makes a quite different contribution, more purposefully looking forward. One feature of contemporary supervision is the use of e-technologies. If we want to record our counselling practice to discuss in supervision we no longer need a large video recorder on a bulky tripod—a small mobile phone will take care of any recording. Playback is similarly less physically cumbersome. Recording of supervision itself is much easier—and if you want value for money, it's an excellent idea to record your supervision and later listen to the conversation from another vantage/listening point. I think of the counsellor I met with

in supervision many years ago who travelled two hours to supervision—listening to the tape of the previous supervision on the way up, and that day’s supervision on the way back. It was a great pleasure to participate in supervision with someone who valued it in that way. But now that practitioner would not necessarily have the two-hour drive: e-technologies can change life for rural practitioners as long as they have enough bandwidth available. E-technology can extend our communities of practice.

At this point in my keynote address, I paused to extend an invitation to some members of my community of practice, also at the conference, to join me. Caroline Cottrill, Vic Marsden, Liz Roberts and Jean Young, four supervisors enrolled in the Post Graduate Certificate in Counselling (Counselling Supervision) at Waikato University, as part of their study undertook a small research project, a qualitative investigation of the use of e-technologies in supervision.

While the full research report had just been published (Flanagan et al., 2017), as noted above, we took the opportunity to highlight some key aspects of the study for their relevance for a future-focused discussion of supervision:

What we are talking about here comes with various names: web-conference supervision, e-supervision, distance supervision, online supervision, cyber supervision, technology-assisted supervision.

We started our study with a title that focused on the ethics and the pragmatics of these forms of supervision. The two—ethics and pragmatics—work hand in hand. For example, it has both ethical and pragmatic implications where a computer is set up, and what is in the background and visible on camera, as we undertake supervision via e-technology, whether as counsellor or supervisor. We may speak more loudly on Skype than we do face to face or have the volume turned up to hear clearly: What are the implications of this noise level for privacy?

And there are a number of clauses in the NZAC Code of Ethics (2016) that refer to competence (4.8, 5.14, 5.2b, 5.9). Competence includes more than whether or not a counsellor is competent to counsel in a particular area of practice, or whether a supervisor is competent to supervise a particular counsellor. When we think in e-tech terms, competence includes whether both parties have the practical e-tech knowledge to undertake supervision in this way, ensuring privacy and online security. There is a warning in an Australian study by Deane and colleagues (2015) about the use of e-technology in supervision in psychology. These authors made the sobering comment:

“users are a primary weakness in any digital system, and user education is imperative in combatting this” (p. 246). So we add e-technology to our list of professional development plans, for discussion in supervision.

Our small exploratory study involved semi-structured interviews with five supervisors, all of whom supervised via e-technologies, as well as engaging in face to face supervision. Interestingly all of them were over 55—not a digital native amongst them!

Maybe not, but none of them reported particular difficulty with learning or becoming familiar with the technology. And perhaps that’s not surprising—those who were available to participate in a study of e-tech in supervision would most likely be supervisors using e-tech with some confidence.

That doesn’t mean it was all easy. One participant in our study commented: “I’m not at all tech efficient . . . I have learned what I need to know. I don’t think it took me very long once I had gotten over my tech anxiety.”

Indeed, two participants commented on what became possible when a level of technical mastery meant the technology faded into the background. One said: “The technology’s often something that disappears out of your mind. Once you set yourself up and you’re sitting here and you get into supervision, it kind of just disappears.”

Similarly another reported: “The supervision conversation just sort of flows once you get really connected with the conversation.”

This is not to say that participants assumed that relationship just happened, just flowed. Participants reported that particular attention was paid to a number of intersections of relationship and technology.

One participant suggested that the physical space she occupied was relevant and could be shared visually: “I can imagine myself holding the computer and showing the person my surrounds—my dog, the weather—that’s part of the relationship isn’t it?”

Another preferred to construct the setting as visually neutral, saying “It’s about keeping my private world out of the picture and giving an open scene.”

These contrasting preferences perhaps raise the question of how our preferences for the style of our cyber spaces reflect our preferences for the material spaces of our professional offices. How much do we bring in or leave out and why? What are our preferences about how we do relationship, in person or across cyber space, including setting and monitoring boundaries?

One participant spoke about learning to be more intentional in building a relationship over Skype, something they had missed doing when they first began e-supervision: “Now I make an effort to share a bit of myself, bringing the relationship into it and making sure I am asking questions about how they are doing as we go along.”

Another participant commented: “It takes a lot longer to build up a rich relationship . . . more effort in it, effort in seeking to understand what the counsellor was saying.”

Most participants preferred a hybrid version of supervision, with face to face initial meetings, or face to face occasional meetings where that was possible. E-supervision appears to occur primarily when a practitioner does not have access to a local supervisor, or to a local supervisor with a particular speciality.

E-supervision is not confined by national borders: supervisors in our study had supervised practitioners in international settings. There may be complexities here in terms of different codes of ethics, or different legal arrangements, but no particular problems were reported.

And while we might think of hybrid supervision being based in the use of Skype with occasional face to face meetings because of distance, we heard of instances when the structure might be flipped completely even in situations of proximity.

Skype may also be employed in place of the usual face to face supervision in response to a practitioner wanting to consult about safe practice. When availability in an emergency situation has been already negotiated, it may be possible to have a consultation on Skype if a crisis arises—when the meeting of timetables for face to face consultation might be difficult. Our study notes the importance of negotiating online availability at the time supervision itself is first negotiated and during ongoing reviews, given that e-technology potentially increases supervisor accessibility. How accessible do you want to be as a supervisor? This question may become more relevant when supervisors offer Skype or email supervision. This small exploratory study suggests that cyber supervision is a useful complement to traditional face to face supervision, with digital migrants finding their ways around the interwoven pragmatics and ethics.

More than a therapeutic generation ago, one-way screens in family therapy introduced a technology that unsettled assumptions about therapy boundaries in reconfiguring both space and relationship. Live supervision became possible,

the supervisor more visibly present in therapeutic practice (Bubbenzer, West, & Gold, 1991; Heppner et al., 1994; Lambert, 1989).

Although the technology was available, perhaps many of you here might not have made use of one-way screens, or experienced live supervision? Certainly supervision by report has remained the dominant mode in counselling. What is your perspective on this new technology? Skype and similar technologies appear to make a move in a different direction than the live supervision of the one-way screen, from more supervisory presence to something of an absence—a presence in supervision that gets actualised only in cyber space.

Or perhaps technology will in time offer us options for *more* presence as supervisors—how far away is live supervision of practice via Skype? Perhaps it is already here?

Whatever your experience thus far, we hope you will take with you today some questions:

- about what aspects of e-technology you already embrace in supervision;
- what aspects you are approaching with caution;
- and why.

This brief report becomes the last in a series as supervisors studying with us have investigated supervision practice in Aotearoa, focusing on what we considered to be important practice questions to address at that time. Looking forward, what small piece of supervision research would you, as reader, suggest we might undertake in the next iteration of this class? What do you think are the critical questions for counselling supervision?

In this article, I have done some looking back, looking around, looking forward. My main focus has been on the aspirational. In closing I briefly look around at the most significant rupture I identify for supervision right now, the significant changes in the social service landscape. While the investigation the Education Review Office (2013) undertook of school guidance and counselling as part of the Prime Minister’s Young People’s Mental Health Project seemed to hold the ground for counselling in schools, beyond secondary schools there are some very significant challenges for counselling, for our shared values, for our principles and practices. As a recent example, on Radio New Zealand in April 2017, Anne Tolley, Minister of Social Development in the former National-led government, described the research that her ministry officials had provided as “only an opinion.” Policy advice was derided as “only an opinion” when

it represented a perspective that differed from an ideological approach to service delivery the minister preferred, one with serious implications for client privacy and confidentiality (see ‘Anne Tolley responds’, 2017).

However, rather than looking around and finishing this address on a note of despondency, I want to acknowledge the honourable professional work that goes on every day in supervision rooms in these changing and challenging neoliberal times. The world in which counsellors practise today in Aotearoa is shaped not only by shifting tectonic plates, but also by economic and political shifts that are incrementally changing the social contract of our society. In our practice in counselling and supervision we cannot avoid these changing terms, and we should not think that words like *accountability* and *regulation* are benign just because it is we who speak them to each other. That is also the work for supervision—and perhaps for supervision research—to continue to consider rigorously: how we respond to our immediate relational responsibilities, the wider responsibilities invoked by the tasks of supervision, our wider responsibilities as members of a professional association, and as citizens of a postcolonial country, in a world that daily confronts us with what Kaethe Weingarten (2003) calls common shock.

We live in threshold times. As I look around at these responsibilities, I need the solidarity offered by professional community events, such as the gathering of supervisors at which I offered this keynote address, in order to sustain my hopes for care, for justice, for ethics. I am grateful for the presence and contributions of participants on that day—and for your interest in supervision as a reader of this article. Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou kātoa.

Note

1. In N. Borrell & K. Butterworth (Eds.) (2008). *The taste of nashi: New Zealand haiku*. Wellington, New Zealand: Windrift. Used with permission.

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