

A Response to “Supervision and Culture: Meetings at Thresholds”

Titihuia Rewita

Kia ora Kathie.

Nga mihi nui ki a koe me Paul, me nga tauira katoa mo tenei paanui me te kaupapa! Ka nui nga mahi. I wish to acknowledge the commitment and work by the students and yourselves nga kaiako, that has gone into producing this article. I thank you also for the opportunity to read and offer some thoughts in response and at times to pose some open questions.

Perhaps a common thread that connected to my experience of supervision is the importance of the relationship building between the participants. Whether it is ethnicity, gender, culture, or other difference, there needs to be some kind of acknowledgement that identifies and accepts difference and the question needs to be asked: how might difference enrich the supervision relationship and outcomes?

There were aspects of the article which I found were thoughtful encouragers for developing ideas and continuing conversations about supervision and culture.

In the professional domain there is a requirement and expectation as professionals to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi: the three Ps—partnership, protection, and participation. Therefore, what might this mean in and for the supervision relationship? The article highlights the importance of continuing the conversation about tauwi counsellors and supervision and culture. Some of the questions that spring to my mind are as follows.

When it comes to culture how might tauwi counsellors seeking supervision still be able to lead the supervision process while engaging with cultural difference? How might the supervision process be managed collaboratively by both parties, supervisor and counsellor? I wonder how useful it is for tauwi counsellors to identify, at some point, their journey exploring cultural difference. And how might difference be enabled to speak in supervision? I wonder how the supervision process might encourage more the bringing forward of cultural knowledge of the tauwi counsellor? As a Māori practitioner providing supervision, I have experience of some tauwi counsellors who go into supervision saying they know nothing about Māori culture. This leaves me at times wondering what that might mean to them (and to the client) when they are working with clients who are Māori.

I wonder if this article will shed further light on the ways in which some practitioners view cultural supervision as elusive. How might this article serve to reinforce the importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi to the field of counselling and supervision, and bring to the fore some of the discourses around cultural supervision?

The article has identified that cultural supervision is a requirement of NZAC as a way of ensuring that the work of counselling and supervision is acknowledging of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. I wonder how tauiwi practitioners observe this in practice and how they may have developed some sense of meaning for themselves and the positions that are on offer in this process.

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.

I wonder, too, about the supervision training on offer: I wonder if Māori supervisors were trained in collaborative practices, how much more open cultural supervision could be. If people are not trained in some kind of collaborative supervision, then are the cultural and power differences likely to be even more dominant?

Threshold/waharoa—I found this to be a useful metaphor as I envisage it could be a site of bringing together in a micro sense supervisor and counsellor, and in a macro sense bringing together groups of people of different backgrounds. This metaphor is very indicative of useful and important pōwhiri processes that can facilitate building relationships and constructive outcomes. The relational component seems very important if counsellors are to be enabled to build relationship with a cultural supervisor.

In reference to the term *waharoa* in the article, what concepts might the pōwhiri process hold that might be adopted in supervision? What is it like for some tauiwi who are using or may be working to adopt some Māori processes, and how might they take on the meanings and learnings of these? Is this a helpful kōrerō if people are identifying some Māori concepts of value to the supervision process in the article? What more can be said about this?

Kathie, there were a number of pieces in the article that stood out for me in what the student pairs brought forward in their conversations, that I would like to acknowledge.

Brent and Bernard

I was drawn to the visual images discussed of the gathering at the waharoa and the “caution and tension” that are experienced by people entering into a domain such as the marae atea. I am interested in the pōwhiri process and how this may be approached when thinking of supervision and culture. What are some of the shared experiences as a process that works with tension at the waharoa? I appreciated the idea that participants bring to supervision varying lenses of cultural difference, and how these can bring many challenges of understanding and engaging in the relationship of cultural supervision.

Jody and Naarah

This conversation for me heightens awareness of the elusiveness that the term cultural supervision can bring to the supervision process when counsellors may be positioned as the less knowledgeable participants. This position may lead them to defer to the more authoritative cultural knowledge of supervisors. For cultural supervision relationships with Māori cultural supervisors, I wonder if some discourse around the need for “redress” is overarching in some relationships, and should that be discussed? I wonder how it could be discussed?

For me this again invites the question of how supervision can include cultural conversations in safe, equal, and respectful ways, and how tauwiwi and Māori participants in supervision can prepare themselves to be able to contribute in these ways.

Tricia and Ian

Focusing on Treaty responsibilities for partnership through reciprocal relationships brings into focus the spaces between participants in supervision and how they might speak to those and about them. Again in this paper we are reminded and encouraged to value and to prioritise the relationship itself in supervision as a guide to practice that can work at the threshold of difference in ways that *allow for both joining and separating and keep us mindful of non-colonising approaches*. Very challenging tasks, I think, and significant learning and developing for both counsellor and supervisor.

Huia and Joan

Joan, through identifying an experience of “compulsion in cultural supervision,” may invite counsellors to consider how to challenge the authority of this, and how to work with other knowledge in a supervision relationship so one’s own knowledge is also authored, as well as remaining respectfully open for question and discussion. I wonder

how counsellors might break through or break free from “compulsion” in cultural supervision? What might these discourses of power and authority reveal when unravelled? Huia’s clarity around relationship in supervision—how we might negotiate, proceed, relate, and have difference, even disagreement—evokes for me again marae processes that start by meeting at the waharoa.

Maureen and Sandy

I was drawn to a difference suggested by Maureen and Sandy between *expanding of cultural knowledges* and *networks of knowledges*. I wonder if we could consider the former in supervision being like *the narrative landscape of meaning*, while the latter may be more like a *landscape of action*. In a supervision group hui that I attended recently, the question was asked whether consultation is more about action than meaning and whether cultural supervision is more about sharing meaning and understanding. I wonder what connection there might be between these thoughts and the difference suggested by Maureen and Sandy.

Janet and Nigel

How might we allow for a sharing of difference of culture in a supervision process that allows each participant’s contribution to be heard, respected, and valued, while at the same time collaborating to move together on new possibilities of thought, ideas, and action?

This was the big question this research invited me into. If we see value and uphold narrative approaches to supervision, then can culture be treated like any other topic, issue, or point of difference, expecting that the supervision process will work towards collaborative outcomes? However, it seems cultural supervisors are often positioned as persons of cultural authority and the dominant discourses around this seem to inhibit sharing of difference of culture, both ways.

Chris and Diana

I am encouraged by the suggestion that more time, more conversation, more trust and confidence may well support the three Ps for Māori and Pākehā in supervision processes, and that it is the nature and quality of relationships in this process that will best facilitate this. Hope has a significant place in supervision and culture.

The article makes mention in the discussion section about *struggles for and hopes of cultural partnership and supervision*.

Zoë and Arthur

I am encouraged that cultural consultation is experienced by these practitioners as something of value and an individual responsibility which counsellors can and do initiate for themselves on behalf of their clients. Zoë and Arthur offer the possibilities for counsellors engaging in cultural consultation to learn and grow their own skills of bicultural relationship building which will enhance ongoing work both in counselling and in supervision.

No reira, e nga kaimahi me nga taurira katoa, kia kaha ki a koutou akoako mo enei taonga whakahirahira me tenei akonga.

Naku noa, Titihuia

Copyright of New Zealand Journal of Counselling is the property of New Zealand Association of Counsellors and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.