Supervising Supervisors:

Developing Social Work Supervision Practice

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Statement of Originality

I hereby certify that the work embodied in the thesis is my own work, conducted under normal supervision. The thesis contains no material which has been accepted, or is being examined, for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968 and any approved embargo.

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Louise Johnston

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the best way out is always through

(Robert Frost)

As this arduous experience drew to a close, my thoughts went to the select group of people in my life on whom I can always depend. While I was determined to get this done and make it *through*, when it looked like I might not, those people made it possible.

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CONTENTS

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Appendices

Conference Presentations from this Research

Johnston, L. (2013). *Where practitioner and researcher meet: Exploring the impact of vested interest in practice on a research project*. Paper presented at the Newcastle-Macquarie Humanities Postgraduate Symposium, University of Newcastle, Australia.

Johnston, L. (2014). *Supervising supervisors: Developing social work supervision practice*. Paper presented at the RHD Symposium, School of Humanities and Social Science, University of Newcastle, Australia.

Johnston, L. (2016). *Supervising supervisors: Developing supervision practice*. Paper presented at the Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development, Seoul, Korea.

Subject-Related Publication Completed during this Study

Noble, C., Gray, M., & **Johnston, L.** (2016). *Critical supervision for the human services: A social model to promote learning and value-based practice*. Jessica Kingsley.

Abstract

Supervision for social workers is considered a professional imperative and there is extensive literature about supervising others. The prompt for this study was that, regardless of that available knowledge, many social workers say that their supervisee experiences are not what they need or want. Supervision sessions are often overwhelmed by managerial and organisational performance at the demise of reflection and support, which is commonly explained by neoliberalist agendas in human services. However, it may also relate to supervisors' knowledge and skills in preserving professional commitments in complex environments and individualising supervision. A premise for this study was that supervision is a form of social work practice. Coupled with the professional significance of supervision, it led to considering how individual professional supervision is used to develop supervisors and their supervision practice.

This qualitative case study explored what happens in social work supervisors' own supervision sessions. Data was collected from a total of 18 participants. Four supervision pairs – in which the supervisee was also a supervisor – were observed across (n=12) supervision sessions. They participated in one individual interview after observations and could complete optional diary entries. Two focus groups were conducted with (n=10) supervisors who did not participate in observations. They considered a case study scenario of a new supervisor who was also a manager and ideas for supervision conversations. A researcher's journal was used for reflective notes. Data were analysed using a combination of qualitative content, comparative, and cross-case analysis.

This study showed parallels between supervisee expectations whether they are supervisors or work directly with people accessing services and programs. One major finding was the limited discussion in supervisors' own supervision sessions about the sessions and conversations that they facilitated with supervisees. One prominent explanation in the findings was the multiple roles occupied by supervisors. Other influences on how supervisors made use of their own supervision for development included supervision understandings, organisational contexts, power, and relationships. The findings informed a *Multidimensional Supervisor Development Framework* as a starting point for developing supervisors and their supervision practice. This study went beyond self-report methods and looked at supervision-in-action and addressed the paucity of supervisor-specific research. It prompts an important new research agenda for supervisors-as-supervisees and supervisors-of-supervisors.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

> A supervisor's own supervision can help them identify their vulnerabilities, triggers and blind spots so they can engage more effectively with complex process dynamics. (Patterson, 2019, p. 54)

Social work supervision and supervision sessions are promoted as fundamental to the support and development of social workers and their practice. Although supervision is purported as a given for social workers, it is not always available, structured, or provided in a way that suits social workers and their professional development needs. Its prevalence and use might depend on factors such as the work setting, the social worker's role, and how supervision is defined, promoted, and applied by the organisation, the supervisor, and the supervisee. The seemingly less importance placed on supervision of supervisors and developing supervision practice may be another explanation for concerns about the supervision experiences of social workers and other professionals. This study was premised on a view that supervision is practice and social workers are social workers, no matter what job or role they occupy. As such, attention to supervision is critical for *all* social workers, including supervisors.

Background and Rationale

My decision to pursue this research came from my experiences as a supervisor and as a trainer and educator in professional supervision. There were two particular prompts for the focus on supervisors and their own supervision sessions. I was often told by different practitioners that they did not get the supervision they expected, needed, or in a way that they had read or heard it should look. Some discussed differences between supervisors they had

over time. The other prompt was regular comments from people that they either did not understand, or they rejected, the expectation that supervisors of other supervisors or managers should provide reflective supervision for them.

One of my prompt experiences was as a supervisor providing external professional supervision for practitioners from different government and non-government human service organisations and some were social workers. They sought-out external supervision and most funded it themselves. They included client practitioners (working directly with clients or people who access their services and programs) as well as supervisors (managers or clinical supervisors). Most reasons for seeking external supervision were that their internal supervision was non-existent, was not meeting their supervision needs, or had presented some interpersonal difficulties or challenges. Many used supervision sessions with me to vent about and explore frustrations they were having with their other supervisor. That included their experiences and observations of the supervisor's approach and its consistency with professional supervision frameworks, and we explored ways to engage differently with their supervisor to help their relationship and the supervisee's development and practice.

The other experiences that informed this research were the trainer-educator and facilitator work I did several years ago as an external provider with a large human service organisation. I was one of a number of trainers who provided a pre-developed four-day core training program on professional supervision which was followed by associated monthly supervision practice groups with smaller groups of participants. I facilitated several of those groups for a number of years. Within the program, the groups were intended to be action learning to embed lessons from the original training.

Participants in the training and practice groups were not all social workers, however, the influence of social work practice and supervision was observable in the reflective supervision

model that was promoted by the organisation, which had been developed by a social worker. The training had supervisor participants with mixed levels of experience, from novice supervisors through to long-term experienced supervisors. The subsequent practice groups were position-specific; separate groups of middle managers who supervised client practitioners and groups of senior managers who supervised supervisors.

The dominant influence on this study was the supervision practice group experiences, especially the senior manager groups. Over time, many developed an acceptance that supervision of supervisors had parallels with supervision of client practitioners and there were shifts in knowledge and skills. There were some standout features of that experience that consolidated my interest in supervisors-as-supervisees, which I will briefly describe.

Although the groups were about *providing* supervision, many participants often talked about their own supervisee experiences and what was not happening for them. New supervisors in the groups identified a notable difference in supervision after they started in their new position, which most said had limited focus on them as developing supervisors and managers. Participants who had moved from middle to senior manager positions reported that their new supervision was more task-oriented and about managing other staff. This was compared to their former middle manager experience where, while still not primarily about them, had a casework focus that lent itself to more reflection and analysis.

I interacted with members of some supervision pairings separately because I facilitated different manager groups. In each group, I was privy to information and views from each of them about their supervision relationship and how each described what happened in their supervision sessions. I could see consistencies and contradictions from each in terms of how our group session content was being translated (or not) into practice, as well as how they

were approaching supervision that they either provided or received during the intervals between our group sessions.

A significant and regular discussion in the senior manager groups was whether professional supervision and reflective learning processes were relevant for them – as both supervisor and supervisee – given their higher organisational level and role. They suggested that because they were in management positions and not working directly with clients, the usual content of professional supervision was not relevant. The general view was that professional supervision was for practitioners who work with clients, and that the key elements of reflection, exploration of feelings, and theory-practice linkages were more pertinent to such work. I also heard those views from some colleagues who were not in the groups. There was general acknowledgement that parts of the commonly accepted supervision functions framework (Kadushin, 1976; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014) were acceptable, in particular the administrative/managerial function, due to the nature of managers' jobs and responsibilities. In terms of other functions – such as, development and support – there seemed to be a struggle to identify what managers would reflect on at their level and how the commonly understood focus in professional supervision on casework practice might transfer into a focus on managerial or supervision practice.

Discussions across my group and individual supervision experiences prompted interest and questions for me about how supervisors learn about professional supervision. This included, how they develop it over time, the influence of surrounding factors on whether or not they provide supervision, their knowledge base for supervision practice, and how and why they make decisions to supervise in particular ways. Based on that, I wondered what was happening in their own supervision sessions and how those sessions contributed to both their conceptual understanding of professional supervision and how they approached it with others.

For example, the types of supervision approaches and thinking that were demonstrated and modelled by their own supervisor and how, in turn, that was reflected in supervision they provided to others. This led me to contemplate whether supervisors-of-supervisors applied the same supervision approaches they would with a client practitioner, and if they thought a professional supervision framework was appropriate for supervisors in their own sessions.

Up to that point, my knowledge about what was happening in the sessions of supervisors I had met in the groups and individual supervision was confined to what they reported. It seemed logical to attempt a closer look at what supervisors' own supervision experiences were like and how they learned to supervise outside training and practice development groups. I thought it would be best to look beyond training which was the more common avenue of supervision learning. That angle also seemed important because the groups I had worked with had completed training and yet sustained their views or confusion. Supervisors' own individual supervision sessions seemed a good starting place given those suggestions that professional or practice supervision conversations were irrelevant for supervisors-as-supervisees. The combination of my experiences led me to wonder if supervisors simultaneously positioned themselves as supervis*ees* as well as supervis*ors* – in separate settings and relationships – and if their supervisee experiences attended to their development as supervision practitioners.

Supervision Language and Terminology

Language and meanings constructed in social work supervision were critical to this research, in both describing this study and, ultimately, in its findings. Examples of the range of terms and definitions for supervision are provided in the literature review chapter. Importantly, understandings and frames of reference for supervision were part of major findings in this study, as important influences on supervisors' approaches to supervision of others and their

own supervision sessions. In the contexts surrounding this study, usage of the two terms *supervision* and *supervisor* across different organisational and practice contexts was relevant to understandings of what is meant by social work supervision. Additionally, both are also generic terms that are used in industries and organisations outside the social work profession and human services more broadly, where they do not always mean reflexive, reflective, and developmental processes. For example, in business, finance, and various trade arenas they may refer solely to day-to-day workplace supervision. With the prominence of neoliberalism in human services – which includes encroachment by those other arenas – broader applications of supervision terms have become more commonplace and often translate to less developmental and professional focus for social workers and other practitioners.

Specifying an emphasis on practice and practitioner development, such as coupling *supervision* with other descriptors like *social work*, *clinical,* or *professional* may reduce some confusion. However, a general lack of clarity remains, with multiple terms used to describe supervision, the context in which it occurs, and the practice fields or approaches that may be the focus of supervision conversations. Additionally, there are various forms of professional supervision, for example, individual, group, peer, cultural, and interprofessional supervision. Attempts to traverse terminology differences may be more perplexing because many descriptions of social work supervision incorporate supervision *types* or *functions.* One example is the *administrative* or *managerial* function (Kadushin, 1991; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014), which might be viewed by some as the single purpose of supervision. As such, the extent of supervision can be narrowed when its focus is limited to one function of defining and meeting job and organisational accountabilities, outcomes and outputs, and a focus on job performance (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). A potential outcome could be overlooking other functions of supervision in social work, such as, *education* and *support* (Kadushin, 1991) and formal processes like supervision sessions.

Specific to presenting and discussing this research, I confronted a language challenge which might also exist for the reader. The term *supervisee* proved confusing in distinguishing research participants in this study who were also supervisors; thus, the term *supervisor-supervisee* or *supervisor-as-supervisee* is often used. Generally, outside this study, it is more common for the term *supervisee* to be associated with client practitioners or workers. Because supervisors could be referred to as supervisor or supervisee – depending on the context or moment – I found it difficult to explain and describe my research focus in conversations and writing about this study. Sometimes, this was further compounded if people with whom I spoke did not see, or had not considered, supervisors in dual roles of supervisor and supervisee. The term *supervisee* is used more often in this research to refer to the supervisees in the observed pairs, and *client practitioners* or *workers* is used to denote supervisees who did not participate in the research.

Aims of the Study

The primary aim of this study was to establish a developing picture of what goes on in supervisors' own individual supervision sessions. The individual focus was chosen because that format had been the primary concern in the prompts for this study and, notwithstanding the benefits of group and peer supervision, I wanted to explore individual approaches to development as distinct from group training as a popular means of supervisor development.

The emphasis was on content, process, and context of those supervision sessions, as well as how supervisors developed their supervision practice. I was interested in how supervision session conversations attended to supervisors' approaches to supervision of others, especially the supervision sessions they facilitated. Thus, the focus of this study was on supervisors-as-supervisees.

This study aimed to:

1. Provide some direct evidence of what happens in social work supervisors' own supervision sessions, beyond retrospective self-report accounts.

2. Contribute to discussion, debate, knowledge, and learning about developing supervision practice, particularly, the relevance and role of supervision sessions.

3. Support a more balanced body of knowledge about supervision through increased attention on supervising supervisors and developing supervision practice; applicable to social work and other human service professions and organisations.

Research Questions

The research questions were informed by important features in social work supervision that were highlighted in the review of supervision research, such as, supervision relationships, communication, interactions, session structure and topics, and settings and contexts.

The research question for this study was:

What happens in social work supervisors' own supervision sessions?

The following four sub questions guided exploration of the research question and were related to interpersonal, processual, and contextual elements of supervision sessions:

(a) What topics are discussed?

(b) How do sessions focus on supervision practice?

(c) How are topics discussed?

(d) What are the influences on the sessions?

Theoretical Perspective and Methodology

I chose a qualitative case study methodology for this research. It was grounded in an interpretive constructivist paradigm which assumes that multiple realities are constructed through the meanings people make of their experiences and interactions, individually and in groups, and consensus that is reached about those meanings (Clarke et al., 2015; Guba & Lincoln, 2008). The qualitative case study methodology meant I could consider different interpretations of supervision and supervision sessions and influences, such as, interactions, relationships, roles, and contexts. Relevant theories for the methodology and research focus included symbolic interactionism as well as role and identity. Central in symbolic interactionism is how people make, maintain, and change meanings and actions as they interact (Carter & Fuller, 2016; Charmaz, 2006; Sandstrom, 2008). Theories related to the construction and reconstruction of role and identity were relevant in terms of how symbols and interactions in supervision sessions and other experiences might influence the evolution of identities as "context-specific roles" (Spencer et al., 2014, p. 87).

The strategy of inquiry for this study was a *collective case study* design (Abma & Stake, 2014; Stake, 2003, 2005a) in which each *case* was a supervision pair. Observations and interviews were conducted with four supervision pairs, where the supervisee also supervised others. I observed three consecutive supervision sessions of each pair (12 observed sessions in total), then each member of the pair participated in an individual, semi-structured interview with me approximately two weeks after their final observation (8 interviews in total). Each observation participant also had the option to complete a participant diary which might contain reflections on the observed sessions or supervision more broadly. At a later point in this study, I added focus groups as a research method. Two focus groups were conducted with 10 supervisors from two large government organisations and who did not participate in

the observations (6 participants in Group One, 4 participants in Group Two). As part of the case study design for this research, focus group participants were asked to consider a case study scenario that I wrote for this research. It featured 'Anna', a new manager who was experiencing some supervision challenges.

In terms of data analysis, the multiple data collection methods and the data they produced needed to be analysed both individually and in relation to each other. I used a combination of qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2000; Schreier, 2014), comparative analysis (Gibbs, 2007), and cross-case analysis (Stake, 1995, 2005a, 2005b), which helped to compare and note patterns and develop possible explanations and models (Gibbs, 2007). I demonstrated the back-and-forth and cyclical features of qualitative research through simultaneously re-visiting codes and themes and writing and re-writing findings and conclusions.

Significance

This study has relevance for social work and other disciplines across human services, in government and non-government agencies, and services and community programs. Its value extends across different types of professional supervision, beyond social work supervision. It also has relevance for management and leadership. It appears that this may be the first study to provide research evidence from direct observation of supervisors' own supervision sessions. As such, it adds to other research that recorded supervision sessions where client practitioners were the supervisees, and self-report, interview-based research where supervisors and supervisees talked about experiences of supervision sessions.

This study provided an inside view of supervisors' own supervision sessions. The findings will be useful to inform supervisors' practice; both supervisors of client practitioners and supervisors of supervisors. Particularly important was that participants demonstrated how

supervision sessions could be used with supervisor-supervisees, which extended to focusing on their practice as supervisors, managers, and leaders. Many used or proposed reflective processes and techniques to explore those different roles, which were findings that could be useful for supervisors' practice. Importantly, they also challenged notions that such processes and techniques should be confined to supervision of client practitioners.

This study highlighted the multiple experiences, roles, and practice angles of supervisors. Most were also managers and others had additional simultaneous roles, such as, counsellor or case manager. This study drew out, in specific terms, the convoluted nature of the experiences of supervisors who occupy multiple roles in organisations. Supervisors and organisations may have acknowledged those multiple roles in some way up to the point of this study, but participants in this study described those complications in concrete terms. I created a *Multidimensional Supervisor Development Framework* from this study's findings. It acknowledges the multiplicity of supervisors' experiences and extrapolates the different *layers* of talking to supervisors about their experiences and, in turn, supervisors talking to supervisees about their experiences. The proposed framework could act as a reference point for conversations in supervisors' own supervision sessions, other supervision practice fora, and learning and development programs for supervisors that extend beyond didactic training.

This study has organisational significance in terms of how supervision is promoted for *all* employees, regardless of level and role. Additionally, it demonstrated the potential, even necessity, for the reflective processes that are synonymous with social work and other professional supervision as means to confront organisational burdens on employees. Participants in this study articulated numerous pressures that they and others, including their supervisees, experienced within their organisations. They stressed the importance of opportunities to explore and navigate those challenges and the relevance of conversations

with others to keep them focused. As supervisors, participants in this study were not immune to those challenges and worries by virtue of their senior or supervising role. This is significant in the contemporary landscape in which many organisations are diminishing or diverting the practitioner and practice focus of supervision. Again, the framework I proposed from the findings of this study provides a platform for framing practice in organisational contexts.

This study established an important starting point for further research into the experiences of supervisors-as-supervisees and supervisors-of-supervisors. It provided a prompt for exploring in greater detail the process of becoming a supervisor. Importantly, it provided a foundation for more exploration of how supervisors approach the supervision sessions that they provide.

Limitations of the Study

A number of ethical considerations were important to consider in this research. The research design attempted to reduce or manage aspects that might create bias. Participants for this study were recruited from a small community of social workers. Efforts not to identify them in the findings were critical, but may not have been entirely successful. I also knew most participants in some capacity based on past experiences with them as a colleague, supervisor, trainer, or educator. That knowledge, coupled with potential impediments associated with observer-effect, social desirability responses, and self-censoring, meant bias was an important consideration. I addressed this through non-participant observation, my research supervision, and in the writing and re-writing mode of data analysis.

Most participants worked in large organisations and the majority of participants were also managers. It is possible that findings from a study with participants from a wider variety of organisations, and some who were only supervisors, may have been different. Observations

of three consecutive sessions was part of the research design to address some of the issues associated with, for example, social desirability bias. Because all the pairs were established, it also meant that some usual elements of their supervision relationship and session content may not have appeared in the observed sessions. For example, the discussions I noted as absent in observed sessions may have happened previously or participants may have agreed not to discuss certain topics when they initiated supervision relationships and agreements.

Even though the participants volunteered to participate in this study, they may have been anxious or worried about being observed or about what information would be presented as part of the write-up of this research in a public space. As such, they could have protected themselves by restricting what they talked about and how they talked about it. Limitations are discussed further in the research methodology chapter.

Overview of the Thesis

This chapter provided an explanation of the background of this study and my reason for choosing the research topic. It included the aims of this study, the research questions, and the theoretical perspective and methodology. I also discussed language and terminology challenges around supervision – both broadly and within this study – which are discussed in more detail in later chapters. This chapter ended with a description of the significance and limitations of this study. Chapter 2 provides a literature review which supported the focus and design of this study. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology for this study, which includes the methodology, research design, participants in this study, and a description of data collection and data analysis. Chapter 4 contains the findings from this study. This thesis ends with Chapter 5 which discusses the findings from this study and presents conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of studies, findings, and ideas that were drawn from an array of theoretical and research literature. The chapter begins with a description of the literature review methodology, search strategy, and a summary of findings. In light of the dearth of supervisor-specific research, a dedicated section of findings about relevant supervision research is provided to position this study in terms of its potential contributions. The sections that follow capture more details about those studies in discussion about different supervision elements, which include, definitions and frameworks of supervision, contexts surrounding supervision, and some foundational practice components of social work supervision. This chapter concludes with presentation of the relatively limited research and literature about the transition, development, and supervision of social work supervisors, within which the predominance of supervision training was notable.

Support for the importance of social work supervision is informed by a developing empirical knowledge base that remains relatively ad hoc. While there has been a steady increase in supervision research in recent decades it is yet to provide sufficiently consistent findings to support or refute proposed theories and models of supervision (Beddoe et al., 2016; Carpenter et al., 2012). It is a field that remains overwhelmingly influenced by anecdotal experience. The associated theorising and conceptualising of supervision practice have been extrapolated by numerous authors in a raft of professional supervision literature (for example, Beddoe & Davys, 2016; Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Hawkins & Shohet, 2012; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; McMahon & Patton, 2002; Munson, 2002; Noble et al., 2016).

Literature Review Methodology

This literature review was conducted in three parts. The first search covered the period 2000-2014 and aimed to locate literature related directly to the research question; *What happens in social work supervisors' own supervision sessions?* The emphasis was on Australian supervision studies that were social work-specific. It looked for studies that were dedicated to *supervisor* participants and those that were about *supervision sessions* or *supervision pairs*. The second search extended to broader supervision descriptions, such as, *clinical supervision* and *professional supervision* and it expanded geographically to New Zealand and international supervision studies. The third search was conducted because of the duration of this study and time that had passed since the earlier searches. It was a repeat of the first two searches for the period 2015-2019 to determine if more recent studies existed.

The terms that were used across the searches are listed below. They were searched on their own and in various combinations. The terms were determined using key words in the research question, as well as the proposed research focus on supervision *pairs* or *dyads*.

Supervision:	*social work supervision, social work clinical supervision*, *clinical supervision,* and *professional supervision*
Supervision pairs:	*supervision* or *supervisory* coupled with *dyad, pair, couples,* or *coupling*
Supervision sessions:	combinations of *supervision* or *supervisory* with *session, conversation,* or *discussion*
Supervisors as recipients of supervision:	*supervising supervisors, supervision of supervisors, supervising supervision, supervisors of supervisors*
Supervisor development:	*supervisor training, supervision training, supervisor development*, and *developing supervisors*

Searches used The University of Newcastle library catalogue, NEWCAT+ and Google Scholar. Databases used for searches included *EBSCO Megafile Premier*, *SocINDEX with full text, Social Work Abstracts, Dissertations and Theses, SAGE Journals Online, Oxford Journals Online,* and *Taylor & Francis Online*.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Precedence was given to studies in which supervision pairs or supervision sessions were *central* in the study, rather than an adjunct or product of a study that was about a different part or form of supervision. In terms of selecting studies that referred to supervision sessions, it could have been the sole focus or one of a number of supervision activities that the study explored. Regarding supervision pairs, studies were only included if they were *with* supervision pairs, rather than *about* supervision pairs where only one member participated. Notwithstanding the importance of other forms of supervision, such as, *group supervision* and *peer supervision*, those terms were excluded from the search. The focus and scope of this study was specifically on individual supervision comprised of a supervisor-supervisee pair. A broader search had potential to dilute or confuse findings related to the research focus.

The original intention to isolate searches that combined *social work* or *social workers* with terms in the research question and the proposed methods was rendered insufficient after initial searches and a brief review of the articles that were located. The initial exclusion of *clinical supervision* had placed limitations on research that might be located otherwise. The presence of social workers in environments where clinical supervision featured and the likelihood of social workers referring to their supervision as *clinical supervision* led to the inclusion of *clinical supervision.* Another added inclusion was *professional supervision* which appeared in some of the earlier articles that were located and presented as interchangeable with *social work supervision*.

Because of the limited research located in the initial search that was dedicated to supervisor participants, broader supervision research about both supervisees and supervisors was ultimately included in the search and review. It was anticipated that parallels might be possible between supervisee experiences and expectations whether the social worker or practitioner was a supervisor or worked directly with people accessing services and programs. The original inclusion criteria, as guided by the research question, were extended to supervision relationships, supervisee expectations, and supervision models.

Findings

The search yielded 146 research articles, 19 of which were located in the second search period of 2015-2019. They included 12 dedicated literature reviews, 4 PhD studies, and 69 supervision studies. In terms of theoretical literature, searches yielded 48 journal articles, five book chapters, and 18 books. Three of the books each had multiple editions.

The review ultimately included some articles outside the search period, as early as 1974, based on references in some located articles. Seminal literature included Alfred Kadushin's text, *Supervision in Social Work*, which was first published in 1976 and was in its fifth edition at the time of this study (Kadushin, 1976; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). It was preceded by his 1974 research in which he conducted a national survey in the USA of supervisors and supervisees (Kadushin, 1974). Additionally, common reference was made to authors who reviewed supervision research in specified time periods, in particular, Bogo and McKnight (2006) and O'Donoghue and Tsui (2015).

Much more supervision research was located in New Zealand compared to Australia. In the international context, supervision research undertaken in numerous countries featured strongly in the USA, Hong Kong, and Canada, as well as the United Kingdom, Israel, and

Scandinavia. Literature from the USA was prominent because of a significant amount of *clinical supervision* research. Notwithstanding the crossover that had been noted between *clinical supervision*, *social work supervision*, and *professional supervision*, even though there are differences in social work practice between the USA and Australia, it broadened the literature for review as well as ultimate use for analysis of the findings.

The searches indicated important features of supervision and supervision sessions that, in turn, helped to form the sub questions for this study:

(a) What topics are discussed?

(b) How do sessions focus on supervision practice?

(c) How are topics discussed?

(d) What are the influences on the sessions?

More specific findings about supervision research literature are described in the next section. It was considered important to extrapolate those findings and then discuss them further in subsequent sections in this literature review because of the minimal research that was dedicated to supervisor participants and to supervisors-as-supervisees. As such, the following summary helped to position this study in the supervision research landscape.

Research about Supervision

This section provides a summary of supervision research that is discussed further and integrated into other sections of this chapter. This section includes an overview of literature reviews, research participants, as well as research about social workers, supervisors, supervision pairs, and supervision sessions. It concludes with a summary of research methods which helped to inform this study. Over the past three decades, numerous researchers have captured the progress of supervision research and study findings in dedicated reviews. Their

emphasis varied. Some considered the state of the evidence from a period in time (Bogo & McKnight, 2006 (1994-2004); Harkness & Poertner, 1989 (1955-1985); Mor Barak et al., 2009 (1990-2007); O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2015 (1970-2010); Sewell, 2018 (2013-2017)). Wilkins (2019) conducted a review of six completed reviews to propose theory. Others targeted their reviews on outcomes, to locate findings about links between supervision and worker outcomes (Mor Barak et al., 2009), client interactions and outcomes (Harkness & Poertner, 1989; Poertner, 2006), and a combination of service, worker, and client outcomes (Carpenter et al., 2012). Reviewers considered the integration of clinical and management supervision (Kleiser & Cox, 2008), suggested evidence-informed supervision models or approaches (Carpenter et al., 2012; Milne et al., 2008; O'Donoghue et al., 2018), and one produced a scoping review to support social work supervisors to access research (Sewell, 2018). Another considered multiple aspects of supervision across studies as related to allied mental health (Spence et al., 2001) and Milne et al. (2011) conducted a systematic review of quantitative research articles between 1998 and 2008 about clinical supervision training in the mental health field.

Although not the focus of this study, most reviewers concurred that connecting supervision and outcomes was challenging, especially the overshadowing or sidelining of client outcomes in supervision and challenges to demonstrate such links through research. Within their review related to client outcomes, and which might be considered to have broader relevance, Harkness and Poertner (1989) suggested it was important to look more closely at supervisor *behaviour* and suggested that "conceptualizations of supervision as what supervisors *do* or *should do*" (p. 116, emphasis added) steered supervision research in particular directions; the former, more functional emphasis steered it away from outcomes.

It is generally accepted that the evidence for social work or professional supervision, and the theory and models that it might inform, are relatively weak. Across various studies, researchers determined a need for expansion, improvement, and more rigour in supervision research. Suggestions included more experimental studies and evaluation (Harkness & Poertner, 1989; Milne et al., 2008; O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2015; Poertner, 2006), validated and consistent or standardised measurement tools (Kaiser & Kuechler, 2008; Mor Barak et al., 2009), more consistent categories across studies (Milne et al., 2008), more random sampling, clarity about or more social worker participants, and more in-depth exploration – beyond "single projects on specific topics" – to build supervision theory and models (Bogo & McKnight, 2006, p. 61). There were also suggestions for comparative studies, including international comparisons (Beddoe et al., 2016; O'Donoghue, 2014; O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2015). Especially relevant to this study, were recommendations for more empirical research of supervision-in-action rather than retrospective accounts of supervision experiences (Beddoe et al., 2016; Harkness & Poertner, 1989; Manthorpe et al., 2013; O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2015; Saltiel, 2017), exploration of the skills, content, and effectiveness of training supervisors (Carpenter et al., 2012; Kaiser & Kuechler, 2008; Milne et al., 2011; Spence et al., 2001), and qualitative examination of the process of supervisor development (Milne et al., 2011).

Social Workers and Supervisors as Research Participants

The review revealed limited supervision research in Australia that was dedicated to social worker participants (Egan, 2012b; Egan et al., 2018; Joubert et al., 2013; Pilcher, 1984). Much more social work-specific research was international (for example, Bogo & Dill, 2008; Caras & Sandu, 2013; Cohen & Laufer, 1999; Hair, 2013; Hensley, 2003; Kadushin, 1974, 1993; Magnussen, 2018; Manthorpe et al., 2013; Munson, 1981; O'Donoghue, 2014;

O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2012a; Rankine, 2017b; Schmidt & Kariuki, 2019; Shulman et al., 1981; Tsui, 2008; Wilkins et al., 2017).

Social workers were included in participant groups of mixed professions in some studies about clinical and professional supervision (for example, Cooper, 2006; Grant et al., 2012; Kavanagh et al., 2008; Pack, 2011; Pack, 2012) across fields such as child protection or welfare (Darlington et al., 2002; Dill & Bogo, 2009; Gibbs, 2001, 2009; McPherson et al., 2016; Poertner & Rapp, 1983; Scott & Farrow, 1993), mental health (Grant et al., 2012; Harkness, 1997; Kavanagh et al., 2003), hospitals (Scott & Farrow, 1993), and counselling (Crocket et al., 2009; Grant & Schofield, 2007; Grant et al., 2012; London & Chester, 2000). Some researchers did not specify inclusion of social workers but it was certainly possible given interchangeable supervision terms (e.g., clinical supervision), the presence of social workers in multidisciplinary settings, and that social workers often work in positions not titled *social worker*.

A small amount of supervision research with specific or sole focus on supervisors was located (Bogo & Dill, 2008; Dill & Bogo, 2009; Grant et al., 2012; May & Stanfield, 2010) and others *included* supervisors as part of their study more explicitly than other broader supervision studies (Beddoe, 2010; Gibbs, 2009; Harkness, 1997; Kavanagh et al., 2008; O'Donoghue, 2014; O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2012a; Pack, 2012; Tebes et al., 2011). The focus of all of those studies was on supervision that supervisors *provided* rather than *received*. While not the focus of their studies, some researchers recommended the importance of supervision for supervisors (Grant et al., 2012; Pack, 2012; Scott & Farrow, 1993).

Supervision Pairs

This literature review highlighted a distinction between studies that were *about* supervision pairs and those that *included* pairs. For example, two USA studies on racial identity and multicultural competence in supervision (Bhat & Davis, 2007; Hird et al., 2004) claimed a focus on supervisor-supervisee pairs but only the supervisors participated; they provided survey responses about their interactions and approach to cultural difference in supervision pairs. They were not considered pairs in the context of this research because of the exclusion of supervisees, and one-sided, supervisor-driven descriptions of relationship.

There were some studies that included supervisor-supervisee pairs and the professional disciplines of participants varied. Some involved mixed disciplines and included social workers (Kavanagh et al., 2008; Lichtenberg & Goodyear, 2000; Pack, 2011, 2012), others had specified disciplines other than social work, for example, psychology (Mangione et al., 2011), and others explicitly recruited social work participants (Rankine, 2017b; Wong, 2014). Rankine's PhD study (2017b) was closely aligned with this research. It was a two-phase study conducted in New Zealand with community-based welfare social workers. The first was interviews with nine key informants about reflection in supervision – to explore espoused theory. The second phase was with eight supervision dyads[1] and comprised an audio recorded supervision session and a follow-up participatory reflection session with the researcher – to explore theories-in-use and use of the *thinking aloud process*. Similarly, Wilkins et al. (2017) conducted action research in an inner London authority where a change program was in-process. Participants were 11 *first line managers*. Two methods were used. Supervision sessions were recorded (n=30), from which portions of case discussion were

[1] Except for one individual, all dyad participants were not key informants in the interviews.

extracted and analysed, and four workshops were conducted. Two workshops preceded the recorded sessions and covered supervisors' ideas of good supervision. The other two reviewed and reflected on interpretations of the recorded sessions.

One of the studies on supervision training included some supervision pairs (Kavanagh et al., 2008). A workshop was presented to three separate sets – immediate and delayed (with pairs) and split (with separate supervisor- and supervisee-specific groups). Workshops were preceded by a phone interview and a baseline survey. The premise of combined training was the researchers' view that "key actions (e.g., clear agreement, structuring sessions, observation of clinical practice) all require collaboration of the supervisor and supervisee" and that training was counterproductive unless it simultaneously provided supervisees "a framework to enable them to benefit from the supervisors' efforts" (Kavanagh et al., 2008, pp. 97, 103).

Another study with pairs (Mangione et al., 2011) was in the USA with eight all-women dyads of psychology supervisors and trainees that explored feminist perspectives and approaches to supervision with an emphasis on the supervision relationship and power. Methods were an individual interview with each participant followed by three audio recorded supervision sessions. Analysis of session data was explicitly framed within the concepts of reflexivity, collaboration, and authenticity (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Supervision Sessions

Only one Australian study with some focus on supervision sessions was located. It looked at difficulties encountered by expert supervisors in counselling supervision and the 16 participants included one social worker (Grant et al., 2012). Other international studies included social workers but numbers were not specified (for example, "counseling

supervision dyads", in Lichtenberg & Goodyear, 2000, p. 5). Regardless of participants' profession, various methods were used to explore supervision sessions, including observation (Magnussen, 2018 (group sessions); Wong, 2014 (individual sessions)), audio or video recordings (Grant et al., 2012; Lichtenberg & Goodyear, 2000; Rankine, 2017b; Wilkins et al., 2017), and retrospective interviews and surveys (O'Donoghue, 2014). Some of those studies were mixed-method designs, for example, survey results considered alongside data from session recordings (Lichtenberg & Goodyear, 2000), supervision session recordings with interviews and interpersonal process recall (Grant et al., 2012), or a participatory reflective session with the researcher after recorded sessions (Rankine, 2017b). The methods used in another UK study (Ruch, 2004) – that was about reflective practice, not supervision specifically – included observation of spaces where reflective practice happened and some participants' supervision sessions were observed.

Research Methods

Research methods used to build knowledge about supervision have changed over time and have included quantitative surveys (for example, Egan et al., 2018; Kadushin, 1974; Kavanagh et al., 2003; Kavanagh et al., 2008; Scott & Farrow, 1993) and qualitative interviews, focus groups, and mixed methods (for example, Bogo & Dill, 2008; Darlington et al., 2002; Egan, 2012a; Gibbs, 2001; Hair, 2015; London & Chester, 2000; Osmond & Darlington, 2005; Rankine, 2017b). Some of the quantitative research used randomised controlled studies (for example, Kavanagh et al., 2008), created a study-specific survey or used established questionnaires, or a combination of the two. Quantitative studies can influence what participants report as important in supervision. For example, pre-defined questions about training (for example, Egan, 2012a) may preference supervision training over other options for supervisors to develop supervision knowledge and skills.

Self-report studies do provide a reasonable foundation to inform supervision practice development, although they are reliant on participants' own accounts of what occurs in their supervision sessions. Noticeably absent from supervision studies to date was direct observation of supervision sessions which is "qualitatively different from the self-report data, upon which contemporary supervision research relies" (Harkness & Poertner, 1989, p. 117). This could provide more knowledge about what goes on in supervision processes, relationships, and discussions, and create space to extend and interrogate findings from self-report methods.

Defining and Describing Supervision

Diverse understandings of supervision, its fluidity in practice, and varied contextual influences mean it is difficult to rely on one definition of social work supervision or professional supervision. Notwithstanding such variety, there is commonality in views that it has unquestionable professional relevance for social work. The primary definition of supervision that was used for this study is presented after presentation of some examples of descriptions, understandings, and definitions that demonstrate variations in understandings.

Social work supervision was the first form of supervision that focused on practice. It originated around 1878 with friendly visitors who were volunteers in the Charity Organization Societies in the United States (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Tsui, 1997). With the expansion of supervision to other disciplines, different forms and titles followed and professional supervision and clinical supervision came to be regarded as "social work's gift to the helping professions" (Wepa, 2007, p. 13). A study in the UK that looked at decision making in child protection supervision described supervision as a "complex social encounter taking place in demanding, stressful working contexts: a repeated, routinised practice

embedded in social work's professional culture with immense significance for the professional identities of the actors involved" (Saltiel, 2017, p. 12).

Supervision Descriptions

For this study, the expanse of titles, descriptions, and elements of supervision created some challenges in locating relevant literature and understanding how social work supervision was understood by research participants. Given the research question, it would have been appropriate to restrict this literature review to social work supervision and social work supervisors. However, that would have limited access to other sources where social work supervision or social workers in supervision were involved but not named as such. Inclusion of those sources ultimately provided a broader base for data analysis.

Most supervision literature contained multiple titles, types, and descriptions of supervision. Rather than one definition, an example set of 41 articles and 5 book chapters presented a diverse range of descriptions. Examples of different titles across literature included:

Social work supervision	Bogo and McKnight (2006); Bruce and Austin (2001); Egan (2012b); Kadushin and Harkness (2014); O'Donoghue (2010); Saltiel (2017); Tsui (1997)
Supervision	Beddoe and Davys (2016); Bernard (2006); Embelton (2002); Giddings et al. (2007); Goddard and Hunt (2011); Grant and Schofield (2007); Grauel (2002); Ingram (2013); Lietz (2009); Morrison (2005); Robinson (2014); Ung (2002)
Professional supervision	Chiller and Crisp (2012); Davys and Beddoe (2010); Scott and Farrow (1993)
Clinical supervision	Bogo and McKnight (2006); Caras and Sandu (2013); Collins-Camargo and Millar (2010); Giddings et al. (2007); Grant et al. (2012); Milne (2007); Pack (2009); Spence et al. (2001)
Reflective supervision	Beddoe and Davys (2016); Collins-Camargo and Kelly (2007); Franklin (2011); Lietz (2009); Rankine (2017b)

Interactional supervision	Bruce and Austin (2001); Shulman (1993, 2010)
Appearing in only one article each:	
Clinical social work supervision	Munson (2002)
Integrative supervision	Giddings et al. (2007)
Social services supervision	Caras and Sandu (2013)
Other titles that do not include "supervision" but were described with similar features:	
Indigenous position (NZ)	O'Donoghue and Tsui (2012b)
Consultation	Grauel (2002); Scott and Farrow (1993)
Mentoring	Collins-Camargo and Kelly (2007)
Coaching	Harlow (2013); Lietz and Rounds (2009); O'Donoghue and Tsui (2012a); Tsui et al. (2017)

Components of supervision varied in the range of descriptions listed above. They included behaviours, actions, processes, activities, tasks, focus, intention, interventions, relationships, and contexts. Examples of more dominant features and terms were:

Intervention-oriented	for example, standards of care, methods, practice, and therapy.
Educative or learning	for example, teaching, education, training, professional development, and growth.
Reflection	for example, reflective, experience (as a trigger), self.

Elements that featured far less were *knowledge* and *theory*. The terms *agency* or *organisation* appeared in most descriptions of professional supervision and social work supervision, and some descriptions of clinical supervision. Informed by a range of professional disciplines, this wide array of descriptions demonstrated the breadth of supervision.

Beddoe et al. (2016) premised their Delphi study on a shared understanding of the diverse "professional demands" that supervision could meet as; "reflection, the continuing

development of professional skills, retention and well-being of practitioners, the safeguarding of competent and ethical practice, and the oversight of casework" (p. 2). In a study with supervisors, one participant said, "good supervision moves into practice, and develops good practice, and extends good practice and has people thinking differently about their practice" (Crocket et al., 2007, p. 64). This is reflected below with examples of textbook definitions that draw out some details, perhaps technicalities, of what we know about supervision and its elements.

Supervision Definitions

Consistent elements of definitions point to supervision as a dialogic interaction focused on the supervisee, people with whom the supervisee works who access services and programs, practice accountabilities and improvement, and the environments that surround and influence practitioners and people with whom they work. Alfred Kadushin's seminal work, *Supervision in Social Work*, first published in 1976 and now in its fifth edition (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014), provided the following definition;

> …a supervisor is a licensed social worker to whom authority is delegated to direct, coordinate, enhance, and evaluate the on-the-job performance of the supervisees for whose work he or she is accountable. In implementing this responsibility, the supervisor performs administrative, educational and supportive functions in interaction with the supervisee in the context of a positive relationship. The supervisor's ultimate objective is to deliver to agency clients the best possible service, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in accordance with agency policies and procedures. Supervisors do not directly offer service to the client, but they do indirectly affect the level of service offered through their impact on the direct service provider. (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014, p. 11)

This definition set social work supervision firmly in the organisational context by referring to elements such as delegated authority, job performance, agency, and service providers. Additionally, it referred to licensure which, at the time of this study, did not exist in Australia (Cooper, 2006; Egan, 2012a; May & Stanfield, 2010).

Clinical supervision is a popular term and form of supervision. It stems predominantly from psychology and psychotherapy fields. It may feature in social work because of the presence of social workers in those fields and the nature of some social work practice, such as, counselling. There was an array of literature on clinical supervision and the amount of clinical supervision studies far exceeded those specific to social work supervision (for example, Bernard, 2006; Bogo & McKnight, 2006; Caras & Sandu, 2013; Collins-Camargo & Millar, 2010; Dill & Bogo, 2009; Giddings et al., 2007; Milne, 2007; Munson, 2002; Pack, 2009, 2011; Spence et al., 2001).

Based on decades of focus on clinical supervision in social work, Munson (1975, 1981, 2002) provided the following definition of *clinical social work supervision* which had similar elements to the definition of Kadushin and Harkness (2014), such as reference to an organisational environment and functional elements;

> an interactional process in which a supervisor has been assigned or designated to assist in and direct the practice of supervisees in the areas of teaching, administration, and helping. The supervisees are graduates of accredited schools of social work who are engaged in practice that assists people to overcome physical, financial, social, or psychological disruptions in functioning through individual, group, or family intervention methods. (Munson, 2002, p. 10)

The development and use of clinical supervision as a response to *clinical social work practice* had a therapeutic focus. We cannot conclude a sufficiently clear distinction exists between

clinical supervision and what might be referred to as social work supervision because they have commonalities, such as, reflection, client-focus, and clinical-oriented elements. Regardless of the chief place of clinical supervision in other disciplines, a complete separation would be questionable because of the similarities in practice focus and the prevalence of social workers in fields where clinical supervision happens. Additionally, many social workers use the term *clinical supervision* to describe the supervision they attend and provide. However, caution should be paid to the overlap.

The influence of psychotherapy and psychological theories and models in clinical supervision may divert social workers' supervision conversations and thinking away from important distinguishing elements of social work, such as, structural and critical perspectives (Fook & Gardner, 2007; Noble et al., 2016) and social justice (Gentile et al., 2009; Hair, 2015). It may redefine the intent and scope of social work supervision and, thus, affect the development of well-rounded social workers who are capable of working at micro, meso, and macro levels and politically (Adamson, 2012). That is, social workers who can respond to not just the needs and rights of clients but also the organisation, profession, and broader community. When describing *critical supervision*, Noble et al. (2016) emphasised the benefit of developing criticality through applying core critical concepts in transformative learning processes to create "'big picture' practitioners who see and consider the surrounding contexts of their practice" (p. 149). They described critical supervision as "a combination of questioning and analysis – before, in, and after practice moments… underpinned by critical theory, facilitated by critical thinking, reflection, and questioning, and has a primary focus on improvements to practice to benefit service users" (p. 143).

The definition of *professional supervision* used to inform this study was provided by Davys and Beddoe (2010). It was also the definition used by the Australian Association of Social

Workers at the time of this study (2014). This definition includes organisational policy and procedure referred to by Kadushin and Harkness (2014) but is broader in terms of scope for social work supervision to occur within or outside an organisation and the role or functions of the supervisor. Given the importance of criticality and social justice to social work practice and highlighted in the literature review, the fundamental practice elements of this definition were considered within the widest possible scope of contexts;

> … a forum for reflection and learning... an interactive dialogue between at least two people, one of whom is a supervisor. This dialogue shapes a process of review, reflection, critique and replenishment for professional practitioners. Supervision is a professional activity in which practitioners are engaged throughout the duration of their careers regardless of experience or qualification. The participants are accountable to professional standards and defined competencies and to organisational policy and procedures. (Davys & Beddoe, 2010, p. 21)

Supervision Models, Frameworks, and Typologies

In addition to definitions, there are other efforts to encapsulate supervision and its purported functions, processes, and benefits into models, frameworks or typologies. For some, they may simplify and make-practical the range of ideas posited about supervision and its practice. Table 2.1 provides some examples from across decades. Some are function-driven (Kadushin, 1993; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Mor Barak et al., 2009; Proctor, 1987) and others are process-driven (Stoltenberg, 2005; Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987) and influenced by theories and models related to experiential, reflective, and organisational learning (for example, Kolb, 1984; Schön, 1983). There is some commonality around connectedness, such as, interrelationship, interdependency, and integration (Morrison, 2005; O'Donoghue et al., 2018; Rankine, 2017b). A number combine one or more of those elements and are consistent with

the breadth of social work with inclusion of contexts and systems and recognition of the worlds surrounding clients, supervisees, and organisations (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012; Rankine, 2017b; Shulman, 1993, 2010).

Detailed discussion about the models and frameworks is beyond the scope of this review. However, some are referred to throughout this chapter when discussing different elements of supervision practice and they helped with data analysis. For this study, it was difficult to determine greater applicability of one over another. The same challenge most likely exists in supervision practice, where supervisors use models as a guide, and in hybrid form, as they adapt to individual supervisees. Notwithstanding the useability of elements of most models, those with developmental and interactional elements (with emphasis on relationship and context) were significant for this study given its focus on supervisor development.

Table 2.1:

Supervision Models, Frameworks, and Typologies (examples)

Title/Descriptor	Core elements	Authors
Three Functions of Supervision	Administrative, educational, and supportive.	Kadushin (1976, 1993); Kadushin and Harkness (2014)
Three-Function Interactive Model	Formative, normative, restorative.	Proctor (1987)
Reflective Learning Model	Combines the closely related ideas of reflective practice and adult learning in a four-stage cycle: event, exploration, experimentation, evaluation.	Davys (2001); Davys and Beddoe (2010)
Integrated Developmental Model	Four levels of supervisee development: 1. beginner and self-focus; 2. client-focus; 3. balancing self-other awareness and reflection and knowledge use in practice; and the fourth level, 3i. continuing development and integration across practice domains.	Stoltenberg and Delworth (1987); Stoltenberg (2005)
Systems Approach to Supervision (SAS) Model	Interrelationship and mutual influence of seven dimensions. Core or central dimension: relationship of supervision. Six other dimensions: supervisor, supervisee, client, organisation, supervisor functions, learning tasks.	Holloway (1995); Holloway (2016)
Integrated Model of Supervision (4x4x4 model)	Integration of functions, stakeholders, and processes: Four functions (management, support, development, mediation); four stakeholders (people who use services, staff, the organisation, partner organisations); four elements of the supervision cycle (experience, reflection, analysis, action planning).	Morrison (2005); Wonnacott and Morrison (2014)
Seven-eyed Model of Supervision	Relational and systemic model with seven areas of focus: The client and what and how they present; strategies and interventions used by the supervisee; relationship between	Hawkins and Shohet (2006, 2012)

	client and supervisee; the supervisee; supervisory relationship; the supervisor and their own process; wider contexts in which the work happens.	
CLEAR Supervision Model	Contract; Listen; Explore; Action; Review.	Hawkins and Smith (2006)
Basic Model of Clinical Supervision	Contextual variables (moderators); interventions (mediators); treatment outcomes (mechanisms of change).	Milne et al. (2008)
Typology of Three Supervisory Dimensions	Task assistance, social and emotional support, supervisory interpersonal interaction.	Mor Barak et al. (2009)
Interactional Supervision	Centred on the supervisor–supervisee relationship and the mediating role of the supervisor; between supervisee and systems and between supervisee and subject	Shulman (2010)
Critical Supervision	Use of critical theories and perspectives, critical pedagogy, and transformative practice. Four-step process: context description, critical reflection, critical analysis, critical practice.	Noble et al. (2016)
Four-Layered Practice Model of Reflective Supervision	Interrelationship between: social worker (self and role); organisation; relationships with others; socio-political and socio-cultural contexts.	Rankine (2017a, 2017b)
Evidence-informed Model of Supervision	Dynamic interrelationship between: Construction of supervision; supervision of practitioner; supervision relationship or alliance; interactional process; supervision of practice.	O'Donoghue et al. (2018)

Contexts of Social Work Supervision

Social, political, and economic factors are always present in social work by virtue of its focus. However, in contemporary times, their significance and intersection in supervision practice has increased due to "ongoing tensions about the role of supervision and the balance of its functions as the profession responds to the impacts of neo-liberalism on practice" (Beddoe et al., 2016, p. 16). They compound existing challenges in focusing supervision on practitioner development and social work values, and maintaining commitment to the foundations of social work supervision (Adamson, 2012; Egan, 2012a; Goddard & Hunt, 2011; Harlow, 2013; King et al., 2016; May & Stanfield, 2010; Noble & Irwin, 2009; Schmidt & Kariuki, 2019; Tsui, 1997). This can influence, for example, favouring of certain supervision functions over others, such as, managerial more than supportive functions (Egan et al., 2018; King et al., 2016), directive over reflective styles (Lawlor, 2013), and the tension that Ingram (2013) referred to "between technicist approaches and relationship-based approaches" (p. 17).

Further challenges to the integrity of social work supervision may come from the increasing number of managers and supervisors in organisations who are not social workers. This could be fuelled by misunderstandings and devaluing of professional supervision, changing workforce composition that is more inclusive of experience and qualifications from outside the human services, and cost-cutting exercises at the demise of practice (Baines et al., 2014; Hughes & Wearing, 2013; Saltiel, 2017; Shulman, 2020; Tsui et al., 2017; Vito, 2015). In case study research with front-line workers in not-for-profit agencies in Canada, Australia, Scotland, and New Zealand, Baines et al. (2014) concluded that, "workplace identities of workers and managers became conflicted and a site of struggle as NPM [New Public

Management] models of work organisation restructured work in such a way that social justice and care content were reduced or removed" (p. 446).

The prevalence of managerialism in human services has influenced a greater focus on accountabilities, performance, and risk aversion in organisations (Bruce & Austin, 2001; Evans, 2012; Hair, 2014; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997; Noble & Irwin, 2009; O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2012b; Rankine, 2019a) in which many have commandeered supervision for surveillance and managing performance concerns (Kadushin, 1991; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Wilkins et al., 2017). Within a supervision functions framework, the result is suggested to be greater emphasis on administrative or managerial functions of supervision and less on support, development, and education (Egan, 2012a; Egan et al., 2018; Ingram, 2013; King et al., 2016; McFadden et al., 2015; Pack, 2009, 2011; Tsui, 1997).

Dill and Bogo (2009) identified factors at organisational, supervisory, and practice levels that influenced supervision and suggested, "an organization primarily concerned with risk-assessment appears to foster an administratively focused model of supervision and practice while an organizational culture of continuous learning may foster a collaborative approach in supervision and practice" (p. 101). The former approach may contribute to inadequate attention to power and authority – within and outside supervision sessions – and the behaviour of supervisors who adopt authoritative styles of supervision as means of surveillance and scrutiny may be replicated in supervisees' practice with clients (Dill & Bogo, 2009) and their supervision of others.

As an adjunct to a Canadian study that explored use of self in social work practice, Vito (2015) reported on further analysis of the subtheme of supervision that covered social workers' self-reflection, supervisory, and leadership support. Once broken down further, two themes were identified; "the challenges of organizational pressures and power differentials;

and the vital role of social work leaders in modelling values and creating a safe organizational culture" (Vito, 2015, p. 156). This speaks to the importance of supervisors being skilled in and supporting navigation of complicated organisational and surrounding environments and, in their educative role, being role models in the organisation. Shulman (2014) referred to the organisation as a "second client" which extended the practitioner's role to mediating between agency and client (p. 14). He applied the same understanding to his interactional supervision model which positioned the supervisor as mediator, "between the supervisee and the systems (i.e., the client, the agency, or setting, and external professionals and systems)" (Shulman, 2020, p. 6).

Some researchers suggested that organisational demands could redirect supervision approaches and content away from practitioner and client outcomes (Dill, 2007; Dill & Bogo, 2009; Egan, 2012a; May & Stanfield, 2010) and heighten emphasis on agency-driven priorities and models (Chiller & Crisp, 2012; Crocket et al., 2007; Giddings et al., 2007). An example was "defensive organisation demands" (Goddard & Hunt, 2011, p. 425), especially around risk aversion and management, and organisational development or change that compounds the usual state of flux in human services (Gibbs, 2009). Social work supervision has been promoted as a means to explore practitioners' uncertainties about their work, with a view to understanding, responding to, and managing them in practice (Gibbs, 2009; Morrison, 2005; Munro, 2008). In organisations where risk is a central concern, such discussions may be intentionally avoided so that risks are not identified and practice is not exposed (Beddoe, 2010; Gibbs, 2009; Munro, 2008, 2011). This avoidance may inevitably be an additional risk in itself. There was general agreement that supervision that uses reflection and promotes reflective practice is most needed at those very times, so that challenges can be navigated and managed (Collins-Camargo & Kelly, 2007; Dill & Bogo, 2009; Gibbs, 2009; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997; Lietz, 2009; Morrison, 2005), feelings can be acknowledged and

explored (Gibbs, 2009), contributing factors in surrounding contexts and systems can be examined, and social justice can be brought to the fore (Baines et al., 2014; Hair, 2015; Rankine, 2017a, 2017b).

Supervisee participants in some studies concurred about organisational concerns such as, collective defensive strategies, organisational cultures lacking sensitivity and a learning focus, and availability of safe opportunities to explore complexities and challenges (Crocket et al., 2007; Gibbs, 2009; Pack, 2012). Other examples of organisational features that affected, and often impeded, their supervision included inadequate or erratic access to supervision, inconsistent guidelines, insufficient organisational support (Kavanagh et al., 2003), competing organisational demands, resource constraints, time and workload pressures, and competing managerial and clinical discourses (Darlington et al., 2002; Pack, 2011; Rankine, 2017b; Scott & Farrow, 1993).

From the supervisor perspective, participants in some studies had the same concerns and imperatives. They also noted other challenges as supervisors, such as, worker defensiveness (Darlington et al., 2002; Gibbs, 2009), supervisee avoidance strategies around practice, and supervisee anxiety about exposure and exploration of feelings (Gibbs, 2009). Some were also concerned about shortfalls in supervisor training, especially adequate time and resources, follow up support, and the need to learn how to operate in dual manager-supervisor roles (Egan, 2012a; Kavanagh et al., 2003; Pack, 2011; Wong, 2014).

Management and Leadership

It was important to define management and leadership for this study. This was especially relevant because of findings from other studies about the prevalence and challenges of dual manager-supervisor roles, the importance of leadership and modelling, and the impact of managerialism across human services. Detailed exploration of the history and mix of ideas about management and leadership was not possible within the space for this literature review. Management and leadership are longstanding arenas of study and practice. With roots in business and industry, a raft of management and leadership models and approaches have developed over time. Simultaneously, there has been emphasis on dedicated social work management and leadership, albeit mostly in the United Sates until recent decades. Social work values, principles, models, and approaches have been the foundation for critiquing, replacing, or merging with notions of management and leadership from other disciplines (Austin, 2018; Fisher, 2009; Perlmutter, 2006; Ruch, 2012; Ward & Bailey, 2016; Webster et al., 2015; Wimpfheimer, 2004). Social work leadership and management are often conflated, for example, when described as a *scope of practice* by the Australian Association of Social Workers (2016).

The definitions posed for this study characterise management and leadership as separate concepts. However, coupled with professional supervision, the interrelationships between three different, yet related, practices were important to this study. Each definition had potential to be used both separately and in unison with others to inform data analysis. For definitional purposes, in very basic terms, the distinction between the two is that management is task-centred and leadership is person-centred. They are not necessarily separate in practice or represented by different people. A manager might integrate leadership into their approach and synergistically "achieve a balance between task-centred and person-centred leading and

managing that focuses simultaneously on meeting targets and managing performance whilst valuing individuals and team's contributions" (Ward & Bailey, 2016, p. 282).

Managers focus on maintaining links between how their organisation, service, or team functions to achieve organisational goals. Their role involves "everyday activities, tasks, and routines that are necessary for an organization to remain viable and function smoothly" (Sullivan, 2016, p. 52). Examples include, recruitment, supervision, resource allocation, financial management, overseeing information management systems, reporting on team and service activities (Hughes & Wearing, 2013), monitoring and working towards organisational performance (Shepherd, 2018), supporting policy implementation, planning, and evaluating (Austin, 2018; Wimpfheimer, 2004). Shepherd (2018) described a process of managing as, "define the problem, gather relevant data, develop possible solutions, evaluate them and decide on the best course of action" (p. 1673). The type, amount, and extent of manager activities would vary across organisations; a manager may supervise day-to-day activities and manage workload but not provide professional or practice supervision and might have varying involvement in financial management and related decisions.

Leaders are often linked with "motivation and organizational innovation" (Fisher, 2009, p. 347) and roles such as, "boundary spanner, innovator, organizer, and team builder/leader" (Menefee, 2009, as cited in, Austin, 2018, p. 576). Holosko (2009) conducted a literature review and content analysis of 70 journals in which social workers regularly published. The following five "core leadership attributes" were identified and the researcher proposed a definition for each;

1. *Vision*

   Having one: To have a description of a desired condition at some point in the future

   Implementing one: To plan and put in place strategic steps to enact the vision

2. *Influencing others to act:* To inspire and enable others to take initiative, have a belief in a cause and to perform duties and responsibilities

3. *Teamwork/collaboration:* To work collectively and in partnership with others toward achieving a goal

4. *Problem-solving capacity:* To both anticipate problems and also act decisively on them when they occur

5. *Creating positive change:* Moving people in organizations to a better place than where they once were (Holosko, 2009, p. 454).

Managers and leaders are both often considered to be employees with higher levels of delegated authority. This may be truer for managers because they usually have an assigned position in an organisation. In relation to leaders and leadership, contemporary analyses and models suggest that confinement to the upper echelons of an organisation could be limiting. Rather, leadership is promoted as a set of skills or capabilities that can be adopted by anyone at any level of an organisation at any time;

> …there is less emphasis on formal authority and control and more on collective action and commitment to the values and vision of the organization. The onus of crafting and articulating this vision and translating this vision into actual behaviors that lead to goal accomplishment falls to leaders and followers alike. (Sullivan, 2016, p. 53)

Such perspectives are consistent with management and leadership informed by social work values and how they are enacted, including collaborative and participatory practice principles. Two examples suggested by Sullivan (2016) were collective leadership and client-

centred leadership that may borrow, but have distinct features, from models not specifically designed for human services. For example, distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000), which prompted "the abandonment of fixed leader–follower dualisms in favour of the possibility of multiple, emergent, task-focused roles" (p. 325). Like other shared and collaborative models, this was an example of shifting from individualistic leadership constructs that promote superior and heroic leaders, into greater emphasis on context, relationship, process, and group rather than individual action (Bolden, 2011; Gronn, 2000) which also provides a "counterbalance to managerialism, with its emphasis on routinisation and de-professionalisation" (Hughes & Wearing, 2013, p. 122).

Dual, Interprofessional, and External Supervision

An apparent by-product of the shifts in internal and external organisational environments that were discussed previously is the proliferation of supervision arrangements beyond one supervisor or manager for all supervision purposes. There is contention and debate about the separation or integration of functions and elements, especially managerial and educational; sometimes framed as organisational supervision and professional supervision. Some suggest they are incompatible (Erera & Lazar, 1995), that they may get disproportionate attention (Bradley et al., 2010), and that separation is *ideal* (Beddoe, 2012). Such views informed the popular separation of line managers and supervisors within organisations – the former focused on accountabilities to the organisation and the latter on the supervisee and practice – as well as promotion of external supervision arrangements with a similar division (Beddoe, 2012).

Dual supervision – where a supervisee has a manager and a supervisor – is probably the longer standing alternative arrangement, especially in health settings. Increasingly, interprofessional supervision is also an internal feature of organisations, for example, a social

worker supervised by a nurse, psychologist, or someone with qualifications outside the human services, such as, banking or business. The influence of a managerialist agenda is apparent in recruitment from outside human services, and where (for example) reduced funding is managed via re-designed roles, responsibilities, and reporting structures. Such an agenda narrows or erases internal opportunities for same-discipline supervision. As a remedy, the stepping-out to external arrangements seems increasingly common, not just to formal external supervision but also seeking professional wisdom and practice advice *outside* from colleagues and others, in what King et al. (2016) referred to as *self-managed supervision*.

One Australian study in 2007 found most social workers were supervised by line managers or clinical supervisors within their organisation and almost one third accessed external supervision alongside their internal supervision (Egan, 2012a). Other researchers noted a steady increase in social workers using external supervision and participants cited benefits, such as, supervisor neutrality, greater opportunity to explore ethical dilemmas, a reduced sense of surveillance and need to fit with agency expectations (Beddoe, 2010, 2012; Harvey & Henderson, 2014), and maintaining professional identity and commitment (Rankine, 2017b).

There has been debate about separation of different types and functions of supervision and separate responsibilities allocated to different supervisors and spaces (Beddoe, 2012; Egan, 2012a; Itzhaky, 2001; Pack, 2009; Ung, 2002; Wong & Lee, 2015). Such debates are similar to those around dual roles for line managers in organisations to provide practice or clinical supervision as well as managerial or administrative supervision (Cooper, 2006; Dill & Bogo, 2009; Egan, 2012a; Kavanagh et al., 2008; O'Donoghue, 2010; Robinson, 2014). Pack's (2012) study in NZ with supervision pairs in individual interviews identified "tension points" between clinical and managerial supervision, which "coalesce around various ethical

dilemmas involving risk management, training, performance appraisal and organisational objectives" (p. 170). Focus group participants in a USA study about clinical supervision in child welfare (Dill & Bogo, 2009) noted supervisors' propensity to favour administrative over clinical functions, and new supervisors said their focus was entirely on administrative requirements. The researchers posited that the findings could relate to "diminished capacity and understanding of how to integrate clinical practice issues into child welfare supervision within the context of comprehensive issues and bureaucratic demands" (p. 99). They cautioned that, left unattended, this could be carried forward by subsequent supervisors because, as workers, they were not "able to integrate social work values, knowledge, and clinical skills with the unique aspects of child welfare" (p. 99).

Separating administrative and clinical practice focus, or using external arrangements, may enable practitioners to focus on what they do with clients, how practice is informed, and their use of self in practice. However, it may be problematical if direct connections with organisational expectations are not made, from either dual or external supervision (Beddoe, 2012; Pack, 2011; Ung, 2002) or self-managed supervision supported by collegial wisdom and advice outside the organisation (King et al., 2016). In turn, there may be "considerable disconnect and a lack of communication and accountability" (Beddoe & Davys, 2016, p. 113) and the organisation may not know about professional development needs identified elsewhere (Wonnacott & Morrison, 2014). Patterson (2019) concurred about some "risk of splitting" and added that if support and management supervision were "de-coupled" an organisation could fail to "provide effective containment for work that is, of necessity, emotion-laden and challenging" (Patterson, 2019, p. 51). In sum, the separation has potential to draw supervisors and supervisees away from practice development and to serve the interests of the organisation, rather than the needs and rights of clients or service users which

necessitate professionally confident and competent practitioners (Gibbs, 2009; Giddings et al., 2007; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997; Morrison, 2005).

The Practice of Social Work Supervision

> Through professional supervision, practitioners engage in a relationship with a supervisor enabling both a place and space to refine and develop professional identity, knowledge and skills and for reflectively examining the challenges faced in everyday practice. (Karvinen-Niinikoski et al., 2019, p. 87)

Supervision has been increasingly promoted as a form or domain of social work practice (Brashears, 1995; Bruce & Austin, 2001; London & Chester, 2000; Munson, 2002; O'Donoghue et al., 2018). London and Chester (2000) posited supervision as "a theory and a skill in its own right, and not just an extension of therapy" (p. 48) and when O'Donoghue et al. (2018) extrapolated a model of social work supervision based on their review of research evidence, they noted that supervision is "imbued with social work processes and values such as the clarification of role, responsibilities and duty of care, relational and reflective processes and a concern with enhancing the well-being of people" (p. 354).

Most supervision research gathered data from supervisees who worked with clients or people who access services or programs and the findings were based on retrospective accounts of their supervision experiences. Although those supervisees were not the focus of this research, findings from studies about their experiences and expectations were relevant in at least two ways. They could parallel what supervisors might expect and experience in their own supervision, and they could provide a knowledge base to inform supervisors' development and their approach to supervision of others. Although this was based on an assumption that supervisees have similar expectations of supervision whether they are working with clients or

supervising others, it was a starting point given the limited research on supervisors-as-supervisees.

Supervision Experience and Relationship

A popular notion across studies was how practitioners' past supervision experiences informed how they participated in, used, and provided supervision. Those supervision histories appeared integral to constructing individual approaches to supervision – both as supervisor and supervisee – and the supervision relationship was central to their descriptions (Gibbs, 2009; Morrison, 2005; O'Donoghue, 2012; O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2012a).

The supervisory relationship as a determinant of supervision quality was a common focus in supervision research (Gibbs, 2001; Kavanagh et al., 2003; McPherson et al., 2016; Pack, 2011) and it appeared as an influencing factor on the depth and breadth of supervision conversations. Researchers identified supervisor qualities and skills for facilitating supervision that were considered unhelpful, sometimes harmful, for supervisees, as well as those that worked for supervisees (London & Chester, 2000), which Pack (2011) summed up as supervisors "fostering a high quality of relating" (p. 52).

Findings from various studies indicated that valued relationship qualities and characteristics included behaviours such as rapport, trust, safety, and communication (Crocket et al., 2007; London & Chester, 2000; McPherson et al., 2016; Pack, 2012), accessibility, empathy, and praise (also aligned with job retention and satisfaction) (Bruce & Austin, 2001; Kavanagh et al., 2003), explicit focus on differences around power and other social dimensions, such as, gender and culture (Dill & Bogo, 2009; McPherson et al., 2016; Pack, 2011), and regular, reciprocal, and balanced feedback (Pack, 2012).

In terms of unhelpful relationship factors, supervisees identified supervisor unavailability, cancellations, and interruptions (Kavanagh et al., 2003; London & Chester, 2000; Scott & Farrow, 1993), insufficient time for reflection, aggressive responses and blaming, not being acknowledged or praised, messages that not coping indicated weakness (Gibbs, 2009), and supervision as surveillance rather than support (Ruch, 2007b).

One example of the influence of relationship dynamics on supervision was collusion, described as, "complementary safety behaviours that serve to conveniently avoid and escape from difficult topics and challenging supervision methods" which are replaced with reassurance and comforting that supersedes an individual's needs over the supervision (Milne et al., 2009, p. 107). Based on findings from audio recordings of child protection practice conversations, Saltiel (2017) identified potential for serious practice mistakes to be unchallenged when some new manager participants were "only interrogating [supervisees] when it became necessary because concerns had been raised by other professionals and then framing the challenge in the least uncomfortable way" (p. 13). In a study with supervision pairs, Mangione et al. (2011) noted a lack of deep engagement in "questions of relationship, power, status, and roles, unless there was a conflict" (p. 156).

The complicated nature, yet central position, of power extends to language in supervision. Terms such as *supervisor, supervisee,* and *supervision* contribute to assumptions about differences in power, authority, and expertise in supervision relationships. Common pairing with terms such as *providing* and *receiving* supervision, also implies *power over* rather than *power with* and potentially create a starting position that the supervisor has more power. This may compound challenges that already exist in supervision practice, with assumptions that the supervisor is more knowledgeable and skilled than the supervisee and that negotiation may not be possible (Bernard, 2006). Further, some critiques of the models and frameworks

discussed previously note concern about positioning the supervisor as the only expert in the relationship and, as Carrington (2004) noted, they imply "that supervision is a one-way learning process with knowledge and skills being passed through the profession in a linear fashion" (p. 33).

There have been some attempts to address power differences in language terms, such as using alternative titles or adding supervision *type* descriptors (see definitions section) or referring to supervision as *consultation*, *co-supervision*, or similar. Theoretical literature has focused less on terms and more on process, commonly attending to power dynamics in supervision sessions and supervisors' use of authority (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997; Morrison, 2005; Munson, 2002). This includes the influence on supervisees' willingness to engage in supervision in the first place and on exploring what might be considered vulnerabilities in supervision, such as practice challenges and uncertainties. Based on a study about how participants defined clinical supervision (CS), Pack (2012) concluded that, "power differences in the status and experience of supervisors and supervisees in CS needs to be clearly negotiated and articulated in a supervision contract at the outset of the relationship" (p. 178). Other suggestions were to value shared learning, dialogue, and co-constructed conversations (Hair, 2013) that open learning up to both supervisor and supervisee – as "learning partners" (Carroll, 2009, p. 210). Supervisors can recognise supervisees' existing knowledge and build learning from that basis, and learn more than just how to supervise as they expand knowledge and gain insight from supervisees' contributions.

Supervision Sessions

There was limited specific focus on supervision sessions in supervision research, especially observation of live sessions. Where supervision sessions were observed (Magnussen, 2018 (group sessions); Wong, 2014 (individual sessions)) or audio recorded for post-session

analysis (Grant et al., 2012; Lichtenberg & Goodyear, 2000; O'Donoghue, 2014; Rankine, 2017b; Wilkins et al., 2017), they were sessions where the supervisee was a client practitioner and the sessions were about work with clients, such as, counselling or casework.

Supervision sessions are a common part of supervision in human services. Fundamentally, in action, supervision sessions are an "interactive conversational exchange" (O'Donoghue, 2014, p. 64) or "individual conference" (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014, p. 102) that lasts between 1 and 1.5 hours. They can be key events and, if combined effectively over time, may be a "systematic supervisee development package [of] teaching, modelling, rehearsal, and corrective feedback" (Milne et al., 2008, p. 183). As such, they may represent developmental milestones that reflect practitioner development.

There was reasonable consistency across studies in supervisees' descriptions of activities that happened in supervision sessions. They included:

- a supervision contract or agreement
- structure or defined process for supervision sessions
- support, evaluation, feedback and praise
- discussion and problem solving
- teaching, skill introduction and development, and providing ideas
- direct observation, modelling skills (especially task skills)
- audio visual aids and supplementing face-to-face supervision with electronic methods (Kavanagh et al., 2003; Kavanagh et al., 2008; London & Chester, 2000; O'Donoghue, 2014; Spence et al., 2001).

The amount of time that practitioners had been in practice was a suggested influencer of supervisees' expectations of sessions. For example, some studies found that less experienced

supervisees sought teaching of new skills, observation, and more direct guidance (Collins-Camargo & Royse, 2010; Hawkins & Shohet, 2012; Kavanagh et al., 2003).

Supervision agreements or contracts were common in some supervision research (Egan, 2012a; Kavanagh et al., 2003; O'Donoghue, 2014) and have been generally accepted as a foundation for supervision relationships and conversations (Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997; Lawlor, 2013; Morrison, 2005). There were however variations in research participants' descriptions of the existence and use of agreements in supervision, the extent of their specificity or individuality, and if or when they were reviewed.

In terms of structure and process, Kadushin and Harkness (2014) suggested three phases of a supervision session; the *beginning* where supervision is structured, scheduled and the meeting prepared, the *middle* where teaching and feedback occur, and the *end* where the session is closed and future meetings are planned. Similarly, Shulman (2010) suggested four stages with similar emphasis; preliminary, beginning, middle, and ending and transition. In a study where 34 supervisors and supervisees were interviewed about their experiences of supervision sessions, O'Donoghue (2014) confirmed a process and ritual was used in sessions and proposed a non-prescriptive *map* to guide and review sessions, comprised of preparing, beginning, planning, working, and ending; with both supervisor and supervisee phases.

Regarding topics covered in supervision sessions, supervisees' expectations related mostly to practice, including conceptualisation of issues and problems confronted by clients, understanding clients better, and developing strategies for client work (Kavanagh et al., 2003; London & Chester, 2000), and others reported that they talked about complex and challenging cases, supervisee concerns, and ethical issues (O'Donoghue, 2014). Researchers noted differences in the prevalence of discussing links between theory, research, and practice

in supervision. Some indicated it featured to varying degrees (Hensley 2002, as cited in Bogo & McKnight, 2006; Darlington et al., 2002), and recent reviews of supervision research indicated more theoretical focus was needed (O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2015). One explanation for this was task-orientation rather, or more, than process-orientation, and greater emphasis in-session on administrative or managerial functions over supportive, developmental and educative supervision functions (Gibbs, 2009; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997; London & Chester, 2000). This might be driven by organisational demands and restrictions discussed previously, but could also be related to supervisors' comfort, opportunity, knowledge, and skill in supporting and facilitating supervisees' reflection and analysis to establish and apply theoretical and research knowledge.

Supervisor Knowledge and Skills

> Skilled supervisors are responsible for the protection of clients, for the advancement of social work practice, and for the professional development of the individual worker. In the complex environments in which social workers function, the supervisor must work effectively on many different levels, often simultaneously. (Shulman, 2020, p. 2)

Research that identified supervisor knowledge and skills was included in this review to determine what might inform supervisor development, in supervisors' own supervision sessions or elsewhere. A major influence on identifying supervisor knowledge and skills is the variety and extent of other (sub)roles that supervisors occupy. Supervision authors and researchers have suggested that within the primary role of supervisor, other roles could include, supporter, consultant, trainer, teacher, colleague, coach, mentor, and advocate (Carroll, 2010; Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Grant et al., 2012; Johnson & Stewart, 2008; McPherson et al., 2016; Tsui et al., 2017; Ungar, 2006). Shulman (1993) added mediator, as part of interactional supervision, wherein the supervisor mediates between the supervisee and

systems and, as part of their educator role, "between the supervisee and the subject (i.e., assessment and practice knowledge, intervention skills, and so forth)" (Shulman, 2020, p. 6). Other supervision authors also added mediation as a function alongside Kadushin's administrative, educational, and supportive functions (Kadushin, 1993; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014) to denote the supervisor mediating between the supervisee and their organisation and the respective expectations, as well as advocating for supervisees with the organisation for (as examples) acknowledgement, resources, and opportunities (Morrison, 2005; Richards et al., 1990).

Based on a best evidence synthesis of 11 quantitative studies on clinical supervision training, Milne et al. (2011) provided a helpful grouping of supervisor knowledge and skills based on data from 145 supervisors who were training participants. The researchers surmised four areas of competency as:

- Skill acquisition and behavioural change (e.g., adjusting to supervisees' needs)
- Knowledge (e.g., increase in theoretical and conceptual knowledge)
- Generalisation of skills (e.g., from simulated to clinical settings); and
- Supervisees' satisfaction (e.g., increase in confidence, sense of independence) (Milne et al., 2011, p. 61).

Watkins Jr (2012) suggested six supervisor competencies that were considered to be internationally relevant. Although the focus was on psychotherapy supervision, there was some consistency with those above, especially around supervision knowledge and responsiveness to supervisees. Watkins Jr (2012) proposed knowledge and skills related to:

- Supervision models, methods, and intervention;
- Attending to matters of ethical, legal, and professional concern;
- Managing supervision relationship processes;
- Supervisory assessment and evaluation;
- Fostering attention to difference and diversity; and,
- Openness and use of a self-reflective, self-assessment stance in supervision.

More specifically, from a variety of studies that included and extended beyond a training focus, researchers proposed a range of supervisor knowledge, skills, and styles. Those findings could be a good guide for supervisor development. In practical terms, participants valued supervisors who were reliable, available, and committed to scheduled sessions (Mor Barak et al., 2009; Wilkins, 2019). Dedication to, and respect for, supervisees was important and included characteristics and skills such as, being empathic and well-regulated (McPherson et al., 2016), human, genuine, honest, and transparent (Kemer et al., 2014), personally and interpersonally sensitive (O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2012a), and able to provide emotional, affective, and learning support (Bogo & McKnight, 2006; Mangione et al., 2011; Mor Barak et al., 2009). Some also thought there should be at least some alignment with the supervisee's perspectives and expectations (Bogo & McKnight, 2006). Encouragement of professional growth was important (Bogo & McKnight, 2006) and some highlighted modelling as vital to support such growth and learning, including how to talk about and use power (Dill & Bogo, 2009; Mangione et al., 2011; Pack, 2011), and techniques for practice and leadership (Bogo & McKnight, 2006; Collins-Camargo & Millar, 2010). This mix of skills and approaches indicated that supervisors need to tailor responses to individual circumstances through "a delicate balance of directive and more subtle approaches" (Borders, 2009, p. 201).

Process-related imperatives were linked to the previous discussion about supervision relationships. They included, supervisors using facilitative and interactive styles (Bogo & McKnight, 2006; Mangione et al., 2011; Mor Barak et al., 2009), reflective and critical thinking techniques (Collins-Camargo & Millar, 2010; Dill & Bogo, 2009; Kemer et al., 2014), confrontive and catalytic techniques (Watkins Jr, 1993), and "conceptual interpretive reasoning" (O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2012a, p. 15). Competence was important in areas such as, balancing the tension between support and challenge (Grant et al., 2012), working with cultural and interprofessional differences (Bruce & Austin, 2001), and understanding, talking about, and managing power differences (Beddoe & Davys, 2016; Dill & Bogo, 2009; Mangione et al., 2011; Pack, 2011).

Other aspects of process and dynamics that were noteworthy for supervisor development were difficulties that supervisor participants described in two studies (Grant et al., 2012; Pack, 2011). The "defining moments" and common "difficult scenarios" that supervisors reported in one study (Pack, 2011) included discussing performance issues, breaking confidentiality, multidisciplinary relationships, and navigating ethical and boundary issues in a supervisee's client relationship. External supervisor participants posed an additional challenge of navigating conflict between the supervisee and their employing organisation. In another study (Grant et al., 2012), expert counselling supervisors identified similar difficulties around supervisee incompetence and unethical behaviour (e.g., inappropriate interventions) and also noted challenges with supervisee characteristics (e.g., defensiveness), supervisor countertransference (e.g., criticalness), and supervisory relationship problems (e.g., transference). The same researchers found four "interventions" were used by the expert supervisor participants; relational, reflective, confrontative, and avoidant. They suggested that a "mix of confidence, authoritativeness, and non-defensiveness is a model for good management of supervisory difficulties" (Grant et al., 2012, p. 539).

Research findings and suggestions about knowledge relevant to supervision – for both content and process purposes – covered the expanse of experiential wisdom (O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2012a) and technical and professional knowledge (Bogo & McKnight, 2006; Bruce & Austin, 2001; Dill & Bogo, 2009; Wilkins, 2019). They indicated that supervisors should have skills to support supervisees to translate knowledge and theory into practice. In a review of supervision research evidence, O'Donoghue and Tsui (2015) found minimal attention paid to theory and theory-practice links in supervision. Similarly, in a UK study with newly qualified social workers, Manthorpe et al. (2013) noted a decline from the first to second year of employment in focus on linking theory and practice explanations in supervision sessions. Other researchers suggested it was important for supervisors to have and apply knowledge about change management, immediate and broader contexts of practice (Bruce & Austin, 2001), and the contemporary practice environment, which included neoliberal challenges for social work (Schmidt & Kariuki, 2019).

It has been suggested that translating knowledge and skills from an intervention context to a supervision context is common (Kavanagh et al., 2008; London & Chester, 2000) although not always directly applicable, and the shift in knowledge and skills could be the focus of supervisor training and development (Saltiel, 2017). An added element is the role of supervisors as educators, facilitators of learning, or learning partners in teaching or developing intervention-related knowledge and skills. Supervisors might use the same knowledge and skills but in a different way, from a different perspective, and for a different purpose, especially to support the supervisee in learning how to use intervention-related knowledge and skills (Brashears, 1995; Shulman, 2010). This distinction implied at least one new or additional area of knowledge and skills for supervisors that encompassed educating, learning, and developing.

Brashears (1995) cautioned against going too broadly into other disciplines' knowledge arenas for social work supervision – such as, education and business management – and suggested a false dichotomy was often constructed between social work practice and social work supervision. Fundamental social work principles and values – such as, social justice, opportunities, participation, self-determination, and environment – were considered directly relevant to social work supervision; "one not need have a therapeutic [clinical] relationship to express respect for all people, to allow full participation of people in the processes that affect them, or to enable the full realization of individual goals to the fullest extent possible" (Brashears, 1995, p. 695).

Some researchers suggested there might be inadequate use of reflective processes in supervision. Reflective processes have been promoted in supervision and practice as means of uncovering assumptions and biases (Fook & Gardner, 2007; Gibbs, 2001, 2009; Munro, 2008) and identifying habitual and routine practices that do not give due consideration to people's uniqueness (Adams et al., 2009). The suggestions of inadequacy in supervision were premised on study participants' responses to research methods that involved reflection (e.g., pre-interview tasks, qualitative questions) (Dill & Bogo, 2009; O'Donoghue, 2014; O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2012a; Osmond & Darlington, 2005; Rankine, 2017b). O'Donoghue (2014) included a critical incident analysis technique in a pre-interview task that described a recent supervision session which participants then unpacked and reflected on during their interview. They said it led to reflection and thinking beyond what usually happened in their practice. In another study that used reflective techniques to explore theoretical knowledge, participants found that "gaps, blind spots, or over-attention to one area became obvious" (Darlington et al., 2002, p. 61). Participants in Rankine's study (2017b), which used a thinking aloud process after recorded supervision sessions, reported that it "assisted in the

stimulation of reflection and development of solutions… [and] was helpful to track their thoughts and identify learning from the issues raised in supervision" (p. 191).

Concurrently, with the knowledge and skills described above, self-focused skills are important for supervisors to provide supervision and develop their expertise. This was another area where there was a notable absence of research in the practice environment. In one USA study (Kemer et al., 2014), researchers used a survey and concept mapping with 44 expert supervisors in counselling to explore supervisors' cognitions and cognitive categories regarding their supervision sessions. Their *expert* status was reflected in inclusion criteria that comprised a doctoral degree, experience in teaching and supervising students and in scholarly activities, and professional recognition as a mentor or contributor. As such, they were not entirely reflective of workplace-based social work supervisors in the practice arena but it provided a helpful starting point to think about what might be strived for as part of social work supervisor development. The researchers reported "a notable characteristic of advanced and expert supervisors' thinking is their self-assessment, self-reflection, and self-evaluation" and that they evaluate their own work "transparently and accurately" to identify strengths and limitations (Kemer et al., 2014, p. 13). One example was their examination of how they reacted internally to supervisees in the supervision relationship.

Becoming and Developing as a Supervisor

> I value this continual self-assessment for myself, not because I am seeking reassurance about my work in a deficit fashion, but as an ethical responsibility to myself and to the people I work with. (Crocket et al., 2007, p. 61)

This section of the literature review presents research that was related to supervisor development and training. It complements the above descriptions of findings about knowledge and skills that were proposed as relevant to supervision practice. As noted

previously, there was limited research specifically about social work supervisors and a dearth of literature and research about how social workers became supervisors (Schmidt & Kariuki, 2019; Spence et al., 2001). As such, again, research beyond but potentially related to social work was accessed.

Social work and other forms of professional supervision are widely promoted as a primary source for development of *client practice*. This research was initiated on the proposition that supervision is practice and that becoming and improving as a supervisor is a developmental process – including an "identity-articulation process" (Watkins Jr, 1993) – that encapsulates growth in knowledge, skill, and self. While not missing "what may be distinctive about supervising the supervisors" (Patterson, 2019, p. 47), supervision practice may be developed in the same way as client practice with varied use of some common knowledge and skills.

Some supervision authors proposed models for supervisor development (for example, Hawkins & Shohet, 2012; Hess, 1986; Watkins Jr, 1993) or manager development (Beddoe & Davys, 2016). They were similar to those for supervisees, such as, the Integrated Developmental Model noted earlier (Stoltenberg, 2005; Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987). As one example, Hess (1986) described three stages:

> *Stage A- beginning,* in which role status changes. The beginner supervisor may have limited knowledge about supervision-specific structure and techniques and they associate more with a senior clinician identity than supervisor. The emphasis with supervisees is on techniques and more concrete aspects of practice and there is an uneasiness with the role, supervisees' responses, and evaluation.
>
> *Stage B- exploration,* where process and the professional significance of supervision come to the fore. The supervisor can discern different standards and quality of sessions and conversations and "the power base shifts from the formal to informal" (p. 62); the latter

involves primary place for the supervisee's agenda and what the supervisor can offer, versus directive answers and evaluating from the supervisor.

Stage C- confirmation of supervisor identity, where supervision is built on trust and confidentiality similar to client work, and the supervisee attends for the "excitement of supervision" (p. 62) rather than for organisational or professional obligations. Relationship is the mode of communicating and there is less overt thinking or worry *about* relationship. Evaluation and process is built-into the process and the supervisor models and captures parallel processes as part of prioritising the supervisee's learning agenda.

A similar developmental model with four stages was proposed by Watkins Jr (1993) for psychotherapy supervisors. It also borrowed from the proposed supervisee developmental models and their related theories and had similar components to the stages in Hess' model. Based on *role*, the four stages proposed by Watkins Jr (1993) were:

Role shock, as entry to the supervisor role, feeling overwhelmed, and relying on existing knowledge and structure.

Role recovery/transition, when supervisor skills and abilities are recognised, supervisors "recover [and] collect themselves" (p. 59) and the supervisor identity evolves.

Role consolidation, features fusion with the supervisor identity and more "openness, competence, and skill vis-a-vis supervision" (p. 59).

Role mastery, where the "highest level of functioning" (p. 59) is achieved and the supervisor has a sense of mastery in identity and skill.

New Supervisors

In a study where social work supervisors in Canada were interviewed about how they transitioned to supervisor, Schmidt and Kariuki (2019) discovered three pathways: *task exposure* – such as acting in and observing the supervisor role and field educator experience – *supervision by happen chance* – such as, immediate demands for someone to fill a supervisor role, usually based on length of experience – and *deliberate decision* – such as, ambition or stimulated interest to become a supervisor.

It also seems to be a commonly accepted practice to select competent practitioners to be supervisors (Gibbs, 2009; Kavanagh et al., 2008; London & Chester, 2000). The assumption that a good practitioner will make a good supervisor has yet to be explored. There are certainly parallels but also marked differences between client and supervision practice. Some studies found that new supervisors and managers experienced challenges in making the transition and navigating the different knowledge and skill base required to supervise practitioners (Dill & Bogo, 2009; Gibbs, 2009; Rapisarda et al., 2011; Saltiel, 2017; Spence et al., 2001). For some, *sink or swim* approaches to supervision orientation and development meant they had not "developed a framework of reflective practice from which to develop supervisory practice" (Gibbs, 2009, p. 295). In another study, participants thought new supervisors should learn about administrative requirements first, suggesting that "they could not integrate the 'clinical pieces of the work' until they felt they had the paperwork 'under their belt'" (Dill & Bogo, 2009, p. 98). Those perspectives and experiences may be determined by the previously discussed organisational expectations and demands – which included the preoccupation with job surveillance and performance – especially when supervisors are new, want to do well and fit in, and think they should have all the answers (Patterson & Whincup, 2018).

There have been some findings about changes in supervisees' experiences when they become supervisors (Bogo & Dill, 2008; Dill & Bogo, 2009; Gibbs, 2009; O'Donoghue, 2012), especially if they are line managers rather than peer or clinical supervisors (Cooper, 2006). Many new supervisors who were also line managers reported that their own supervision (as supervisee) returned to instruction and direction with an emphasis on tasks and managerial accountabilities, "with little or nothing specific to their development… [and] receiving supervision rather than participating in it" (O'Donoghue, 2012, p. 225). This appeared to be influenced by their new supervisor being a more senior manager who had previously been at a distance. In comparison, those who became peer or clinical supervisors did not change their supervisor and, for some, their ongoing supervision incorporated a focus on shifting to the supervisor role.

Sources of Supervisor Learning and Development

The complexity of supervision would suggest that supervisor knowledge and associated skills cannot necessarily be established and developed solely by supervisors on their own. Supervisors have reported learning about supervision in different ways – most of which appeared to be time-limited and more commonly incidental and self-directed. The prominence of self-direction might be heightened by the extensive range of supervision books and literature that present supervisors with an array of choices in supervision skills, approaches, and models to use in their supervision practice, and rely on supervisors to purchase them, read them, and apply their content.

Supervisors commonly reported that they constructed their approach to supervision from their experiences as supervisees (Gibbs, 2001, 2009; O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2012a; Patterson, 2015, 2019) and some referenced their experiences as field educators in student placements (Schmidt & Kariuki, 2019). Findings from interviews with 18 supervisors in a NZ study

suggested use of an integrated framework that was comprised of experiences within supervision, supervisory practice wisdom and approaches, direct practice approaches, style and assessment checklists, and emotional intelligence (O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2012a).

Some studies indicated that supervisors' feelings of confidence and competence might be boosted through combinations of training and other activities. Complementary activities included, peer support, networking, mentoring, action learning (Collins-Camargo & Millar, 2010; Dill & Bogo, 2009; Kaiser & Kuechler, 2008), clinical experience and supervision experience (Atzinger et al., 2014), more supervision content in university courses (especially undergraduate), opportunities to act up and relieve supervisors during absences, organised succession planning (Schmidt & Kariuki, 2019), and supervisors receiving "high quality supervision themselves" (Scott & Farrow, 1993, p. 41). One USA study with supervisors (Collins-Camargo & Millar, 2010) explored a "learning laboratory approach" and focused on the introduction of clinical supervision in four child welfare agencies through "incremental learning over time, rather than [only] traditional intensive training sessions" (p. 183). It involved continuous learning cycles that combined peer consultation with trainers moving between the training room and workplace for in-situ learning. They found it supported supervisors' development which, for some, took up to three years because of the significant change in thinking and practice that was required.

Training was identified as a popular means of supervision development even though findings about its value were scarce and in dispute. In a summary of research on training, Tebes et al. (2011) concluded that little or no supervision training may contribute to "increased supervisor stress and turnover, decreased supervisor work satisfaction, inadequate accountability of supervisees, and an inconsistent or diminished quality of care" (p. 190). Training appeared in supervision research as either a specific study focus (for example, Erera & Lazar, 1993;

Kaiser & Kuechler, 2008; Kavanagh et al., 2008; Tebes et al., 2011; Vinokur-Kaplan, 1987) or as an element where supervisor development was considered (for example, Egan et al., 2018; Hair, 2013; Kadushin, 1993). Some other articles described and reflected on training programs that the authors had provided. They were evaluative rather than empirical research and helped to establish some ideas about what supervisor development and training might entail (Ford, 2017; Lietz & Rounds, 2009; Patterson & Whincup, 2018).

Some supervisor participants in studies reported that they participated in training courses that were usually one-off or limited (Egan, 2012a; Egan et al., 2018; Kavanagh et al., 2008; Patterson & Whincup, 2018; Pilcher, 1984; Scott & Farrow, 1993). Differences in New Zealand were acknowledged where training requirements were part of registration (O'Donoghue et al., 2005). There were conflicting researcher views about the usefulness or effectiveness of training and if it resulted in good supervision practice. Similarly, “no apparent consensus exists on what constitutes effective supervisor training” (Milne et al., 2011, p. 54) or the best outcome measures to assess supervisor competency, with divisions between client outcomes and supervisee development (Kavanagh et al., 2008; Milne et al., 2011; Spence et al., 2001).

Some studies revealed that not all supervisors participated in training, mostly because it was not always available for them or time and resources did not allow. Where training did occur, it was often for relatively short periods (e.g., 12 hours or less) and during the initial stages of becoming a supervisor, which some suggested was after, not before, they had started in the supervisor role (Atzinger et al., 2014; Ausbrooks, 2010). It was also noted that training was often conducted with groups of supervisors with mixed experience; across the range of new supervisors (perhaps without supervisees yet) through to seasoned supervisors (Patterson, 2019). Training methods and activities varied, with most using a mixed approach, such as,

didactic presentation, discussion, case studies or scenarios, skills practice, and demonstrations (Kavanagh et al., 2008), and readings, videotapes, role plays, and participants' own case material (Kaiser & Kuechler, 2008). From their review of 11 studies on clinical supervision training, Milne et al. (2011) identified 15 different educational methods – 11 of which were also aligned with methods used in supervision – and the more common methods were feedback, educational role-play, and modelling (live/video demonstration).

Some findings indicated that managerial rather than practice or clinical topics were favoured as content in supervision training (Egan, 2012a; Kavanagh et al., 2003; Kavanagh et al., 2008; Scott & Farrow, 1993). There was some indication that there was limited impact on supervision practice and outcomes from the more popular approaches of brief training and workshop formats. Some reasons proposed were because training attempted to cover expansive topics, information, and skills, and the resultant time limitations might lower participants' confidence because there was not enough space to explore the demands and complexity of supervision (Kavanagh et al., 2008).

One example of vast coverage intentions is provided in Table 2.2. It is the content of a two-day supervision training program that was implemented and examined in an Australian study with supervisors and supervisees (Kavanagh et al., 2008). It covered elements related to supervision content, process, and context. The researchers acknowledged the density of the program and that it might confront supervisor participants as well as impact their self-efficacy. An advantage that they suggested was that it may have provided supervisee participants "a clearer understanding of the performance demands of supervision" (p. 103).

Table 2.2:

Supervision Training Content Example (Kavanagh et al., 2008)

• Agency supervision guidelines	• Evaluation and feedback
• A model of supervision	• Skills acquisition
• Supervision functions	• Technology for remote session delivery
• Codes of conduct	• Learning styles
• Professional standards	• Potential problems in supervision and preventive strategies
• Principles of reflective practice	• Evaluating supervision
• Supervision agreements	• Ending supervision
• Session agendas	

Comparatively, the content of a training program considered in a study in the USA (Kaiser & Kuechler, 2008) did not have the organisational and professional elements that were included in the program in Table 2.2. It was provided by the University of St. Thomas School of Social Work Supervision Institute across four monthly sessions. The content had been revised based on participant feedback and practice concerns from an earlier six-session program (Kaiser & Barretta-Herman, 1999). The four sessions covered: "the supervisory relationship, power and authority in supervision, transference and countertransference issues in supervision (including parallel process), and multicultural supervision" (p. 79). The study used pre-training comments from participants about their hopes and post-training surveys to identify what participants found useful from the training. Most prominent in a variety of benefits from the training were; learning about supervision knowledge and skills – especially a theoretical framework – networking with other supervisors for learning and support, and opportunities to reflect on themselves.

Conclusions from researchers about what should be in supervisor training varied. Some suggested that training should include how to occupy dual roles as supervisor and manager (Kavanagh et al., 2003; Pack, 2011; Wong, 2014). Mor Barak et al. (2009) proposed three supervisory dimensions that could inform supervisor training: task assistance, social and emotional support, and supervisory interpersonal interaction. Based on a NZ study with 18 social work supervisors, O'Donoghue and Tsui (2012a) proposed a "supervisory curriculum" of three areas, "(a) knowledge about supervision; (b) the conceptual interpretive reasoning process used within supervision; and (c) the emotional intelligence required to effectively attend to the human interactional and relational process" (p. 15). A number of researchers concluded that, regardless of what training entailed, it was critical to incorporate follow up support infrastructure for supervisors (Kavanagh et al., 2003; Pack, 2011; Wong, 2014).

Supervising Supervisors

Research specifically about supervision of supervisors – supervisors-as-supervisees – could not be located. It appeared that when supervisor participants retrospectively commented on their supervisee experiences, it most often related to being a client practitioner, before becoming a supervisor. One mixed-discipline study found "half of the supervisors said they had received supervision of their supervision practice in the previous 2 years" (Kavanagh et al., 2003, p. 192). Some participants in another study (Grant et al., 2012) stated the importance of "supervision on supervision", especially when "tricky issues arose" (Grant et al., 2012, p. 534), but it was not central to the study's focus on difficult experiences in supervision.

Findings from studies about practitioners least likely to participate in supervision, by choice or circumstance, could parallel views about the extent of experience and relevance of supervision of supervisors. Researchers found some reasons for little or no participation in

supervision included staff in regional and rural areas and those who worked in multiple settings (Kavanagh et al., 2003), more experienced and high level staff (Grant & Schofield, 2007; Kavanagh et al., 2003), staff with smaller caseloads (Grant & Schofield, 2007), and those approaching the end of their careers (Greenspan et al., 1992; Laufer, 2004). Grant and Schofield (2007) sought longer term practitioners' reasons for not engaging in supervision and the most popular reasons were, "I am very experienced and consult with peers when needed" (56%) and "I am not seeing enough clients to warrant supervision" (44%) (p. 6). While not all supervisors have long-term careers, the assumption that they are experienced and knowledgeable, and their proximity to client practice, are commonalities with the parameters of those findings.

The prevalence in organisations of supervision focused on accountability, task, and performance expectations (Egan, 2012a; Gibbs, 2009; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997; Robinson, 2014) may contribute to the view that supervision of supervisors is irrelevant or inappropriate. Managerial and administrative responsibilities may not be considered *practice* and accordingly viewed as not requiring reflection, analysis, and theory-practice links. Some line managers who also provided supervision reported they were often required to, "get on and manage the resources in the team without a disaster happening while the team members [look] to them for support, guidance and frequent supervision" (Gibbs, 2009, p. 295). No matter their position, supervisors left to navigate those challenges on their own may not achieve the desired results.

Conclusion

This literature review provided an expansive amount of information about supervision in human services broadly, and less specifically on social work supervision. Social work supervision research has a much shorter life than the practice of supervision and it features ad

hoc construction of empirical knowledge. Studies about clinical supervision featured strongly because of their prominence in supervision research. The review of research showed overwhelming attention on the experiences of supervisees who work directly with clients or participants in services and programs – often called *direct practice* – rather than supervisors. Research that did focus on supervisors was about supervision they *provided* rather than *received*. In terms of how supervisors learn about, develop, and sustain their approach to supervising others, the predominant emphasis in research was on supervisor training, albeit limited in terms of its amount, if it was Australian, and if it included social work supervisors. More specifically for this research, while there was some fleeting acknowledgement of the importance of supervisors' own supervision, there were no studies that explored supervisors' own individual supervision sessions and their use to develop supervision practice.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology I chose for this study. It covers the purpose of the research, the qualitative case study methodology and related theories, and the research design, which includes sampling and recruitment. It provides an overview of the participants who were recruited and describes the multiple data collection methods that were used – observations, interviews, participant diaries, focus groups, researcher journal, and research supervision – and the process that I used to analyse data. The chapter concludes with discussion about the trustworthiness of the findings, ethical considerations, and the potential benefits and limitations of this study.

I used first person in this and the remaining chapters to acknowledge my presence in this research and the subjectivity related to my own supervision practice experiences which were discussed in the introduction. Use of first person was consistent with the premise of the chosen qualitative case study methodology and the social construction of knowledge wherein the interface between my experiences and those of participants acted as a conduit to understandings of sociocultural processes (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2013). Gilgun (2005) suggested that "use of the first person and of direct quotes is a way of acknowledging that the voices of researchers and those whom we research are not the same yet are interconnected" (p. 259). My presence in this research is discussed later in this chapter.

Purpose of the Research

The literature review for this study identified numerous gaps in social work supervision research. Most relevant to this study, it demonstrated that supervision-of-supervisors was marginalised in supervision research. While there was an expanse of practice literature on *what* supervisors should *do* (for example, Beddoe & Davys, 2016; Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Hawkins & Shohet, 1989, 2006, 2012; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997; Noble et al., 2016), it was not matched or supported with similar literature and research evidence about developing supervisors in-practice and, more specifically, about the place of their own supervision sessions in developing and supporting them over time. I was intrigued by this and the implication that once supervisors – who were often also managers – had responsibility for others' practice they no longer needed development and support themselves. Further, it suggested that perhaps common facets of professional practice, such as, challenges, models, emotions, values, and learning, were deemed irrelevant to supervising others and, by implication, supervision was not viewed as practice.

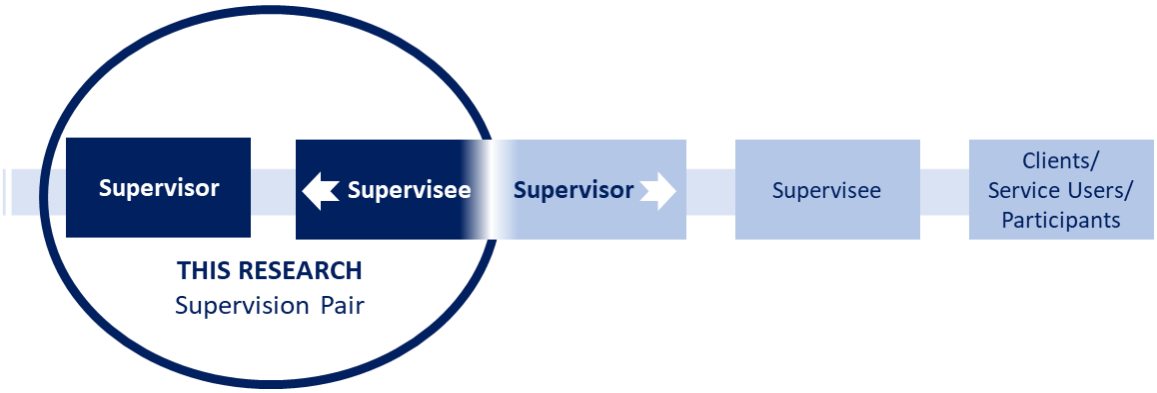
In this context, the purpose of this research was to explore social work supervisors' own individual supervision sessions – when they were the supervisee – in terms of what happened in those sessions and how they discussed, developed, sustained, and built on their supervision practice. I was particularly interested in how their supervision conversations covered their supervision of others and how they used that afterwards when they supervised others. I wondered how supervisors learned about professional supervision, how they developed it over time, and their knowledge base for supervision practice. I also wanted to know if and how surrounding factors influenced how they supervised in certain ways. Prompted by what appeared to be limited value and relevance of supervision-for-supervisors, another

consideration was whether research participants thought social work or professional supervision was appropriate for supervisors-as-supervisees.

Figure 3.1 shows the supervision pairing that was the focus of this research. It shows that the supervision pair in-focus in this study is where the supervisee is also a supervisor in a separate pairing. This study represented a step away from the usual emphasis – supervision of client practitioners – while simultaneously acknowledging a continuum of supervision pairs that ultimately connects to people who use services, access programs, or engage with practitioners in some other form.

Figure 3.1:

Supervision Relationship In-focus in this Research



Research Aims and Questions

The primary aim of this study was to establish a developing picture of what goes on in supervisors' own supervision sessions and, in turn, contribute to knowledge about how supervision practice could be developed over time. Given the multiple understandings and applications of supervision sessions, my objective was not to identify a homogenous

understanding and way of doing or using supervision sessions; one *truth*. Rather, it was to see and hear potentially varied interpretations, practices, experiences, and behaviours in supervision sessions and to identify a range of factors that influenced and informed the development of supervision practice. The central focus of this study was on:

- Social work supervisors
- Supervision of social work supervisors (as supervisees); and
- Supervision sessions, specifically social work supervisors' own individual sessions.

My research question was:

What happens in social work supervisors' own supervision sessions?

The review of supervision research highlighted features that were considered important in supervision, such as, supervision relationships, facilitation, communication and interactions, session structure and topics, and settings and contexts. They informed a set of sub questions to support exploration of the main research question. They acted as an initial guiding premise, or launch pad, because there was the possibility that other features might be discovered during data collection, analysis, and writing-up the research. The four sub questions listed below were linked to interpersonal, processual, and contextual elements of supervision sessions:

(a) What topics are discussed?

(b) How do sessions focus on supervision practice?

(c) How are topics discussed?

(d) What are the influences on the sessions?

Considering the literature reviewed in conjunction with current knowledge about supervising supervisors and the research questions, this study aimed to:

1. Provide some direct evidence of what happens in social work supervisors' own supervision sessions, beyond retrospective self-report accounts.
2. Contribute to discussion, debate, knowledge, and learning about developing supervision practice, particularly, the relevance and role of supervision sessions.
3. Support a more balanced body of knowledge about supervision through increased attention on supervising supervisors and developing supervision practice; applicable to social work and other human service professions and organisations.

Qualitative Case Study Methodology

I chose a qualitative case study methodology for this research because I wanted to consider the varied interpretations of supervision and supervision sessions. This extended to how meanings about, and through, supervision and supervision sessions were constructed by participants and by me, and how that might be influenced by factors such as interactions, relationships, roles, and contexts. Given this interest, the research methodology was grounded in an interpretive constructivist paradigm.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) defined a paradigm as;

> a set of *basic beliefs* (or metaphysics) that deals with ultimates and first principles. It represents a *worldview* that defines, for its holder, the nature of the "world", the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts. (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 107, original emphasis)

An interpretive constructivist paradigm assumes that no single reality exists, but rather, it is constructed through the meanings people make of their experiences and interactions, individually and in groups, and consensus reached about those meanings (Clarke et al., 2015;

Guba & Lincoln, 2008). The collective or shared component of this paradigm was critical to this study because of how interpretations and constructions might be influenced through interactions and relationships in supervision sessions and the language, discourse, societal conventions, histories, and environments that exist within and around those interactions (Charmaz, 2013; Gergen, 2015; Noble et al., 2016; Talja et al., 2005).

My interest in what happens in social work supervisors' own supervision sessions logically implied I needed to look directly at how people interacted and related in those sessions. I could then consider how those exchanges influenced both participants' thinking and approach during and after the sessions and my views about what I observed and how I might have influenced the sessions. As such, co-construction of knowledge was central to this study, so, qualitative research was most suitable (Creswell, 2014; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lincoln et al., 2011).

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research was ideal for this study, most notably because "description of persons, places, and events has been the cornerstone of qualitative research" (Janesick, 2003, p. 69). Denzin and Lincoln (2008) defined qualitative research as,

> a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretative material practices that make the world visible… [through] a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self… qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 4)

All research is value-driven, from the point of deciding on a research topic through to constructing meanings and interpretations from the data. As Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) noted, "we all bring our own likes, dislikes, emotions, values, and motivations to our research projects" (p. 77) which are influential in our search for *truth*. Qualitative research incorporates ways to consider how the researcher's background and personal, cultural, and historical experiences shape interpretations of data and others' meanings about the world. It focuses on interactions among individuals and the specific contexts in which they work, with consideration of history and culture (Creswell, 2014).

Qualitative inquiry attends to complexities in the phenomena under study, which I saw as the multilayers of supervision and supervision sessions – such as, understandings and practices of supervision, expected and assumed roles of supervisors and supervisees, and relationships and relating – and their interplay with each other and surrounding contexts. As acknowledgement of such complexities, the qualitative research process is emergent and flexible. Changes to research questions, sampling, and data collection methods can occur as the research progresses based on participant and researcher discoveries (Brown, 2010; Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, 2011).

Researcher Role and Reflexivity. In qualitative inquiry, the researcher's presence should be transparent from start to end (Carter & Little, 2007; Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, 2011; Gilgun, 2015; Gilgun & Abrams, 2002; Smith, 2006). It is especially important where there is prolonged or more intensive interaction between the researcher and participants (Creswell, 2014). Such transparency should occur in methodological planning, to help early exposure and preparation around "tensions and dilemmas inherent in the [research] process" (Smith, 2006, p. 211), and by being open about the researcher's presence in the write-up (Gilgun, 2015). As discussed later, detail about the researcher's presence assists quality and

trustworthiness of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

A key element of the researcher's role and engagement in qualitative research is reflexivity [2] (Ben-Ari & Enosh, 2011; Creswell, 2014; Enosh & Ben-Ari, 2010; Gilgun, 2015; Gilgun & Abrams, 2002; Guba & Lincoln, 2008; Smith, 2006). Reflexivity involves unearthing binaries, contradictions, and paradoxes constructed by the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 2008) and speculating about the meaning of the topic to the researcher, participants, and other stakeholders (Gilgun, 2015). To highlight and consider those factors, I maintained a researcher journal and explored my research role in research supervision sessions.

Reflexivity should also feature "active, conscious processes that emphasize the researcher's dual position both within and outside the phenomenon, requiring constant movement between the two" (Ben-Ari & Enosh, 2011, p. 153). Through early thinking about researcher influence, reflexivity, and the idea of inside-outside research I brought reflexivity to the fore in methodological considerations (Edmonds-Cady, 2011; Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2013). I identified some researcher–participant proximity factors that were relevant to this study because of my own supervision experiences and knowledge. Proximity could be gauged by similarities or differences in factors such as, knowledge, practice context, models and approaches, skills and techniques, role, relationship, identity, and power. This was a useful guide for my reflexivity.

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[2] *Reflexivity* is the more common term used in research literature. Other terms, such as *reflectivity*, are often used interchangeably.

Case Study Research. The primary reason I chose case study research was the significance placed on contexts and complex conditions. Three prominent case study researchers are Yin (1989, 1992; 2012; 2014), Stake (1978, 1995, 2005a), and Merriam (1988; 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Notwithstanding differences in paradigms, perspectives and approaches, all three concurred that case study is, "a commitment to studying a situation or phenomenon in its 'real life' context, to understanding complexity", and that it is more than a method (Simons, 2009, p. 20).

Stake's work was most influential in this study, due to the emphasis on qualitative and constructivist approaches, naturalistic case study, an interpretive stance, and the researcher's active role (Abma & Stake, 2014; Baxter & Jack, 2008; Harrison et al., 2017; Lauckner et al., 2012; Stake, 1978, 1995, 2003, 2005b). Merriam's constructivist perspective was important in terms of the weight placed on intersubjective construction of reality through meanings and understandings (Harrison et al., 2017; Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Symbolic Interactionism. Given my interest in what happens in supervisors' own supervision sessions, I identified symbolic interactionism as one suitable theoretical perspective grounded in the interpretative paradigm. Supervision sessions could be viewed as social phenomena; interactions between people, within which process, content, and meaning were constructed by them, individually and jointly. I anticipated that each supervision session would be different. The literature review indicated those differences might be influenced by factors such as, past experiences, expectations of self and others, understandings of supervision and supervision sessions, time and place, and contexts (Egan, 2012b; Gibbs, 2009; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997; Morrison, 2005; Noble & Irwin, 2009; O'Donoghue, 2012; O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2012a).

George Herbert Mead's ideas (1934) about development of self and interaction influenced other theorists' development of symbolic interactionist ideas (for example, Blumer, 1969; Kuhn, 1964; Stryker, 1980). I chose to concentrate on Blumer and the emphasis on *naturalistic* qualitative inquiry and "the natural social world of everyday experience" (Blumer, 1969, p. 148), which included both *action* and actors (people) in groups (*units*) and the autonomous actions of individuals as influential on others in a group. The methodology promoted by Blumer (1969) was consistent with the aspects of qualitative case study research that were discussed above and trustworthiness of findings, especially, using participants' own categories to capture meanings, direct examination of distinct settings and interactions, and defining concepts rigorously to understand behaviour rather than through quantitative methods (Carter & Fuller, 2016).

A central tenet of symbolic interactionism is how people make, maintain, and change meanings and actions as they interact (Charmaz, 2006; Sandstrom, 2008) face-to-face, repeatedly, and meaningfully (Carter & Fuller, 2016). Symbols are determined by agreement in an interaction to have common meaning or are used to represent something else (Forte, 2010; Serpe & Stryker, 2011) and might include words, language, nonverbal gestures, images, objects, actions, and styles of appearance (Carlson, 2013; Dennis & Martin, 2007; Handberg et al., 2015; Vannini, 2007; Williams, 2008).

Adaptation, negotiation, and changing of acts and meanings in a cyclical and reciprocal action process is suggested to happen both within an interaction and in subsequent interactions with the same person or others (Blumer, 1969; Chamberlain-Salaun et al., 2013; Denzin, 1992; Forte, 2008; Sandstrom et al., 2006, 2014). The idea of changes over time based on new information and experiences (Crooks, 2001) was relevant for this study because of the focus on multiple supervision sessions over time and that conversations and decisions

in-session might be translated into practice outside sessions. It fitted features of symbolic interaction and how participants might make different meanings from the same interaction, and how past experiences might influence how they approached and interpreted a new interaction (Goffman, 1971; Salvini, 2010; Spencer et al., 2014).

Role and Identity. Another theoretical influence for this study was the construction and reconstruction of role and identity, as influenced through symbols and interactions in supervision sessions. Spencer et al. (2014) noted that identities are "context-specific roles", constructed in and from different interactions, none of which represents our "true self" (Spencer et al., 2014, p. 87). Other studies noted the significance of supervisors' multiple roles and their influence on types and content of supervision sessions (for example, Egan, 2012b; Gibbs, 2009; Wong, 2014; Wong & Lee, 2015).

In this study, I anticipated that supervision sessions could involve conversation, reflection, and analysis related to supervisees' roles and identities, and supervision session dialogue might focus on meaning and construction related to role and identity. I also saw relevance in the role of the *significant other* and *generalised other* in interactions (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934). *Significant others* are "people who we respect as role-models and consider central for personal development" and the *generalised other* is the group that individuals "want to become part of… [which] is influential as it transfers norms and attitudes representative for the existing culture of the group" (Carlson, 2013, p. 459). In this study, the *significant other* could be the supervisor, and the *generalised other* could be any number of groups with whom supervisees want to be connected, including, but not limited to, supervisors, supervisees, managers, practitioners, professions, and practice fora.

Research Design

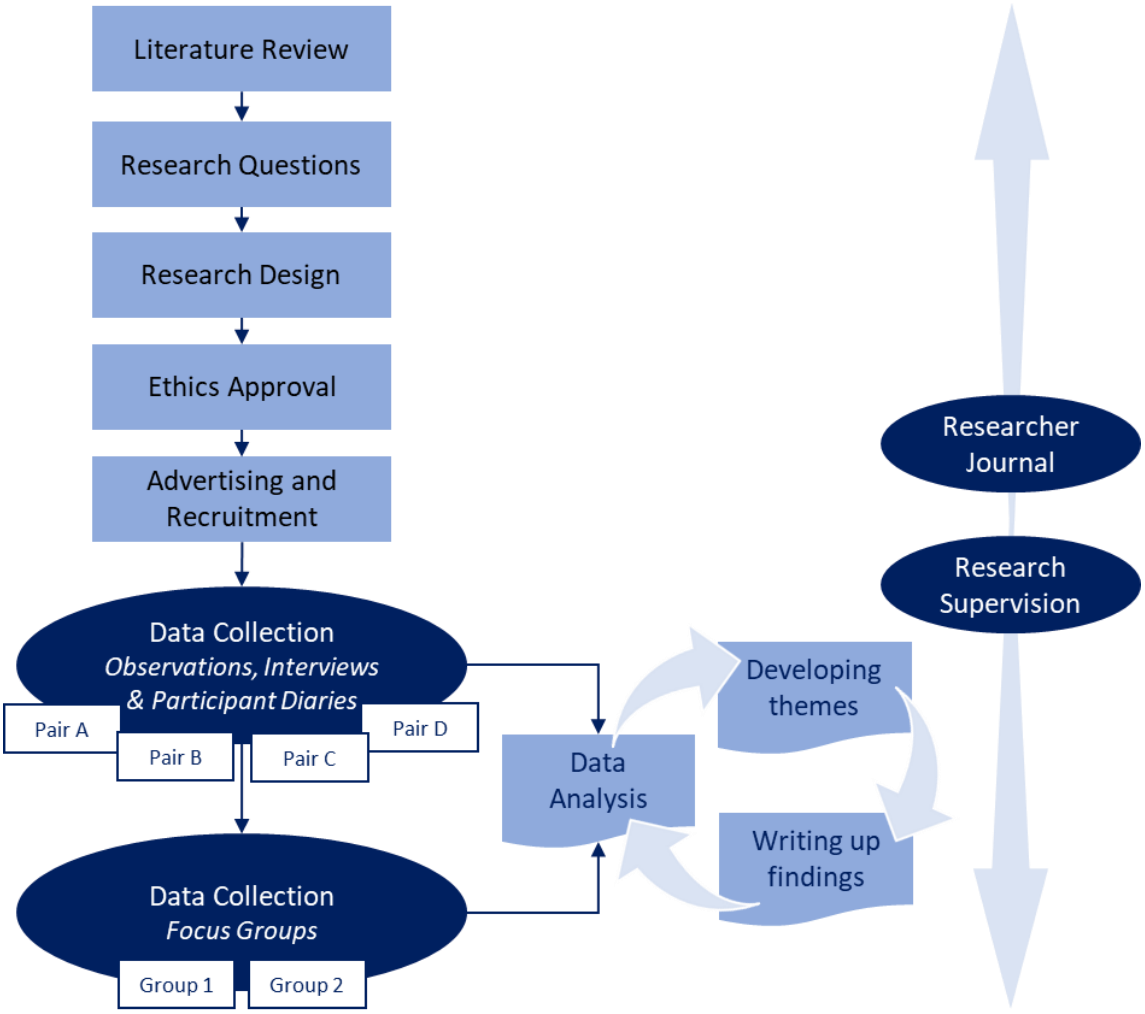
The research design was informed by the philosophical and theoretical premises that were just outlined. It covers processes and methods used to establish a knowledge foundation for this study, to identify and recruit participants, to collect, analyse and interpret data, and to present findings in relation to the research aims and questions. An overview of the research design is in Figure 3.2. It was suitable for the phenomena of this study; supervision sessions. My decision to use multiple methods for data collection was aimed at creating a "more valid, reliable and diverse construction of realities" (Golafshani, 2003, p. 604). The literature review indicated potential value in complementing retrospective self-report data from other studies with direct evidence using an observation method. Angrosino and Rosenberg (2013) noted that "the great value of naturalistic observation has always been that we have immersed ourselves in the ebb and flow, in the ambiguities of life as it is lived by real people in real circumstances" (p. 161).

I decided to conduct multiple observations of each pair for several reasons. Richer data might be collected by looking at supervision activities and interactions over time, and issues related to observation data collection methods might be addressed – such as, observer-effect, social desirability responses (Baxter & Jack, 2008), and self-censoring (Monahan & Fisher, 2010) – wherein participants' performance, actions, statements, and interactions might be different or unduly affected by observer presence. Socially desirable responses might also dwindle via multiple observations of the same pair over time. I thought observation might also counter such responses and bias because data would be collected from participants in the presence of their supervision partner so they might act consistent with their usual approach. I supplemented the observations with an unstructured individual interview with each member of the pairs, approximately two weeks after the final observation. Each of the observation

participants also had the option to complete entries in a participant diary during their participation in this research, for example, after each observation or when prompted by reflections or ideas.

Figure 3.2:

Research Design



After the study started, I added focus groups as another method, to be conducted with supervisors who did not participate in the observations and interviews. My intention was twofold; to open a new avenue of recruitment for additional pairs for observations – which had been limited up to that point (outlined below) – and to provide data from different

perspectives to consider the research questions. The focus group method was a means of gathering "direct evidence about similarities and differences" between participants in the same group (Morgan, 1997, as cited in, Farnsworth & Boon, 2010, p. 607) and between groups to complement those discovered between the observed pairs. Additionally, as noted by Barbour (2010), focus groups can allow participants to "step back from their taken-for-granted behaviours and assumptions and provides space to 'problematize' concepts and ideas to which they may previously have paid scant attention" (p. 331). The latter was particularly relevant to how participants across this study understood the nature, purpose, relevance, and usefulness of supervision-of-supervisors. I used my researcher journal and audio-recorded research supervision sessions as other data sources that informed interpretations, analysis, and writing-up the research.

The strategy of inquiry for this study was a *collective case study* design (Abma & Stake, 2014; Stake, 2003, 2005a), also referred to as multiple case study (Yin, 2003), where each *case* was a supervision pair. This approach meant I could access multiple sources of evidence from a number of cases. Using the same data collection and analysis methods, I could explore the particularities of single cases, compare cases to discover commonalities and differences, and potentially draw generalisations from a variety of perspectives on the phenomena under study (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Gilgun, 1994; Goddard, 2010; Lauckner et al., 2012; Stake, 2003, 2005a). An additional benefit was that the contexts I was interested in exploring – that might have bearing on interpretations and constructions of supervision and supervision sessions − could be expanded, and thus, considered within and across different supervision pairs who met in different settings and comprised different people, roles, identities, expectations, processes, and so on. The collective case study design could also temper my preconceived ideas of what might be found in this study through varietal representations of supervision sessions.

Sampling

For the observation and interview component, I intended to recruit six supervision pairs, comprised of two pairs each from three different agency or practice settings – government, non-government, and private practice. The inclusion criteria for selecting supervision pairs for the observations and interviews were:

- An existing supervisory relationship;
- Regular supervision sessions were occurring every 4-6 weeks;
- Both members were social workers. This was the preference. If not possible, the supervisee needed to be a social worker;
- The supervisee was also supervising others at the time (at least one supervisee, who did not have to be a social worker);
- Both were currently employed in a government or non-government human service agency, or the supervisee was employed in an agency and funded (self or agency) for supervision with a private (external) practice supervisor;
- Both could sustain regular supervision sessions for the designated research period; and,
- Located within the Hunter area of New South Wales, due to resource constraints (e.g., time, travel), with the possibility of extending to the Central Coast.

I chose purposive theoretical sampling as the primary sampling method, to be followed by snowball sampling where recipients of invitations passed on study information. Sampling was purposive because of the targeting of social workers for this study. It was theoretical because the agency or setting type I set was broad and not specifically defined in terms of agencies

and locations within which participants' supervision might occur. Snowball sampling could increase the number of potential participants by providing me indirect access to professional relationships and networks of people I had invited to participate.

Recruitment

Recruitment of participants for this study took some time and involved a series of challenges. Ultimately, recruitment advertising spanned July 2015 to August 2016 and comprised several different strategies – some repeated – due to limited responses and interest. In addition to more formal methods – such as, emails and advertisements – I had informal discussions with practitioners at meetings and other events. There were limited options to communicate directly and on a large scale with social workers in the field and in specific geographical locations. I advertised the study on two occasions in an e-news bulletin produced by the New South Wales Branch of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW). While it did not garner any interest in participation there was general interest and support for this study.

Advertising Activities and Timelines. A range of methods were used to advertise and recruit potential participants for the observations, interviews, and focus groups.

Observations and Interviews. From the first formal round, four social workers expressed interest. Three were unsuitable due to their location, sporadic sessions, or no supervision as a supervisee. The fourth was suitable, provided consent, and was the first pair recruited. The second formal round of invitations produced no direct expressions of interest. Recruitment of the remaining three pairs came from snowballing over an approximate 18-month period. An overview of the recruitment timeline for each pair is in Appendix I.

This study was ultimately limited to four pairs because data collection and preliminary analysis for the first two pairs showed that one pair generated extensive data and significant analysis requirements; adding more pairs was not feasible within my time and resources.

All invitations sent to potential participants for the observations and interviews included the following documents: Participant Information Statement (Appendix A), Consent Form (Appendix B), and a request to forward information to others. Additionally, three of the four pairs were in an internal supervision arrangement or the supervision was funded by an organisation. Each of those organisations was sent an Organisation Information Statement (Appendix C) and an Organisation Consent Form (Appendix D). All replied and provided consent. For one, I had to first submit an organisation-specific ethics application.

Focus Groups. After unsuccessful attempts to recruit via executive and senior people at organisational levels, focus group participants were recruited via email invitations to specific individuals from my contacts (see recruitment overview in Appendix I). Two focus groups were selected from two different organisations. None of the focus group participants were in the observation pairs. In each focus group, all the participants were from the same organisation (see Table 3.1 and Table 3.2).

All invitations sent to potential focus group participants included the following documents: Focus Group Participant Information Statement (Appendix E), Focus Group Consent Form (Appendix F), a recruitment flyer (Appendix G and Appendix H),[3] and a request to forward information to others.

[3] The initial flyer covered set dates and venues for focus group sessions. The second flyer covered a revised approach in which participants could select their group, dates, times, and venues (also see, Appendix I).

Participants

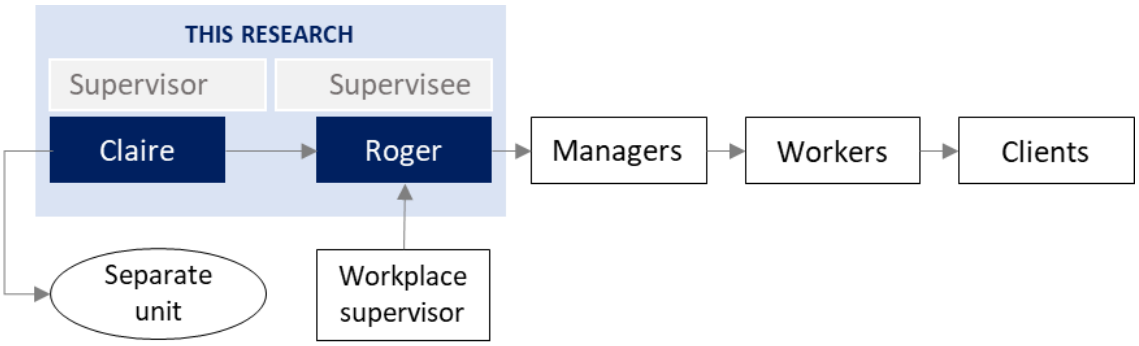
Observations, Interviews, and Participant Diaries

The following is a brief profile of each pair and their supervision arrangements and includes diagrams of arrangements. The names are pseudonyms that were used throughout this thesis.

Roger and Claire. Roger (supervisee) and Claire (supervisor) worked in a large government agency and were in a senior and executive position respectively. Their supervision relationship spanned approximately eight years. Just prior to starting this study – and after they had already given consent – their usual supervision relationship ceased temporarily because Claire was temporarily in another position and location in the same organisation. They maintained their interest in this study and proposed that they resume supervision sessions for the purpose of this study. I considered them appropriate to participate because their original supervision arrangement was lengthy and continuous, it was less than one year since it had ceased, and they reported that they had continued to have some discussions about Roger's work after the changed arrangements. Figure 3.3 describes Roger and Claire's arrangements during this study.

Figure 3.3:

Supervision Arrangement: Roger and Claire



In their former supervision arrangement, Claire supervised Roger and a group of other senior managers. They were not physically co-located but had regular contact via meetings, emails, and phone calls. For this study, it was referred to as an internal arrangement because they were employees of the same organisation. However, it could be defined as a type of split, internal-external arrangement [4] because they were distanced from each other and the absence of administrative supervision responsibilities. Roger was also a supervisor of supervisors.[5] He supervised a group of middle managers who supervised frontline practitioners and he was co-located with the whole team.

Audrey and Valerie. Audrey (supervisee) and Valerie (supervisor) were in an external supervision arrangement. Both were social workers in private practice as counsellors and as supervisors. Figure 3.4 describes Audrey and Valerie's supervision arrangements.

During this study, Audrey and Valerie did not discuss Audrey's supervision of others at all and they focused on Audrey's counselling practice. There was no indication during the recruitment phase that this would occur. Audrey met the criteria of being a supervisor of others and being in an ongoing supervision arrangement. At the end of the first observation, I asked Audrey and Valerie if the counselling focus of the session was their usual approach. Both said it was and referred to their arrangement as *clinical supervision* and Audrey said her purpose for engaging an external supervisor was to focus on her counselling practice.

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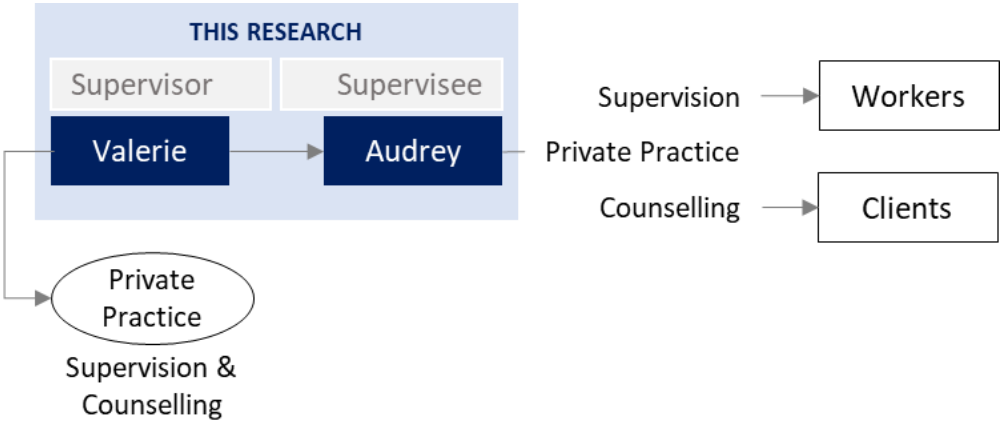
[4] This is a distinction created for this study. While such arrangements are often referred to as internal, they do differ from other internal arrangements where the supervisor and supervisee are co-located and/or are members of the same team or work unit. Many organisations have employees who are from the same organisation who provide supervision for other employees based at different work locations; often as an alternative to line managers providing supervision. In one focus group, most participants provided supervision in this type of arrangement.

[5] This was a departure from other supervisees in this study who supervised workers who worked directly with people who accessed services and programs (e.g., client practitioners).

Figure 3.4:

Supervision Arrangement: Audrey and Valerie



I decided to continue Audrey and Valerie's participation because there was still potential to explore processes and approaches connected to the research questions. I was also interested to hear from both in their post-observation interviews about how they understood supervision-of-supervisors, their thoughts about what it might focus on, and their own experiences of developing as supervisors.

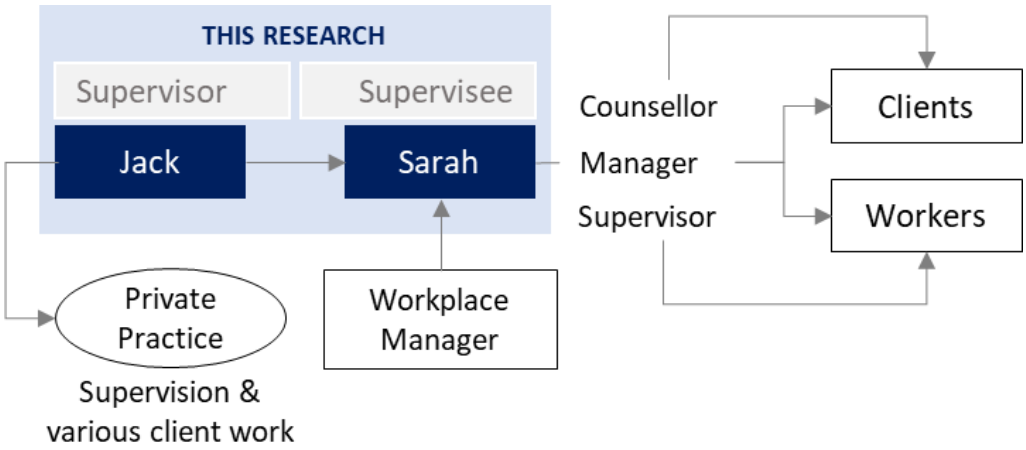
Sarah and Jack. Sarah (supervisee) and Jack (supervisor) had been in an *external* supervision arrangement for two years. Jack referred to it as a "subcontract" arrangement, rather than strictly private, because Sarah's agency was paying him to provide the supervision. Figure 3.5 describes Sarah and Jack's supervision arrangements.

Sarah's agency was a large non-government agency with numerous separate services and programs across the region. Sarah worked in a government-funded program which was replicated by different agencies across the country. She was in a lead clinical role, which included supervision of counsellors, and had her own counselling caseload. Sarah reported to a manager within the agency. Jack was not required to report to the organisation about their

supervision. Before starting his private practice, Jack worked in the same program in a different agency. At the time of this study, Sarah was about to go on extended leave, so the three observed sessions were Sarah and Jack's final sessions.

Figure 3.5:

Supervision Arrangement: Sarah and Jack



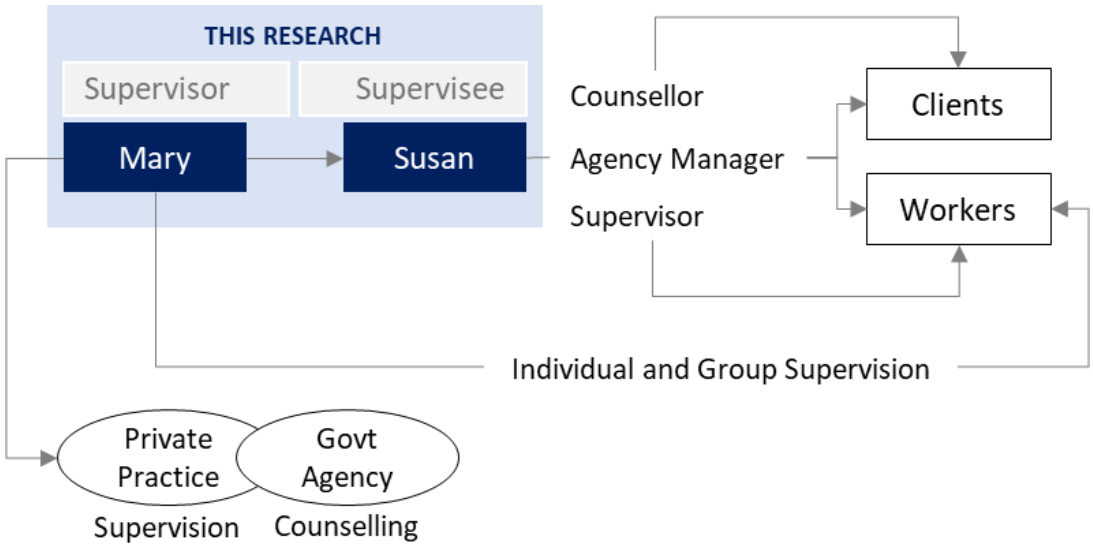
Susan and Mary. Susan (supervisee) and Mary (supervisor) were in an external supervision arrangement. Mary was in private practice and was also a part-time counsellor for a government agency. Susan's agency paid Mary to provide monthly individual supervision sessions with Susan and bi-monthly individual supervision sessions with approximately five workers in the agency, all of whom Susan also supervised in day-to-day practice and individual supervision sessions. Mary also facilitated bi-monthly group supervision sessions, in which Susan and the workers were participants. Figure 3.6 describes Susan and Mary's supervision arrangements.

Susan was a new graduate and new manager and provided counselling in addition to her management responsibilities. Prior to her manager role, she had worked at the agency for several years in other roles. Up until the second observed session in this study she had a third

role – case management – which ceased, and she continued in her manager and counsellor roles. Susan's agency had experienced changes around staffing, accommodations, and expectations.

Figure 3.6:

Supervision Arrangement: Susan and Mary



Focus Groups

Focus Group 1. A profile description of this focus group is provided in Table 3.1. All participants worked in a government agency that provided mental health services, in different internal work locations. Some were managers and supervisors, and others were counsellors and supervisors. Their organisation had a general policy for social workers to choose their own supervisor; a person different to their line manager. There were circumstances in which some social workers were allocated their supervisors and, as noted during this focus group's discussion, a relatively new approach was that some managers provided supervision for the same people they managed. In addition to providing supervision for varying numbers of other staff, all participants attended their own supervision sessions. The frequency of those sessions

differed across the group, from set schedules to ad hoc arrangements, both of which did not always occur.

Focus Group 2. A profile description of this focus group is provided in Table 3.2. All participants in the second focus group worked for a large government statutory child protection service. Two members worked at the same location and the others at separate work locations. Some were managers and others were practice specialists who provided consultations and often relieved as managers. They worked in an organisation whose longstanding policy was for line managers to also provide professional supervision, and there was no option for workers to select their own supervisor, regardless of professional affiliation. Participants reported a shift in supervision policy and practice in their organisation at the time of this study, where greater use of group supervision was promoted with a focus on practice development and improvement and "shared risk". Each participant attended their own individual supervision sessions which, for some, were often intermittent.

Data Collection

Observations

I invited the four recruited pairs to be observed by me in three consecutive supervision sessions at intervals of 4-6 weeks, and for each of them to attend an individual interview with me approximately two weeks after their final observation. I also gave them an option to complete entries in a participant diary after each observation and any other time they chose. This combination of data collection methods for each pair provided a multi-perspective reference point for thinking about supervision sessions and what they looked like in different settings, interactions, relationships, and contexts.

Table 3.1:

Focus Group 1: Participants and Supervision Arrangements

Agency: Government – Mental Health N=6 (Female: n=5; Male: n=1)

Pseudonym	**M/F**	**Supervisor of…**	**Own supervision arrangements** (as supervisee)
Amy	F	5 social workers + informal supervision. Individual only.	Every 4-6 weeks, app. 60 min.
Betty	F	2 social workers + 1 peer worker. Individual only.	Monthly
Carol	F	2 senior social workers + 1 social worker. Individual only.	Bi-monthly, app. 90 min
Diane	F	2 social workers. Individual only: “Mostly weekly”.	Monthly
Eric	M	2 social workers. Individual only: 1 x weekly; 1 x 3-weekly.	Individual: Monthly. Group: Every 2-3 months.
Fran	F	1 social worker. Individual only: Monthly.	Every 3-4 months

Table 3.2:

Focus Group 2: Participants and Supervision Arrangements

Agency: Government – Child Protection N=4 (Female: n=4; Male: n=0)

Pseudonym	**M/F**	**Supervisor of…**	**Own supervision arrangements** (as supervisee)
Annette	F	9 workers (inc. 2 part-time). Individual: Monthly. Group: "very new" - alternate with individual.	Individual: Scheduled monthly, happens "maybe every second month".
Bianca	F	5 workers.[6] Individual: monthly. Group: intermittent.	Individual: Monthly. Group: Some recent (ad hoc).
Chloe	F	6 (app.) workers, when relieving in supervisory roles.[7] Individual: Monthly. Group: Weekly (3 teams, 2-3 hrs each).	Individual: Bi-Monthly. Group: Bi-monthly (alternate).
Daisy	F	6 (app.) workers (when relieving in supervisory roles).[8] Individual: Monthly. Group: Program-dependent.	Individual: Bi-Monthly. Group: Bi-monthly (alternate).

[6] Includes mixed group of practitioners requiring special attention, such as, return to work plans, practice concerns that require development.

[7] Either as supervisor/facilitator or participant.

[8] Daisy was not a supervisor at the time of this study but regularly relieved other supervisors. Her substantive role included team and individual practice consultations and facilitating group supervision – such as, "practice case discussions" – which had process and content similarities to supervision.

In total, four supervision pairs in a total of 12 supervision sessions were observed for this study. Data collection with each pair happened over an average period of 3.5 months. Given the recruitment breaks between the pairs, data collection across the pairs spanned two years (see Appendix J). Priority was on fitting with each pair's schedule because I wanted to observe participants as they would usually approach sessions without factoring in research demands. Each pair was observed in three sessions, the duration of which ranged between 55 and 80 minutes. All participants chose their usual venue or organised an agreed alternative. No rooms had one-way mirror or other viewing facilities. For all the observations, I sat in the same room as far from the pair as possible. Prior to starting the first observation of each pair, I reminded them about the process during and after observations, how confidentiality would be maintained, and that they could refer to the Participant Information Statement for more detail. I acknowledged the potential difficulty of having another person in the room and committed to being as unobtrusive as possible. I audio and video recorded all the observed sessions. The audio recorder was on a table close to the pair and the video camera as far away as possible. Pairs waited for recording equipment to start before they began the session.

I made some notes during the sessions, including statements or questions that stood out and questions to think about afterwards and that might be included in interviews. When I created data collection tools during planning, I created an observation record sheet which had sections headed with parts of the research questions, such as *topics* and *relating*. During the very first observation, I quickly found it was much easier to write freely in the order of the conversation. From that point on, I used a blank sheet with selected verbatim-type entries of comments and questions in the supervision conversation. I also noted links to research questions, some analytical notes, and questions for afterwards.

At the end of sessions, we confirmed the date and time for our next session and I reminded them about optional diary entries. When each observation ended, I did not discuss the session, except on two separate occasions. One was when I asked Audrey and Valerie if that was their usual session content – nothing about supervision – which they confirmed.[9] The other, I was packing-up at the end of Roger and Claire's first session and Roger voluntarily talked about some of his supervision experiences over time which I did not record.

I made notes in my researcher journal about the observations, such as, reflections on the experience, conversation aspects that stood out, and potential questions for interviews or to consider in data analysis. Sometimes, I also added to my in-session observation notes, to clarify what I was thinking at the time or to add other thoughts. Within two to four weeks of each observation, I viewed the video recording and made journal or observation notes.

I sent audio recordings of the sessions to an interstate transcription service which had committed to confidentiality requirements for recordings and transcript content. I uploaded the recordings in media files to the transcription service secure site and they were transcribed verbatim. Once I received the transcripts, I uploaded them to a dedicated individual folder for each participant on the university cloud server and sent them their respective access link. I sent an email to each participant and invited them to comment on transcripts, suggest edits, or identify parts about which they had concerns that I would need to consider in the research write-up. No participant returned any comments or requested review or edits.

[9] For other discussion on this, see the 'recruitment' section (above) and 'findings'.

Interviews

At the end of each of the final observed sessions, I scheduled separate individual interviews with the observation participants. Interviews were conducted approximately two weeks after the final session and on separate days. The exception was Susan and Mary who had their interviews about six weeks after their final session and on the same day but at separate times. Each participant attended one individual interview. All interviews were audio recorded. Interview locations were chosen by participants and varied; five were at their own work location and remaining three were at a university office, a café, and a local library room.

I conducted unstructured interviews so that participants could choose what we discussed. The Participant Information Statement included some examples of what they might talk about and noted that I might ask questions based on observations. Participants were free to choose subject matter related to the observations or about supervision more broadly. When I developed data collection tools at the start of the study, I prepared an interview schedule with example prompt questions to use as needed (Appendix K). Before each interview, I prepared some additional questions to ask if time allowed, guided by the session – such as, clarifying content and intention, or checking-in on an interpretation – to explore how and why they approached parts of the conversation and their experience and thinking at that time.

I opened each interview with a broad question, such as, "what would you like to discuss about the supervision sessions I observed?" From there, I facilitated a dialogue, at times asking them to explain or expand comments they made and asking some prepared questions. I also asked interview participants about their views about supervising supervisors and most interviews included brief exploration of participants' own supervision histories. I reminded participants about submitting the optional diary entries they had been invited to complete at the start of this research and that I might consult them about transcripts and summaries.

After each interview, I recorded reflections in my researcher journal, such as, aspects that stood out and questions I would consider during data analysis. I sent audio recordings in a media file to the same interstate transcription service to transcribe verbatim. I uploaded the observation and interview transcripts to the university cloud server for each participant and sent an access link. I offered participants opportunity to comment on transcripts, suggest edits, and to identify parts of the interview where they had concerns that I would need to consider in the write-up of findings. No participant returned any comments or requested review or edits.

Participant Diaries

This data collection method applied to observation participants. It was optional for them to complete diary entries after each observed session and any other time they chose. Content and length were entirely their choice and could be about each session or a broader focus. In total, I received 13 diary entries via email. Four participants provided three diary entries each that related to each of their observed sessions, another submitted a copy of their own supervision notes for one session, and three other participants did not submit any diary entries (also see, data collection schedule, Appendix J).

Focus Groups

I conducted two focus groups with supervisors who had not participated in observations in this study. This method was aligned with the observations and interviews as an additional opportunity to explore supervisors' interpretations of supervision for supervisors and what it might look like. Within a qualitative case study methodology, the practice scenario presented to the focus groups was another form of case study which provided stimulus material (Barbour, 2014) for participants' thinking and discussion in line with how the observations

provided stimulus for the individual interviews. It was complemented with questions and prompted discussion in both focus groups (see Figure 3.7 and the participant handout in Appendix L). This approach also helped to maintain a key point of difference in this study, as an alternative to retrospective self-reporting, through a scenario that was focused on someone else.

I used a semi-structured approach to the focus groups, guided by questions I prepared beforehand that were linked to the research questions and the case study scenario. To begin, I provided participants a copy of the case study with a summary list of question topics. I read the case study aloud then started the discussion. At intervals, I used prompt questions or statements to seek expansion of comments and ideas, to clarify questions, and to generate more thinking and discussion. At the end, I reminded participants about the data analysis process and that they would receive a discussion summary for comment and editing.

I recorded some reflections about the focus groups in my researcher journal, such as, parts that stood out, possible interpretations of their responses, thoughts about the group process, and questions to consider during data analysis. I transcribed both focus group discussions. Once I had done some preliminary analysis and organised it around question topics and analysed categories, I sent a focus group data summary to participants for comment, edit, and suggestions. I added that they could also identify any confidentiality concerns they had about content. Neither group provided any response to the summaries that were sent.

Researcher Journal

I used a journal when planning and conducting this study and to record reflections and notes at intervals during the research, such as, data gathering and analysis and while writing-up the research. I found it helpful to look at how my ideas developed over time. It helped keep track

of my ideas about the topic and was consistent with qualitative research in which the researcher's role and reflections are fundamental to data interpretations and journal writing is a "rigorous documentary tool" (Janesick, 2003, p. 67).

My journal also helped extrapolate and reflect on my own experiences and assumptions about supervision sessions and supervising supervisors. As noted by Corbin & Strauss (2008), "without some background, either from immersion in the data or professional/experiential knowledge, the ability to recognize and give meaning is not there" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 46). My earlier thinking while doing the literature review and designing the study led to creation of the following questions to support my reflexivity, navigate assumptions, and guide journal entries; What opportunities existed for me to re-consider the familiar as new? How did I stand back from my knowledge and experience and create a new perspective? How did I prioritise the knowledge and experience of participants? How did I give my experience and knowledge lower, yet still useful, status?

Research Supervision

I participated in supervision sessions with my research supervisors which were audio recorded. Session conversations covered an array of topics, which included study structure and organisation, challenges and complexities with research design and as a researcher, different data interpretations, and life challenges related to the research experience. Importantly, my supervisors supported and sustained me through the study with an approach that was centred-on and driven-by me wherein they sought my opinions, elaborated my ideas, and built on my suggestions (Gurr, 2001, as cited in, Walsh et al., 2018). This helped me to understand my "motives and blind spots" in the context of this research, to consider different perspectives on the research questions, and "to have free and more open encounters during the research" (Bauriedl, 1993, as cited in, Tietel, 2000, p. 189).

Figure 3.7:

Focus Groups: Case Study Scenario 'Anna' (handout)

Anna has been a supervisor for about 5 years. She is a social worker and started working in human services just over eight years ago. She was first approached to be a supervisor because she was an impressive practitioner in individual and group work with clients. Senior staff thought she could make a valuable contribution to the work of others through providing practice supervision sessions. She provided individual and group supervision for other practitioners for about two years while continuing with her own caseload of clients.

Anna was then appointed as manager of the team she had worked with since starting at the agency eight years ago. The team shares the same practice responsibilities and come from different professions. At the same time, the organisation decided managers would provide day-to-day supervision and management as well as practice supervision sessions. Anna was fine with this arrangement because she was used to providing practice supervision. About a year after she started as a manager, Anna did a two-day supervision training course and recently read a couple of journal articles on professional supervision.

Anna has struggled on occasion to achieve a balance in focusing on managerial and practice considerations. This shows most often in some supervision sessions where she thinks she needs to remove her 'manager hat' when listening and responding to supervisees, especially when they are discussing uncertainties and when they ask for specific instructions or answers. This can be difficult and she often feels pressure to discuss performance issues and organisational expectations, to make sure supervisees abide by them, and finds herself defending organisational decisions that practitioners view as barriers to good practice. There are other times when she focuses on supervisees' practice and their work with clients and gets positive feedback. Some of the more common topics discussed in supervisees' sessions are time and workload management, limited organisational resources, emotional reactions to and of clients, and difficulties with other agencies and providers. Anna knows there is some tension with some team members around her change in role and senses a reluctance to engage in supervision sessions and discuss some of their practice with her.

In her own supervision sessions, Anna noticed a change when she moved into a manager position. She previously used supervision conversations to explore feelings and theories about her client practice. When she started as a manager, she noticed this changed to matters such as accountability and reporting on tasks and performance indicators, and was less about her and her development. She is looking forward to seeing what her supervision conversations look like with her new supervisor.

Scenario questions will focus on:

- Initial reactions
- Key information
- Issues and opportunities
- Other information needed
- Knowledge (professional knowledge, research evidence)
- Ideas for supervision conversations

General:

- Reflection on the focus group
- What happens next in the research

Data Analysis

A feature of qualitative research can be simultaneous, cyclical, and back-and-forth data collection and analysis (Gibbs, 2007; Marvasti, 2014; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Table 3.3 shows that the multiple data collection methods used in this study produced an extensive array of data sources to analyse. Each method and data source needed to be analysed both individually and in relation to others which was a complexity that was difficult to navigate. This was compounded by comparisons and cross-case analyses that were needed to support the qualitative case study methodology and focus on the research questions. I considered time and resource limitations when I determined the data analysis framework and chose to restrict the type, amount, and depth of some analysis for this thesis. Those decisions and the data analysis process I used are outlined in this section.

Table 3.3:

Data Collection Methods and Data Sources

	DATA SOURCES				
METHODS	**Transcripts**	**Audio Recordings**	**Video Recordings**	**Notes**	**Participant Entries**
Observation	12	12	12	12	-
Interview	8	8	-	-	-
Participant Diary	-	-	-	-	13
Focus Group	2	2	-	-	-
Total participant data sources	***22***	***22***	***12***	***12***	***13***
Researcher Journal	-	-	-	85	-
Research Supervision	-	35	-	-	-

I chose a framework for data analysis that combined elements of qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2000; Schreier, 2014), comparative analysis (Gibbs, 2007), and cross-case analysis (Stake, 1995, 2005a, 2005b). I chose qualitative content analysis – "data analysis of texts within their context of communication" (Mayring, 2000, p. 106) – because my research questions were primarily descriptive and I analysed text data in transcripts from all methods.

Content analysis helped manage and reduce the data with a focus on selected data that related to the research questions (Schreier, 2014). I was mindful of the risk of losing contexts and dynamics – especially in the observation data – however, qualitative content approaches range "from impressionistic, intuitive, interpretive analyses to systematic, strict textual analyses" (Rosengren, 1981, as cited in, Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1277). I used an approach that graduated from descriptive content analysis into the comparative and cross-case approaches then coupled them to capture contextual explanations and develop themes.

My use of comparative and cross-case analysis was consistent with the case study methodology and allowed me to "look for patterns, make comparisons, produce explanations and [potentially] build models" (Gibbs, 2007, p. 78) to consolidate and extend my understanding of the study subject (Stake, 2005a) through the data being "braided together" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 554). Analysis *across* cases was delayed in the early stages because data collection for each pair was completed before the next pair started (see Appendix J). The delay helped somewhat because it meant I focused in-detail on single case data as separate *chunks* and drew out particularities of the pair and its members (Eisenhardt, 1989; Ragin, 2014; Stake, 2005a). Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that without such distinction "superficiality sets in" (p. 207). Conversely, the time lapse meant I could not conduct a preliminary read of all the pairs' transcripts first to then choose an order in which to conduct more detailed reading and analysis of each. To counter this, once I had a collection of

different pairs' data, I alternated the order of re-reading transcripts and making notes. I also spent time away from the first pair's transcripts which was consistent with Stake's (2005a) view about multiple case studies, that, "Cases [should] not merge too quickly into the main research questions… They need to be heard a while, then put aside a while, then brought out again, and back and forth (the dialectic)" (pp. 46-47).

Time did not allow for fine-grained analysis of observation *video* recordings, such as, behaviours and non-verbal expressions and actions in aspects of the conversations. Notwithstanding that, my recollections of observations and my notes informed some analysis. I listened to audio recordings and viewed video recordings at intervals during analysis for clarification or a potential new angle on a piece of data. I also used them to check and correct typographical errors in transcripts, clarify words and phrases, and decipher statements the transcriber could not hear. Audio and video recordings were retained for future analysis and publications.

The focus group data was somewhat different to the observation and interview data, a difference which also made data comparison challenging. Compared to the mostly participant-driven structure and content of the observations and interviews, the focus group method used pre-set questions and a case study scenario as stimulus material (Barbour, 2014). I chose to emphasise focus group data that related to the research questions and the comparison of groups, observations, and interviews. To address time and resource constraints, I did not conduct conversation analysis and I limited analysis of aspects such as intragroup dynamics (Barbour, 2010, 2014; Farnsworth & Boon, 2010).

Data Analysis Process

This section describes the key elements of my approach to data analysis in this study which was a "continuous, iterative enterprise" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 12) in which each element was repeated or re-visited to consider data from and between the methods. The previously discussed complexity of data analysis in this study is demonstrated in Figure 3.8 and in the descriptions of process elements in this section.

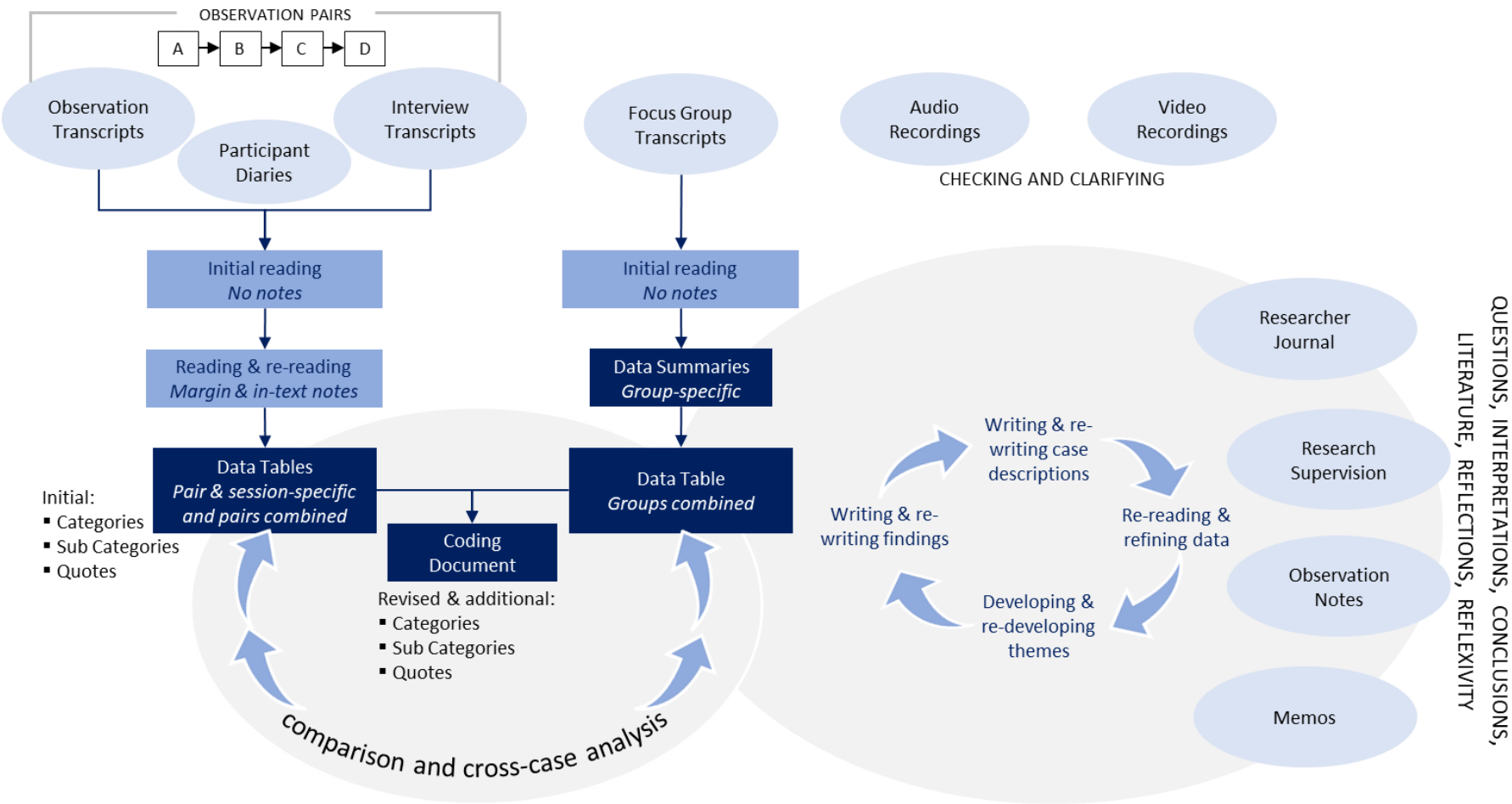
Throughout data analysis I used memos to record questions and possible interpretations and conclusions with some links with literature. I made entries in my researcher journal to record reflections on both data and experiences, and used it in unison with memos to record questions about transcript read-throughs, category formulation, and research supervision.

The following elements of the data analysis process are described in this section:

1. Reading, re-reading, and mark-ups of transcripts
2. Developing, re-developing, and applying categories and subcategories
3. Summarising, describing, and coding data
4. Comparing and analysing across cases and groups
5. Developing themes, writing, and re-writing

Figure 3.8:

Data Analysis Process



Reading, Re-reading, and Mark-ups of Transcripts. For preliminary reading, I read each transcript completely before making notes. I re-read my observation notes and made additional entries to expand shorthand or abbreviations and added other thoughts. Reading transcripts helped me "submerge" into the text and to recall events, consider participants' perspectives, and deepen my understanding (Frankland & Bloor, 1999). The re-reading and mark-up step started the more structured and in-depth analysis. I re-read hard copy transcripts and handwrote notes in the margins and around text and underlined or boxed significant words and phrases (Saldana, 2016). In observation transcripts, I marked supervisor questions with a boxed 'Q' to analyse processes and skills.

Developing, Re-developing, and Applying Categories and Subcategories. I created broad category headings related to topics, skills, processes, and knowledge. They were both concept-driven – based on the research questions and literature – and data-driven based on early transcript readings (Schreier, 2014). The first pair's data initiated the categories that I refined during analysis of other data – for example, the original category of *management* was later changed to two categories; *management of/around supervisee (internal or external)* and *management by supervisee*. In the observation and interview transcripts, I used colour-coding and capital letters to delineate the category headings and entered single words or very brief phrases in lower case under some categories to represent developing subcategories, possible interpretations, and prompts for further analysis.

Summarising, Describing, and Coding Data. I created a summary list of key content and features on the back of each observation and interview transcript which helped data analysis and forming individual interview questions. For each observed pair, I wrote a first-version of a case (pair) description – "descriptive scaffolding upon which the researcher organizes his or her case study" (Tetnowski, 2015, p. 44) – which described "boundedness, contexts, and

experience" to "specify the case" (Stake, 1988, as cited in, Stake, 2005a, p. 3). The descriptions included basic identifiers, such as, relationship duration, supervision arrangements and environment, main topics of discussion in sessions, and data and thoughts about processes and dynamics in their sessions and relationships. I re-visited and amended the descriptions during data analysis to develop themes and case comparisons.

I created pair-specific documents that comprised a table with a primary topic category and separate columns for session-specific data to show session chronology (Gibbs, 2007). I used each observation transcript to create a summary list of subcategory topics – which Stake (2005a) suggested for large amounts of related data or quotes should comprise the "larger thrusts or clearer composites of findings" (p. 308) which included brief quotes or page references. This provided a separate summary overview of each pair's sessions and a foundation for upcoming analysis within and across cases (Gibbs, 2007; Stake, 2005a).

Focus group data summaries: I created a document that contained summaries[10] for each of the focus group questions – such as, responses, topics, preliminary codes, key words or brief phrases, and some brief quote extracts – under which I retained the transcript for the question and bolded or highlighted quotes that reflected the summary. To compare the data of both groups, I created an additional tabulated document with sections-by-question into which I copied the separate summary lists, quotes, and references to quotes. In addition to content, I considered contextual factors to identify similarities, differences, and exceptions, which included participants' suggested responses to the Anna scenario, views about supervising supervisors, organisations and their settings, and roles in the organisation and in relation to

[10] I provided an adapted version of this summary to the focus group to check data and interpretations, as discussed previously in 'data collection'.

each other. This extended to tensions and differences of opinion, as well as dilemmas or difficulties that participants attempted to address collectively (Barbour, 2014).

Collated data summaries: I initiated one document which acted as a coding frame (Schreier, 2014). As a form of cutting, sorting, and piling the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Ryan & Bernard, 2003), I dispersed content from the pair-specific and focus group data tables across previously created categories and subcategories. I included key quotes from transcripts, such as, block statements from individuals in all methods and conversational exchanges from observations. To strengthen the data-driven subcategories, I added in vivo markers, such as, single word or brief phrase quotations, under some category or subcategory headings to heighten participant-generated data and to inform themes. Some examples in the *leadership* category were: *communication/ being heard/ "upfront and honest"*; *"connections" versus "gatekeeping"*; *guiding practice – "separate set of eyes"*; and, *practice innovation or "tinkerer at the edge"*. I re-visited the subcategories and identified and reduced overlaps where data was the same or similar. That created a compilation of categories, subcategories, and quotes which I used to develop themes, re-visit data in transcripts, compare within and across cases and methods, and to write-up up the findings. I colour-highlighted quotes which kept track of them and created a visual display of some segmentation of data and subcategories (Schreier, 2014) which I used to refine data and consolidate theme development during writing.

Comparing and Analysing Across Cases and Groups. Stake (2005a) noted that a multi-case study researcher examines cases, "in terms of their own situational issues, interprets patterns within each case, and then analyzes cross-case findings to make assertions about the binding" (p. 10). I used both the pair-specific tables and the coding frame document to compare what happened across observed pairs. I looked for similarities, differences, and

patterns (Miles & Huberman, 1994) with an emphasis on content, context, and process. I looked more closely at individuals' counterparts in other pairs, to compare how they engaged, topics they focused on, and terminology and other language. A comparison of focus group summaries helped identify similarities and differences and to consider possible explanations between the two groups and between groups and observed pairs. The main points of comparison between the focus groups, observations, and interviews were understandings of supervision and the content and process of supervisors' own supervision sessions.

Developing Themes, Writing, and Re-writing. Writing, re-writing, and reviewing the findings was a cyclical and repeated process and there were numerous versions of *preliminary findings* documents. The process provided opportunity for "digesting and reflecting" on the data (Clark, 2005, as cited in, Saldana, 2016, p. 115) and then deepening data exploration (Schreier, 2014). It helped me to form interpretations of the data, to develop themes, and supported discussions with my supervisors about concepts and themes.

I initiated writing once preliminary categories and subcategories were created with key words and quotes attached. I used a free-writing approach first, after which I referred to data sources, summaries, and coding. Early preliminary findings writing was structured according to the research sub questions. With more consolidation, I found a lack-of-fit between the research questions in their raw form, just as Stake (2005a) cautioned, "emphasis on original research questions and contexts can distract researchers from recognizing new issues when they emerge" (p. 13). I revised the structure to achieve more balance between the questions, codes, and themes and to connect and relate data more clearly. As writing progressed, I started to consider how categories and subcategories related between data sources and methods (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I was mindful during early writing about building towards data and method comparison, in which I would consider not only the content of the

observed sessions, interviews, and focus groups, but also the contexts surrounding events and participants which is fundamental to case study research (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2005a, 2005b, 2010). A preliminary set of themes evolved from the initial writing which was a good foundation to re-consider what was coming out of the data and my interpretations about content, process, and context. More solid themes, as well as exceptions, emerged from the cyclical and repetitive writing process during which I re-read, refined, and re-organised data, categories, and subcategories, and built a more interpretive and analytical stance in my commentary about findings.

Trustworthiness of Findings

Trustworthiness in qualitative research was introduced by Guba and Lincoln (1985) as an alternative to *validity* and *reliability* used in quantitative studies. The trustworthiness framework broadened traditional notions, based on the qualitative research premise that no one "correct" interpretation can be made of findings, and that validity "has to do with description and explanation and whether or not the explanation fits the description" (Janesick, 2003, p. 69). As Denzin (2013) noted, "meanings are always in motion, incomplete, partial contradictory. There can never be a final, accurate, complete representation of a thing, an utterance or an action" (p. 354). The reconfiguration of credibility in qualitative research extended to recognition that such interpretations would be made by participants and researchers in the study, as well as readers who thought about how the findings applied to other situations, for example, "would I feel sufficiently secure about these findings to construct social policy or legislation based on them?" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 238). Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework for trustworthiness is comprised of four components − *credibility, transferability, dependability*, and *confirmability*.

Credibility

The emphasis here is whether or not the findings are *credible*, "given the data presented" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 242) or "the believability of the findings" (Sands & Roer-Strier, 2006, p. 240). The researcher has a responsibility to demonstrate research methods and processes that adequately explore data and establish clear links between data and findings.

In this study, I had extended engagement with participants who were part of the observation and interview methods. The professional settings of study participants varied and were considered in data analysis – such as, linking data to the contexts and settings in which participants worked and were observed – and providing details of surroundings. Member checking was included through offering participants opportunity to comment on data.

The choice of a case study methodology and use of multiple data collection methods and sources supported credibility (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 1990; Yin, 2011). When multiple data sources are used it is important to "consciously utilize designs which seek counter patterns as well as convergence if data are to be credible" (Lather, 1991, p. 67). Cross-case comparison and analysis were data-driven through compilation of data tables that separated, joined, and compared observation and interview data (Gibbs, 2007). I used multiple data sources and triangulation to search for and explore exceptions, rival explanations (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2012), and data that overlapped and converged (Stake, 2005a; Yin, 2013). Data source triangulation occurred between the multiple cases (supervision pairs) and the focus groups. Methods triangulation occurred through use of and comparison of several data collection methods – observations, interviews, participant diaries, and focus groups – coupled with my researcher journal and research supervision. Findings from other studies – as presented in the literature review – supported

development of concept-driven categories and subcategories during data analysis and were used to identify gaps and to expand meanings constructed in this study (Yin, 2013).

Transferability

Transferability is about "transfer of knowledge from a study to a specific new situation" and, in contrast to quantitative research, it "shifts the responsibility for making generalizations from the researcher to the reader or potential user of the findings" (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2014, p. 541). The researcher should present the study and its findings in a way that readers can consider applicability to other situations outside the specific context of the study and, as Matt (2004) suggested, think about, "to what extent does this author's work contribute to an expansion of the framework for the discussion and interpretation of social reality?" (p. 454).

I addressed transferability in the detail I provided about the foundations of this study, the research design, and methods and processes of data collection and analysis. This included finer details about recruitment and specific descriptive accounts of single cases, each of their different contexts, and how cases were compared with each other. I detailed a sampling method that could be applied elsewhere and the cross-setting sample enhanced transferability.

Original participant quotes were used extensively in the presentation of findings. I drew attention to similarities between this study and supervision-in-practice which supported transferability of findings to other research and practice. The case study methodology was important for transferability; while I did cross-case comparisons and analysis as part of this study, readers of this thesis could compare the findings with other supervision experiences; their own *case*. They could identify similar and different boundaries, contexts, and activities, and thus, form their own interpretations of the applicability of this study's findings to their circumstances.

Dependability

Dependability relates to "whether the process of the study is consistent, reasonably stable over time and across researchers and methods" and "reasonable care" was taken within its components (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 278). I framed the data analysis within the research questions which I related to both concept- and data-driven categories and subcategories in the organisation of data. I used multiple methods and data sources which meant I could cross-check and cross-analyse data and methods and look for diverse experiences and perspectives on supervision sessions and the research questions.

I created an audit trail of data sources, decisions, and interpretations comprised of transcript notations, data tables, memos, my researcher journal, and recordings and discussions in research supervision – which included reflections and decisions about data analysis, theme development, and findings. I stored all data securely for future analysis and audits.

Confirmability

Confirmability is "the degree to which the results of the study are based on the research purpose and not altered due to researcher bias" (Given, 2008, para. 3). The research questions for this study were clear. They were used as a reference point to maintain a focus on descriptive accounts of supervision experiences and only minor changes were made to the original research sub questions. I described and explained the data methods and handling processes in detail and drew explicit links between findings and conclusions.

I was explicit about my role in the research. My use of first person situated me within the research and gave the reader "a more vivid sense of the research experience" (Dollard, 1937, p. 2, as cited in, Gilgun, 2005, p. 258). To manage my influence during the study, I used a researcher journal and research supervision to identify and discuss my values, biases, and

assumptions. I also used them to consider different explanations for the data as a means of capturing multiple perspectives and interpretations, which included challenging ideas and potential blind spots I had at the start of this study about what I might discover and, in turn, what aspects of the data I saw and used and my interpretations during data analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval for this study was granted by the *University of Newcastle Human Research Ethics Committee* in June 2015 (Approval number H-2014-0396). Preparation of the ethics application and conduct of this study was guided by the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (National Health and Medical Research Council et al., 2007; National Health and Medical Research Council et al., 2007, Updated 2018). The ethical considerations for this study are outlined in this section and included confidentiality and anonymity – for participants and organisations – potential vulnerabilities, and role boundaries.

To address confidentiality and anonymity, potential participants were de-identified. Ensuring anonymity was a challenge due to the small sample size of participants and agencies and the few geographical locations of workplaces. During recruitment, I did not provide participants' names to their employing organisations when I sought consent. I did not use names in my conversations with my supervisors because they could have known participants through professional connections. Codes and pseudonyms were used during data analysis and written presentations. Data from all the methods were transcribed by an interstate transcription service and I checked beforehand to confirm the transcriber was not familiar with the field or geographical area of this study. Video recordings of observations were only viewed by me and any discussion about observations was done via the written transcripts. Data descriptions

were checked with my supervisors to determine if participants were adequately de-identified and to revise descriptions to improve de-identification.

The potential for participant vulnerability was not only connected to confidentiality in this study but in at least two other aspects; the power dynamic in the supervisor-supervisee relationship, and exposure of practice during the observations. Like researcher-participant relationships, power dynamics can be a feature of supervisor-supervisee relationships (Beddoe, 2012; Hawkins & Shohet, 2012; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997). Supervisees who were potential participants could feel obliged to participate in this study if their supervisor was interested. I included a request in recruitment materials for supervisees to express interest with me in the first instance then to seek interest from their supervisor, after which, (if applicable) I approached and sought consent from the pair's organisation for their participation (Appendix C and Appendix D).

The observation method and the previously discussed recruitment challenges highlighted participant vulnerability as an ethical consideration in this study. It related to the prospect of being observed and exposed in everyday practice, which may have been a deterrent for potential participants. I addressed this through conversations with potential participants during recruitment. I provided details about how the observations would be conducted and that the research question sought a description of what happened in supervision sessions, no matter what that entailed. Coupled with my commitment to consult with them about sensitive material, there appeared to be relief for some when they heard I was not seeking a certain approach to supervision sessions, both of which helped them to make informed decisions.

Another ethical consideration for this study was boundaries related to role and relationship because of my familiarity and existing relationships with social workers who considered participating in this research. Because of my teaching and other practice experience, I knew a

wide network of social workers from various organisations. I knew 14 of the 18 participants selected for this study in some capacity, most of which were historical or brief relationships.[11] This could have influenced recruitment and the study through potential participants' avoidance or lack of interest because I was the researcher – for example, dissatisfaction with past interactions with me – or a desire to participate because of favourable connections with me, which may have meant, for example, that they considered participating so they could *help out* or saw an opportunity for professional advice on their supervision practice.

Beyond recruitment, my familiarity with participants presented ethical issues and challenges in data collection and analysis. Participants may have spoken and behaved in front of me in ways that related to their knowledge about me as a practitioner and supervisor rather than a researcher. Similarly, those same connections could have influenced my interpretations and there was a risk that I might draw conclusions solely from personal values and opinions rather than combined with data collected. To bolster my role as researcher with the participants I used non-participant observation and unstructured interview methods,[12] and kept conversations before and after observations, interviews, and focus groups to a minimum. When conversations did occur, I limited subject matter to this research. When some participants asked for feedback on their sessions or views, I said I could only talk with them about their practice once the research was complete and the thesis was published.

For the employing organisations of potential participants, the ethical considerations related to confidentiality, such as, my access to confidential information about the organisation, practitioners, and clients, and protecting the identity of participants and organisations.

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[11] Six of the eight observation participants and eight of the 10 focus group participants. I met some in my work, some attended supervision workshops I facilitated, and I had been educator for some as social work students.

[12] As discussed in the previous section about data collection.

Potential participants were not restricted from directly advising their organisation about their interest, however, the process described above – wherein I approached the organisation to seek consent – was in place so that participants did not have to identify themselves. The Organisation Information Statement (Appendix C) included details about de-identifying the participants and organisation, such as, pseudonyms for participants and broad descriptions of organisations, for example, “a small non-government organisation". Organisations were also advised about potential risks related to practical impacts on participants meeting work requirements during the research. Other time commitments were included in both participant and organisation information statements to support informed decisions about any potential additional workload.

During the active phase of this study, data records were stored on the University of Newcastle cloud server. Electronic documents, such as, notes and draft chapters were also stored on the cloud server and a password-protected personal computer. Hard copies of transcripts and associated notes during data analysis were stored in a locked cabinet. Once the study was complete, hard copy documents that could be used for future research and publications were stored securely in the School of Humanities and Social Science at the University of Newcastle and electronic documents remained on the university’s secure cloud server.

Potential Benefits of this Study

This study drew attention to supervisors and how their supervision practice could be developed and sustained through supervision sessions and conversations. It represented a step-away from most other supervision research which focused on supervision of client practitioners or workers, and that looked at supervisors in terms of supervision they *provided* rather than *received*. Additionally, other supervision research provided self-report data from supervisors and supervisees – mostly via surveys and interviews. The theoretical value of those findings was strengthened by this study and its use of multiple methods.

The observations of three consecutive supervision sessions for each pair provided direct evidence and knowledge, in real-time, of supervision sessions, supervisors, and how participants engaged with each other and considered approaches to supervising others. The findings from this research could shift understandings and acceptance of the relevance of supervision models and approaches that focus on supervisors and their development, as a parallel to the usual emphasis on client practitioners.

For the participants in this study, there may be practice development benefits. They might have looked more closely at their supervision approaches during and after the research, and could have reflected on their experiences and others' views or insights about how they approached supervision. Those benefits might lead to more informed understandings about themselves and others and improvements in reflective and reflexive practice contexts.

This study was conducted in the midst of critical commentary about the place and suitability of social work supervision in contemporary social, political, and organisational landscapes, with associated organisational demands, such as, surveillance, risk aversion, and emphasis on data and performance. Participants in this study provided vivid descriptions of varied

experiences and both personal and professional impacts of those issues. Those descriptions and some of the strategies presented in this study could be used as part of supervisor development in tackling the issues and managing the impacts. Another benefit might be an openness to integrating manager and supervisor roles and responsibilities. That is, rather than the more common separation, supervisor learning and development opportunities could focus on navigating the associated tensions and meeting both organisational and professional expectations.

Limitations of this Study

The research design was a considered exercise in determining ways in which the methods and analysis processes would alleviate some of the biases and concerns associated with research. However, not all of those elements could, or needed to, be eradicated and there will always be limitations in research. It was difficult to manage anonymity of the four pairs in the observations. They come from a relatively small social work community and, regardless of my efforts to de-identity them, their data may be familiar to a reader. It might also be suggested that four pairs and two focus groups was a relatively small sample that might be considered inadequate for reliable evidence. I had five occasions of contact with each of the pairs which, combined with the focus groups, meant a total of 22 transcripts for analysis (see Table 3.3). Notwithstanding the amount of data, this was qualitative research conducted within an interpretive constructivist paradigm that explored meaning that people make through experiences and interactions with others. As such, there was no one *truth* to be identified or replicated (Clarke et al., 2015; Guba & Lincoln, 2008).

The narrow focus on individual supervision with supervision pairs, and exclusion of other forms, such as, group and peer supervision, could be a limitation of this study. While the focus of this study was on individual session experiences, inclusion of the other forms in the

literature review may have provided a broader knowledge base for analysis of findings about participants' broader supervision experiences. Given the dearth of supervisor-specific research, a narrower focus was appropriate for early attention to the knowledge gap, and future research could extend to other forms.

The composition of the participant group was a possible limitation. The majority of participants were social workers that I knew in some capacity which could have influenced some of the limitations related to bias that are discussed below. Most of the supervisors who participated in this study were also managers which, overwhelmingly, was their focus in observations, focus groups, and most interviews, and was one explanation for the absence of conversations about supervision sessions. If more participants in the observations and interviews were not managers, different findings may have evolved. Participants came primarily from two large government organisations. There were notable differences between them in terms of supervision arrangements, but more diversity in findings may have come from a wider selection of agencies, in purpose, size, and governance.

A critical consideration for the data collected from the observations was that they represented just three sessions of a much longer series of each pairs' supervision sessions prior to this study. The absence of certain conversations in the observed sessions did not mean they had never happened. They may have been in earlier sessions, so a passing comment during the observations might have been fitting for topics already covered. Additionally, given the supervision pairs were already established at the time of this study, there was no opportunity to observe if, when, and how roles and purpose were negotiated as part of establishing their relationship. Such context may have helped explanations for the nature, occurrence, and absence of some content and processes.

My presence in participants' worlds had the potential for limitations associated with observer-effect, social desirability responses, and self-censoring, which could have also been balanced-out with some opportunities. The observer-effect has purported implications for bias, although the same could be said of any research methods. The limitations may be matched by valuable benefits and it could be argued that participants' "performances – however staged for or influenced by the observer – often reveal profound truths about social and/or cultural phenomena" (Monahan & Fisher, 2010, p. 358). Along the same lines, social desirability responses from participants were possible in methods that were recorded, and they may have said and done what they thought I was seeking or valuing (Baxter & Jack, 2008). There was also the possibility that participants wanted to perform in a particular way in front of their supervision partner while being observed.

All of the research methods used in this study had the added potential for self-censoring (Monahan & Fisher, 2010) which might have limited how participants described or demonstrated their knowledge and approaches. Social desirability and self-censoring could have been compounded by participants knowing me through interactions in practice, social work education activities, or my supervision experience and knowledge. Even though the participants volunteered to participate in this study, they may have been anxious or worried about being observed or about what information would be presented as part of the write-up of this research and in a public space. As such, they could have protected themselves by restricting what they talked about and how they talked about it.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the research methodology chosen for this study. Nested in an interpretive constructivist paradigm, a qualitative case study methodology was most suited to the central focus on four supervision pairs – the *cases* – who were observed in three

consecutive supervision sessions and each member interviewed sometime after observations ended. This chapter also described the addition of focus groups to this study, which used the Anna scenario as another form of case study, to explore supervisors' ideas about supervising supervisors. An overview of data collection and analysis was provided, alongside ethical considerations and limitations. Premised on the theoretical foundations of symbolic interactionism and role and identity, the single, cross-case, and comparative analyses considered meanings that were constructed within and outside supervision sessions.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

This chapter presents findings from observations of 12 supervision sessions, eight individual interviews with observation participants, and two focus groups with a total of 10 participants who did not participate in the observations.

The following themes were identified in the findings:

1. Supervision has mixed meanings
2. Organisational context is pivotal
3. Power appears in different forms
4. Supervision as process and development
5. Building and trading on relationships

The first three themes focus primarily on the shaping of supervision, in terms of supervision understandings and contextual influences. The theme related to power has dual relevance, as part of context and as a dynamic that is aligned with the remaining themes about the interior and process of supervision conversations, developing supervisors, and relationships. Across this chapter, themes are informed by findings about what participants talked about in the observed sessions or what focus group participants planned for conversations with Anna in the scenario. In addition to individual responses from the interviews and focus groups, some examples of supervisor-supervisee exchanges in the observed sessions demonstrated how the pairs interacted and some of the techniques each member used to engage in conversations.

Note: For clarity, when observed pairs are discussed, markers for each member of the pair are used when first noted; supervisee marked with $^{(s)}$ and supervisor $^{(ss)}$. Also note, that 'Anna' is the supervisor-supervisee in the scenario that was discussed by the focus groups.

Supervision has Mixed Meanings

This section begins with findings related to understandings and interpretations of supervision as a broad concept then moves to more specific discussion about supervision of supervisors. Findings relevant to this theme are presented in the following parts:

- Naming and framing supervision
- Varied activities and locations
- The breadth of supervision topics
- The idea of supervision of supervisors

Naming and framing supervision

Participants indicated that the way in which supervision and supervision sessions were named and framed was influenced by a number of varied factors. Each of the following factors is discussed and findings that indicated similarities and differences are presented:

- Language or terminology
- Views on purpose or intention
- Past experiences

Language or Terminology. The way participants named supervision was central to different understandings and was a potential impediment to a shared understanding of supervision of supervisors as a practice entity. Findings indicated different understandings of the terms and the related practices of *supervision* and *supervision sessions*, as well as what *supervision of supervisors* or *supervising supervisors* entailed. Additionally, other supervision-related terms used by participants – such as, "group supervision", "clinical supervision", and "manager supervision" – contributed to varied interpretations of supervision as a general practice

concept and supervision sessions as one component of supervision. As such, when participants used the term “supervision” – singularly or coupled with other words – it was often only understood through how and where the term was used.

The term “supervision” was often used as both a general banner heading for different supervision activities and as shorthand for “supervision session” – for example, “I’m going for supervision” or “someone’s coming for supervision”. The terms were seldom used in the observed sessions; some of the few examples were; “the next couple of supervision sessions”, “when I have supervision next week”, and “in supervision he has been…”.

It was common for participants to demonstrate, or refer to, behaviours and activities that were consistent with definitions of professional supervision, but not specifically stated as such. For example, most supervisees referred to *conversations* with, or *talking* or *speaking* to others about practice, relationships, or the work environment. Examples included, “I *spoke to* them individually at work”, “I *went back to* them individually”, “we had *a lot of conversation*”, “I've *spoken more* with my team after that”. The following additional example from the observations demonstrated reference to “conversations” and “talking” by Roger(s) about supervision activities with both a worker-supervisee and his own supervisor;

> I remember I had *conversations* with [worker], and she said, "You haven't engaged with me how I needed to be engaged around this." …it was somewhat of a revelation; it's not about them coming over to me in my way, I've got to go to them, and I remember *talking* with you about that. (Roger, session)

A term that appeared to affect how participants interpreted and framed supervision, especially supervising supervisors, was “clinical supervision”. Some participants had been, or were still, clinical practitioners which seemed tied to their foundational frame of reference; that “supervision sessions” were those dedicated to client practice in which the supervisee was a

worker who provided counselling, support, services, or programs for clients or service users. "Clinical supervision" was more commonly used by participants who worked in health settings, such as, the first focus group and three observation participants, and may have been more prevalent in organisations where individuals had a separate manager and supervisor.[13]

In her interview, Mary(ss) referred to the observed supervision sessions with Susan(s) as "clinical supervision". When I asked her how she defined clinical supervision, she provided the following description which not only focused on clients but made significant reference to social work ethics and principles which, in turn, were linked to professional development;

> Clinical supervision is about always being mindful of our social work code of ethics, what it actually is to be a social worker… reminding of those things around self-determination and confidentiality and the importance of respect for our clients and self-care for ourselves. I think that's probably why I call it clinical supervision, is because it comes up under that professional development. (Mary, interview)

As a comparison, Mary noted that the supervision that Susan provided to others "is a bit different to my supervision because she's a *manager supervisor*". However, in their observed sessions, in addition to talking about some of Susan's counselling work, they also focused on Susan's management of the service. Susan and Mary both provided supervision sessions (separately) for the same workers in the agency; both provided individual sessions and Mary also provided group supervision. Each of them reported in their interviews that they had not talked with each other, specifically, about the differences and similarities between what each of them did with the same workers. In one of the observed sessions, when talking about how

[13] Compared to having the same person as their ('line') manager and supervisor. That is, where the manager provides day-to-day management and direction for the same people for whom they also provide supervision sessions (individual and/or group; monthly or another frequency).

Susan had changed her approach to supervision sessions with workers, Mary made the following comment on what she may have considered the difference;

> But most managers would be thinking… when you have regular supervision, as in not clinical supervision but manager supervision… to have those things that you need to ask your manager about, things that have sort of been, you know, you're maybe not too sure of, or you're not comfortable with, or you just need more clarification around. It would be nice to have all those things. (Mary, session)

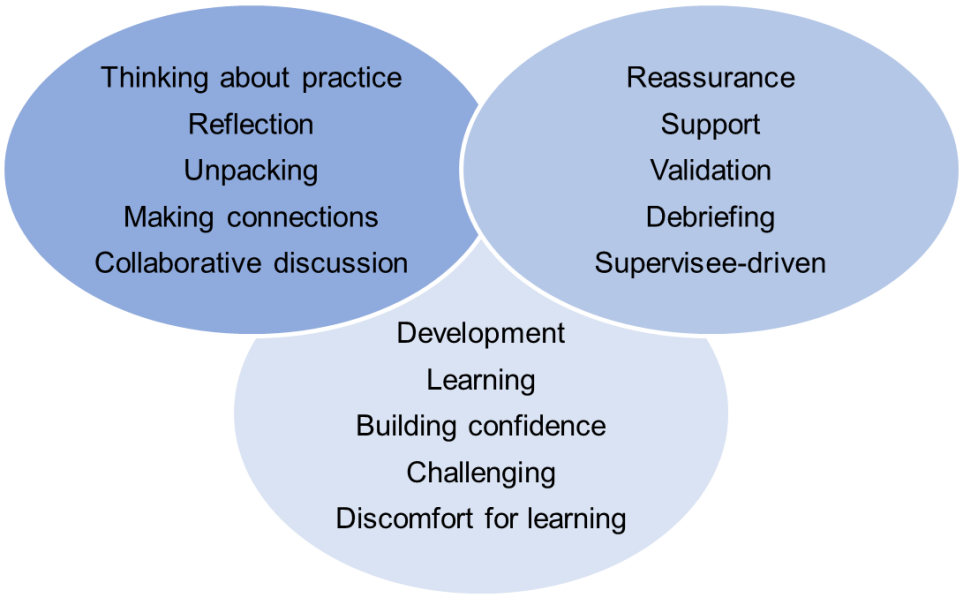
Regardless of titles, in Susan and Mary's observed sessions, the processes and concepts explored in-session – such as, practice challenges, emotional responses, confidence, and relationships – seemed to fit with both of Mary's descriptions of clinical supervision and manager supervision.

Views on Purpose or Intention. Participants commonly identified supervision conversations as developmental – with a learning focus – which entailed debriefing, reflection, support, and guiding practice. A summary of what they identified is provided in Table 4.1 which organises their responses into clusters of similar elements, such as, purpose and process. Some more detail is discussed below in example findings. Claire(ss) encapsulated a view of supervision which included an emphasis on professional development, reflective processes, and thinking about practice within wider contexts. She stressed the significance of "role" and that supervision conversations were a conduit for "development of understanding in a *professional* role";

> … it's about making sense of where you sit in the work; How do you influence the outcomes that you're trying to achieve in whatever role it is? How do you mediate your own responses to things as an individual with a professional role? How do you mediate the expectations of your agency with what you think you can and can't do? (Claire, interview)

Table 4.1:

Participants' Views on the Purpose of Supervision



Susan[(s)] concurred with the developmental focus of supervision. In her observed sessions and interview she talked about introducing a "structure" to supervision sessions that she provided. Susan saw supervision sessions serving different "sections" or functions, the combination of which would "support" and "develop" supervisees;

> …splitting supervision into the three kind-of sections to come up with a bit of a plan. So, in the administrative role, then it will be a little bit of workload planning or most of the guys have said, "I'll bring a case to supervision and we can use our tools, our frameworks, to kind of work through that". Then, just how they would like to be supported. So, it is kind of like a case plan, in a way, to keep us on track… with professional development and stuff like that… I think there's something safe about that structure. (Susan, session)

Roger[(s)] agreed with the importance of support and said, "supervision supports a practitioner in a tough gig… it's not just the practice, it's the supporting around the other bits and pieces as well". Other participants extended the support purpose and considered "reassurance" and "validation" as other important intentions. In her interview, Mary[(ss)] commented, "That's how I see our supervision sessions; is me really just validating what Susan[(s)] is talking about, validating her ideas, and just giving her a safe space where she can be unsure". Separately, Susan confirmed Mary's ideas with her own view about her supervision sessions;

> I just get that reassurance from my supervision sessions, and with this issue… it's not something I've done before. So, it's new and exciting, but at the same time I don't want to stuff it up, so getting that reassurance from Mary… (Susan, interview)

Sarah[(s)] talked about the importance of "validation" from a supervisor;

> To have somewhere I can go, and go, "My goodness, this is so annoying", is quite helpful for me in terms of getting some of that out and having somebody that goes, "Yeah, that is really difficult"; that validation of that situation. (Sarah, interview)

Validation and reassurance were often coupled with "boosting" and building "confidence". Susan[(s)] talked a lot about the confidence she gained from conversations with Mary[(ss)] and how it supported her practice and decision making; "The confidence I get. That boost of

confidence that I am doing okay in this role and the decisions I'm making are sensible decisions with thought behind them". Roger[(s)] described the "evolution" of his confidence over time after he previously had "worries" about what he said to Claire[(ss)];

> I remember telling Claire that I would think about the words that I would say before I would say them [in supervision sessions], and she was really surprised [and] said, "Why is that?" I said, "because I'm worried that you'll take it out of context or whatever". Now, it's not at all like that, but that was the evolution of my confidence. (Roger, interview)

In a focus group, Carol talked about the importance of "collaborative discussion" in supervision sessions when she commented on how organisational stressors and expectations should be approached with supervisees so that they can express their own views; "rather than defending a standpoint that you [supervisor] have to make someone see. It is more about a discussion about the organisational direction, rather than defending it".

Some participants identified "reflection" and "debriefing" as components of supervision sessions, and that subject matter could be either longer term or immediate;

> I would go into my supervision sessions [as supervisee] with my own sort of agenda, whether that be something that I have been meaning to bring to supervision for some time, or something I want to look at, or training that I've been to – reflecting on that or something – or whether that be something that's happened that day and I just need to debrief about it. (Betty, focus group)

Roger[(s)] also saw the importance of reflection and developing supervisees' reflective abilities through *unpacking* and making *connections*. When he spoke about a particular worker, he thought the intention or outcome of supervision sessions should be; "ultimately, he's [supervisee] got to leave the session going, 'I'm more reflective than when I walked in'; reflective in a sense that his behaviours are going to influence people".

Others talked about supervision sessions as a space for *discomfort* or "uncomfortableness" that resulted from difficult subject matter and *challenges* posed by the supervisor, and a space where supervisees could prepare for the work outside sessions. For example, Roger[(s)] talked about being challenged "pretty heavily" while still maintaining his relationship with Claire[(ss)];

> You can have supervision and be challenged pretty heavily and still actually go with that. It doesn't change that relationship… There's a space there where you could actually talk about the challenging good stuff, the confronting stuff, the confusing stuff, but when we walk out the door, we're still doing our job. (Roger, interview)

Some participants saw the purpose of supervision sessions to be *supervisee-driven* and as responding to the *here-and-now* – example phrases used were, "what shows up" or "what's in the room". In her interview, Mary[(ss)] said, "my idea of clinical supervision, it's what's in the room, what's present in the room, who I'm supervising, and what's the immediate need of the supervisee". Similarly, Sarah[(s)] talked about how supervision conversations needed to change with her needs and described a number of the intentions discussed above in her interview; "I think there'd be times where I'm probably just venting and seeking some validation and other times where I'd be happy to be challenged a little bit and made to kind of think about things in different ways".

The perspectives of different professions also appeared as an influence on the purpose and intention of supervision. For example, in a focus group, Amy provided an example response from nurses in her workplace whenever she told them she was going to a supervision session. Any thought it was related to a "different understanding of what supervision is, or a different experience with supervision… [they say] 'oh, you're in trouble' or something". Audrey[(s)] talked about supervising a nurse who acknowledged the support she gained from supervision sessions and how it was a workable arrangement;

> She has never had any supervision, even though she's been a psych nurse for 20 years. She's really so amazed that you can get this sort of support, and I really enjoy providing it to her. It's definitely a different model, but I think we seem to – you know, nothing is lost in translation. (Audrey, interview)

Past Experiences. Another influential frame of reference for participants was their past experiences of supervision. Most participants had varied experiences as both supervisors and supervisees over time and reported that they used poor experiences of being supervised as references for "what not to do" as a supervisor. In a focus group, Bianca presented the following example, and implied she could have received more relevant or useful guidance to develop as a supervisor;

> [After becoming a supervisor] my first supervision session I got told… I had to keep a box of tissues on a high shelf so that if someone cried, I could stand up because that would make them look up and stop crying. That was the wisdom *[sarcastic tone]* that was passed down to me. (Bianca, focus group)

In the same group, Chloe concurred about some negative experiences and also provided a divergent view about what "empowered" her;

> I had [supervisors] asking me about the things that I did well, or really challenging me around my thinking, with the goal for me to be competent in my decisions and my skills. So, kind of critically reflective discussions, but not for the purpose of ridicule. I think that worked really well for me. (Chloe, focus group)

In his interview, Roger(s) noted that there were common perceptions that supervision sessions focused on problems or they were disciplinary responses to concerns; "I think people think supervision is where you go in and get kicked in the arse", and "I know a few staff that have said they go in [to supervision sessions] and just get berated". Some focus group participants

agreed, and one also talked about the prevalence of those perceptions with disciplines other than social work.

Varied Activities and Locations

Some participants talked about supervision as a collection of activities that included more than scheduled supervision sessions. They demonstrated and reported on conversations that occurred in different locations, that were not scheduled, and that had aspects of the purpose or intention of supervision in the findings that were discussed in the previous section.

I used the terms *in-session* and *out-of-session* to denote the location of supervision conversations. *In-session* referred to dedicated – most often pre-scheduled – time for focused conversation; like the sessions that I observed. *Out-of-session* referred to day-to-day interactions and conversations in the workplace that went beyond administrative or instructional supervision of workers and activities; for example, "We have lots of debates and political discussions", and, "we talked about [my concern about a practice event] a little bit and we've had a few more conversations about it, and yesterday again". For this study, the terms in-session and out-of-session helped link data to supervision sessions as the focal point of this study. They were an attempt to shift the implied favouring of formality in more commonly used supervision terms – *formal* and *informal* – and to heighten *conversation* as central in supervision practice. Given I did not observe the out-of-session activities that were discussed in the observed sessions, and because there was a common absence of terms such as *supervision session* or *session*, I used some conjecture to determine their location.

References to individual supervision were both in-session and out-of-session. Group supervision was only referred to as an in-session encounter. I interpreted some of the team interactions that supervisees discussed as team supervision – which occurred both in-session

and out-of-session – and I defined team supervision *sessions* as events such as, team meetings that the observed supervisees had convened and talked about in their sessions.

Roger[(s)] described supervision sessions as a "hub" for a range of supervision activities, and said they were, "where it starts at, and everything feeds out from there". One description Roger gave of a combination of group and individual supervision arrangements was, "[I use] other development and training spaces [alongside supervision sessions] where I can talk about new and emerging practices … that features into our practice group and features into supervision with [worker]". He also described a "tool" he learned about in training some years ago, titled "five-minute feedback", as an interaction that occurred in the work space, where he or another manager would say to a supervisee, "Hey, have you got five minutes? I saw this… This is what [I saw]… Can I get some commitment of some change?" Roger reported regular use of the activity and noted that, "it only springboards off a big supervision session". He pointed out that proximity and contact frequency between supervisor and supervisee was critical for a collection of supervision activities, as a degree of "intimacy" through visibility and "physical presence" was essential for many out-of-session activities.

Examples of other supervision activities were practice groups and group supervision that focused on, for example, "new and emerging practice", how the team worked together, and (in Roger's groups) how they managed, led, and supervised others.[14] In one of her observed sessions, Susan[(s)] talked about a joint session facilitated by her and Mary[(ss)] with a worker. She noted valuable outcomes for her in terms of reassurance and validation when she was "confirmed", and the importance of consistent messages for supervisees;

[14] Roger's group sessions were with a group of managers who, in turn, supervised client practitioners.

> I remember I struggled a little bit with that [worker's response] in that, maybe I'm missing something? You know, maybe I should be more emotional? But I just didn't feel it… I'm really grateful that day that the three of us came in and we said, "Look, let's do this session together about that family". I found that really helpful in that I had said all of the things you said to her, and you and I hadn't spoken about it. That, for me, was really – what's the word? Like, it confirmed to me… (Susan, session)

The idea of supervision as a collection of activities was prompted by the observed pairs when they talked more about conversations and activities with supervisees that occurred out-of-session – often on-the-run or in-the-moment – that were more casual but with a purpose. They included connecting around a practice event or issue – with clients, other workers, or the supervisee – exploring what workers were thinking, or issues confronted by teams. On some occasions, they addressed some concerning behaviour, and some followed up on previous conversations that had happened in individual and group settings with or about the worker. In the following example, Sarah[(s)] referred to concerns she had about some clinical practice of workers and her view that there had been an oversight;

> A lot of session notes talk about anger management about this, and anger management about that, and it's like, "Have you guys actually talked about the drug and alcohol at all, and [talked about], 'you have a tendency to shut down?". [They said], "No, not really. We just talked anger management". Why would you just talk anger management without looking at some of that other stuff behind it? (Sarah, session)

The Breadth of Supervision Topics

Findings showed a wide variety of topics that participants covered in the observed sessions and in proposals for Anna's sessions in the scenario. Those findings also provided further indication as to how participants interpreted supervision. Table 4.2 and Table 4.3 contain

topic summary lists from the observed pairs and the focus groups respectively. Topics spanned individuals and teams, dynamics and processes, skills and techniques, and immediate and broader contexts. Many of the topics related to managing and leading others. They covered participants' past, present, and future, as well as their personal values and attributes and how they used them. Amongst the range of topics, the most common – and seemingly most pressing – were *relationships* that participants had with others, and aspects of the *organisations* in which they worked or talked about.

Table 4.2 lists the main topics covered by each pair in the observed sessions. Their focus was widespread and predominantly fell into categories related to management and leadership. Popular topics included organisational roles, exercise of authority, managing or leading staff, and dealing with change. All participants also talked about relationships as a major issue, and other topics included, transitioning to a new role and identity; creating structure, systems, and guidelines; personal values and their influence; and, future planning. Examples of each are provided in the theme sections related to organisations and development.

The following is a brief snapshot of each of the observed pairs' coverage of topics. More detail about some of those topics and their related conversations is presented across the themes that are presented in this chapter;

Roger$^{(s)}$ *and Claire*$^{(ss)}$ focused predominantly on Roger's day-to-day supervision, management, and leadership of managers who supervised workers. A consistent focus was relationships between himself and managers he supervised and within the team of managers. His concerns about organisational changes and executive performance and decision making were often considered influences on him and his unit. They also referred to group supervision sessions that Claire facilitated with Roger and the manager team.

Table 4.2:

Observations: Conversation Topics

Roger & Claire	Audrey & Valerie [15]
• Relationships – expectations of others, and incongruencies • Team dynamics, tensions, and identity • Consulting and communicating • Organisational change and culture • Personal values and their influence • Future – unit, programs, and career • Ending this supervision relationship	• Individual clients (one per session) • Practice arenas – child protection, domestic violence, sexual assault (survivors and offenders), mental health • Therapeutic relationships and boundaries • Therapeutic practices and approaches • Information sources, adequacy, accuracy, and congruency • Risks, worries, and trust-mistrust • Personal values and their influence
Sarah & Jack	**Susan & Mary [16]**
• Relationships – expectations of others and politics in workplace tensions • Reassuring and supporting staff • Managing practice, time, and workloads • Referral, funding, and service systems • Recruitment adequacy and involvement • Organisational change and culture • Future – pending leave and career • Ending this supervision relationship	• Relationships – expectations of others and power dynamics • Team dynamics, identity, and achievement • Creating structure, systems, and guidelines • Change management and service identity • Funding, contracting, and service systems • Therapeutic relationships and approaches • Multiple roles – developing and balancing • Personal values and their influence • Future – service and career

[15] Talked about client practice only – therapy/counselling.

[16] Talked about mostly management, supervision and leadership, and some client practice.

Audrey[(s)] *and Valerie*[(ss] primarily covered Audrey talking about a specific client or session in some detail, in terms of what was happening for her at the time or seeking ideas for moving sessions or individuals forward. Their sessions focused on boundaries and relationships with clients, especially related to safety and trust, and different techniques that Audrey might use in future sessions. They did not discuss Audrey's supervision practice in their sessions and both were intrigued about what that might look like.

Sarah[(s)] *and Jack*[(ss)] had a range of conversations about Sarah's upcoming extended leave, organisational changes, funding pressures, and concerns about recruitment practices. Their organisational focus often considered workplace relationships about which Sarah had concerns and struggles. They spoke about continuing professional education, accreditation, and Sarah's plans related to going on leave and her career.

Susan[(s)] *and Mary*[(ss)] spent most of their sessions talking about managing the agency, leading practice change in the agency, funding, and contracting matters. To a lesser degree, they also considered Susan's counselling practice. Mary also facilitated the group supervision sessions which were held on the same day as individual supervision. Two of the observed sessions started with, or referred to, the group sessions that they had both just attended beforehand (where Mary was facilitator and Susan was a participant).

Table 4.3 captures the topics that focus group participants suggested they would discuss with Anna in the scenario. Both groups identified the same main topics for conversation, which were extracted from responses to questions related to key information, issues and challenges, and ideas for supervision conversations with Anna. The most pressing issues that both groups saw for Anna were her *relationships with supervisees* – which had become tense after she started in the dual roles of being both their supervisor and practice colleague – coupled with

how Anna could be *supported to move into her new supervisor role* and, critically, to occupy dual roles and simultaneously sustain relationships with others.

Findings across observations, interviews, and focus groups suggested it was not common for participants to use their own supervision sessions to talk about sessions they provided, and many required prompts in interviews and focus groups to think about what those supervision sessions might entail. Some participants – one in the observations and numerous in the focus groups – were clear that, even though they supervised workers, their own supervision sessions focused on client-related practice, conversations, and interventions.

Table 4.3:

Focus Groups: Topics Proposed for Conversation

• Relationships – changing, expectations, tensions, and re-engaging • Organisational changes, expectations, and tensions defending organisation • Supervision conversations (as supervisor) • Own supervision sessions (as supervisee)	• Integrating supervision and performance feedback • Transitioning to new role and identity – understanding, developing, balancing, boundaries, competence shift, and transferring skills

Some supervisees in the observed sessions rarely or never spoke about the supervision sessions they provided for others as supervisors, especially where they occupied dual roles, such as manager and counsellor. When they did have an agenda, it did not include plans to talk about sessions they had conducted. When supervision sessions were discussed, it was

mostly brief, with no constant, consistent, or specific focus on the sessions they provided or experienced as supervisors – such as, a comprehensive overview and analysis of a session.

The pairs who did talk about supervision sessions included reflections on brief moments in sessions, preparation for upcoming sessions, quick reporting-back on applying ideas generated in their own sessions, and developments in their practice and relationship with supervisees. One brief example from Roger[(s)] in an observed session was; "I took a very easy approach, and it was, as I think we discussed; he was really quite surprised that I just said, 'What was your involvement?', 'What did you think about it?', kind of thing". Roger also drew links between his own supervision session conversations and those he had with a supervisee; "…that idea we discussed to say, 'What do you think? *in supervision*; he has been pretty good *each month* because those kinds of questions force him to actually have a view".

Susan[(s)] referred to a plan and documents that she had introduced to create some more "structure" for the sessions she provided. She said there had been improvements in supervision conversations – with no detail of conversation content – and that the structure introduced some "accountability" for her. Susan also said there had been changes in the value that both she and supervisees had placed on the activity and process since the change;

> … [that] bit of structure with supervision is really nice because it keeps me accountable. Like, I have to fill in the notes, because I said I would. It's really nice. It feels so bizarre to me that – you know, [worker] was prepared and had thought up some things for our supervision. It was like, oh, that's really nice that it was important to her, and it wasn't just this thing we had to do. (Susan, session)

The Idea of Supervision for Supervisors

The observations provided examples of what supervisors' own supervision sessions might include. Interview and focus group data extended some of those ideas. Those findings also provided views about the relevance of supervision for supervisors, as well as what differences (if any) there might be between supervision of supervisors compared to supervision of others, such as, workers and students.

There was consensus between participants that supervising supervisors was important. They reiterated the purpose or intention of supervision described above and applied it to supervision of supervisors – such as, "validation", "reflection", and "guiding practice". They coupled those with other purposes, such as, identifying with supervisees' experiences, checking consistency with organisational expectations, and supporting their modelling to others. In a focus group, Daisy suggested it was important to explore "key messages" and "biases" because of the "amount of influence [supervisors have] over so many people"; "I'd be really wanting to check-in and having those supervision sessions with my manager to ensure that those key messages I'm sending to people are correct, particularly my biases about the things being checked-on".

In the other focus group, Diane said the value of supervision for supervisors was how it could ensure the "integrity", "appropriateness", and "usefulness" of supervisors' approaches, and the importance of thinking about the complexity of supervising others; "There have been times where providing supervision has been difficult or challenging, and required large amounts of thought, and that opportunity to use supervision to make sure the integrity of what I was providing was appropriate, was useful".

One of Valerie's[(ss)] views about the importance of supervising supervisors was that it equipped supervisors with the capacity to provide a "secure base" for people they supervised; "In order to provide that secure base [for workers], I think that supervisors, or managers, or leaders in general, they need to be able to do that for themselves before they can do it for workers". Her suggestion also had a modelling component, whereby supervisors could identify with the supervisees' experiences through their own experiences and translate that into supervision of others. This fitted with other findings; that supervisors' past experiences – especially as supervisees – influenced how they approached supervision.

Many participants' understandings about supervision of supervisors pivoted on perceived similarities and differences with supervision of workers and students. To denote a difference with supervising students, Jack[(ss)] described some aspects of supervising supervisors as; "It is chatty. It is very collegial. We're almost equals in that supervision". Jack also distinguished supervising supervisors based on recollections of his own supervisee experiences over time – as he moved into more senior positions – which he saw as "softer", "collegial", "less formal", "more supportive", "less about theory", and "more about relationships in work" but "not gossipy". He reported he was less likely to disagree with a supervisee who was also a supervisor. He also thought relationship duration was an influence – student supervision had been briefer than the two years spent with Sarah[(s)] – and that he was more likely to raise alternative views, pose challenges, or contradict a student supervisee;

> …if someone says something I disagree with, I think with a student I'd be much more inclined to say, "I don't know. I disagree with that. I think it could be X, Y, Z instead of A, B, C." I'm less likely to go, "I disagree with that" with Sarah. I'm more likely to hear that out and hear why she has that opinion, and then if I think there's room to change it, then I might do that. I've been a lot more sort of letting her talk and flow and all that sort of stuff. (Jack, interview)

The common frames of reference that participants used to define supervision, and the language or terminology they used – such as "clinical supervision" – seemed to have some bearing on whether, or not, they saw a distinction between supervising supervisors and others, and what they chose to focus on in their own supervision sessions. Audrey[(s)] chose to use all her supervision sessions to talk about her counselling practice. Until prompted during this study, Audrey had not considered using supervision to talk about her supervision of others. Her thoughts about when she would focus on her supervision practice in supervision sessions hinged on the number of supervisees she had at any time or the existence of problems or concerns with supervisees;

> If I supervised a lot of people, I probably would. At the moment, I supervise three. Or if I had a supervisee that I really had concerns about, I would definitely talk about it. Absolutely. Because that can happen, that you think, wow, this person is not competent, or – and I've had the experience with colleagues, but not with supervisees. (Audrey, interview)

My discussions with some potential participants during the recruitment phase of this study provided some pertinent perspectives about the relevance and content of supervision of supervisors. For example, some said they supervised supervisors but did not have *supervision sessions* with them. They said they "met with" supervisors – who were often managers – but did not see those conversations as the same as what happened in supervision sessions with client practitioners. Mary[(ss)] provided some more insight to this in her interview when she described "roundings" in her workplace; managers' meetings with their supervisors. Mary saw them as different to a supervision session, even though the example questions she provided in the following response might also appear in a supervision session;

> I don't know whether what Susan[(s)] is doing [with others] is supervision or what we're calling "rounding" in [my agency]. It's called rounding when our line managers get us once a month and say, …"How have things been going? Are you struggling with anything? How's your caseload? Is there anything you need?". (Mary, interview)

Valerie[(ss)] compared supervision sessions to therapy sessions. She reported that she used the same therapy model in supervision that she used in her counselling practice. Valerie saw the distinction as the "intention"; "So, there's a really different intention between somebody that you're supervising and somebody that is coming to you for therapy. It's an interesting dynamic to think about why it is that that changes".

Mary[(ss)] suggested that features such as management and a focus on the "service" distinguished supervising supervisors from supervising workers. She framed each type of supervision session as, "client-focused" (casework/clinical) versus "service-focused" (management);

> When I provide clinical supervision to another counsellor… it's really about the casework that they do; the clients. So, they'll come to me with clients that they're stuck with. It's much more client-focused, more so than service. Whereas, I see the management one [with Susan] can be more about the service. (Mary, interview)

Mary provided a potential parallel when she specified what would be covered in clinical or casework supervision – supervisee/self, cases, clients, theories, and specific practice models – which she described as "really direct". She did not provide a similar description of the content of "service" or "management" supervision, or supervision of a supervisor;

> The other supervision [with workers in the agency] is definitely more about the workers, the cases that they're working on, their clients, the theories that they're using, trauma informed practice… so, it can be really direct, I suppose… Whereas Susan is management, that comes into it, that makes a difference, and the service comes into it. (Mary, interview)

In a focus group, Carol recalled a suggestion that arrangements for supervision were not dissimilar to those for client practice; "Someone said something like, 'yes, you don't have a case list, and you don't have that direct contact, but your case list is the staff'". Susan(s) concurred in one of her sessions when she said, "I've probably approached it a bit more like a client rather than – well, they [supervisees] kind of are my clients".

Other findings that suggested commonalities between supervising supervisors and supervising others were some of the topics covered in the observed sessions when either clients or supervisees were discussed. Table 4.4 provides some comparative examples of topics where the subject matter was the same or similar but the focal individual was different.[17] The different conversations similarly explored clients' or workers' relationships and how their behaviours and surroundings reciprocally influenced their response to others. In both settings, the observed supervisees also considered how their own values and behaviours might have influenced clients or workers and their circumstances.

[17] This comparison was possible because two supervisees in the observed pairs talked about their counselling practice with clients.

Table 4.4:

Similarities in Conversation Topics about Clients and Supervisees

SUPERVISION SESSIONS TALKING ABOUT CLIENTS	SUPERVISION SESSIONS TALKING ABOUT SUPERVISEES
Worker-client relationships	Supervisor-supervisee relationships
Challenging client behaviour	Challenging self and others
Risky, dangerous, and defensive practice	Team dynamics, tensions, and identity
Reassuring and supporting clients	Reassuring and supporting supervisees
Setting and navigating boundaries	Setting and navigating boundaries
Client grief, loss, social anxiety	Supervisee stress, run down, worry

Referring to Table 4.4, the cross-over in *relationship* subject matter was evident around tensions and conflicts, and how the expectations of workers or supervisors, and their perceptions of others, seemed to influence their relationships and how others behaved towards them. For example, Roger(s) said, "A challenge which is more difficult for me is that I'm working with people that are just ungracious". Findings indicated that, for workers and supervisors, it was often about creating a workable relationship in which trust was important but not always gained confidently. For example, Audrey's(s) concerns about the accuracy of information provided by a client – "It was very confusing… I just thought, you know, it all didn't add up" – sounded like she was ever-vigilant to the likelihood of new information arising, or of making decisions with the client that ran counter to what she did not know, especially related to risky or violent behaviour.

The example of *dangerous and defensive practice* was paralleled with *team dynamics, tensions, and identity* because of the connections drawn between how teams functioned and their influence on services provided to colleagues and clients. Both pointed to workers' and supervisors' worries about actions and inactions of others and their impact on people and practice. Roger(s) talked about some team relationships "going downhill quickly", which he linked to other conversations where he talked about team tensions and his response to them as "an extension of our group almost, and our identity". Susan(s) spoke about an event where two workers had tried an approach in a group that had not factored-in the risks for them and group participants and that Mary(ss) had to keep reminding them and explaining, "we can't allow that to happen again. We have to assess the clients' situations and it might have been suitable for some clients, but definitely not the two that were in the group and could have been really dangerous".

Audrey(s) talked about how she attempted to manage risk to a client in conversations she had with the client's partner;

> I don't want her to be at risk. Like, if I said everything she said, would there be repercussions for her? I think that was a thought as well, because you know how ex-partners can really accelerate their violence when a woman has left her partner. (Audrey, session)

In terms of parallels in models and approaches, Valerie(ss) talked in her interview about how she directly applied the same therapeutic model and approach that she used in client work[18] to her supervision of others, or "consultation", a term she used for supervision as part her practice model. Audrey(s) and Valerie did not speak about Audrey's supervision practice in

[18] Functional Analytic Psychotherapy (FAP).

any of their sessions. In her interview, Valerie recalled that I had asked after the first observation if they ever covered supervision-related subject matter. It prompted her reflection and "interest" in terms of both her own supervision sessions (as supervisee) and those with Audrey. She spoke about the difference between focusing on process rather than person. Valerie noted that her views were influenced by what happened in sessions where she was the supervisee as well as those where she was a supervisor. It was not known if Audrey was the only supervisor whom Valerie supervised. That may have changed her views, notwithstanding the fact that the pair did not discuss supervision practice during this study;

> I haven't kind of thought about necessarily speaking to even my supervisor about the people that I supervise… Maybe it's just the way that my approach to my [own] supervision is… with a supervisor specifically around the therapy that I use, and so I tend to think of it in terms of how am I using that therapy, what does that look like? So, in the sessions with Audrey, the way that I structure talking about a case is very much around the therapy that I use. So, I talk about that therapy and that structure with my supervisor more so than the actual person that I'm supervising. (Valerie, interview)

Valerie also reported that she viewed the sessions with Audrey as therapy more than supervision. When I interviewed Audrey, she was not aware of the specific model being used but did say that she saw her sessions as a "bit of both" supervision and therapy.

Organisational Context is Pivotal

Various organisational roles and contexts, and the interplay between them, were prominent in findings related to this theme. Participants indicated that their supervision experiences hinged markedly on their organisational environment and the prevailing supervision expectations and opportunities. Participants' different roles and identities are covered in this section, which extends to how some participants reported on how they managed those roles and how roles

influenced the focus of supervisors' own supervision sessions. The section ends with an overview of organisational topics that participants talked about in observations, interviews, and focus groups, which includes an expansion of some topics noted in the previous theme.

The findings relevant to this theme are presented below in the following parts:

- Multiple roles and supervision arrangements
- Conflicting organisational messages and experiences
- Supervision conversations about organisations

Multiple Roles and Supervision Arrangements

Participants across this study occupied two or more concurrent roles in their organisations; manager-supervisor or counsellor-supervisor and some were in multiple roles of manager-counsellor-supervisor. All participants occupied the professional role of social worker. The positions and roles of observation and focus group participants are listed in Table 4.5 and Table 4.6 respectively. They are presented as generic titles, and an attempt was made to reflect like-roles between participants, as well as the possible location of those roles in an organisational design, or line of management or supervision. All but one of the supervisees in the observed pairs had administrative or management responsibilities for the same people for whom they provided professional supervision. The fourth, Audrey[(s)], never talked about her supervision practice in the observed sessions although she was a supervisor (external and not the manager of people she supervised).

Participants rarely referred to any of their role titles explicitly. I related conversation content and the challenges they talked about to their different roles; singularly and combined. For example, participants described experiences and conversations that, on the face of it, were about management of staff, a service, or program, but incorporated content and approaches

that were consistent with supervision. In similar ways, conversations often focused on management and leadership. For example, when Susan[(s)] described her involvement in workers' practice she described an approach that combined management, leadership, and supervision and featured "guidance", "challenge", "accountability", and "support";

> …guidance and that separate set of eyes on the situation to be able to come in say, "Well, what about this?" and really challenge that and hold workers accountable to that – myself included… I understand more about my role, and no matter how experienced workers are, having that guidance just supports them in their role rather than limits them in a way. (Susan, session)

Table 4.7 provides examples of activities or processes described by participants in this study which I grouped according to the roles of manager, leader, or supervisor. For the purpose of this exercise they are separated, however, it is acknowledged that some elements might crossover between roles. The supervisor role content is replicated from findings discussed in the previous section about participants' understandings and interpretations of supervision. Participants sometimes integrated their roles. Supervisor roles were more often hidden amongst others – or absent, given the rarity of in-depth conversations in the observed sessions about supervision conversations and sessions that supervisees provided.

Table 4.5:

Observations and Interviews: Participants' Roles

	Agency type	Roles [19]				
Supervisees in the observed supervision pairs:[(s)] (Roles are in addition to social worker)						
Roger	Government	Senior Manager	Unit Manager		Supervisor (I)	Supervisee (I)
Audrey	Private practice			Counsellor	Supervisor (P/E)	Supervisee (P/E/S)
Sarah	Non-government		Manager	Counsellor	Supervisor (I+P/E)	Supervisee (P/E/A)
Susan	Non-government	Service Manager	Manager	Counsellor [20]	Supervisor (I)	Supervisee (P/E/A)
Supervisors in the observed supervision pairs:[(ss)] (Roles in addition to social worker)						
Claire	Government	Service Director			Supervisor (I/E) [21]	Supervisee (I)
Valerie	Private practice			Counsellor	Supervisor (P/E/S)	Supervisee (P/E)
Jack	Private practice			Consultant/Assessor	Supervisor (P/E/A)	[22]
Mary	Govt & Private [23]			Counsellor	Supervisor (P/E/A)	Supervisee (I+P/E)

[19] Supervisor as related to their supervision partner in the observations. I=Internal; P/E=Private/external; I/E=Internal-external (see note below about Claire); P/E/S=Private/external supervisee-funded; P/E/A=Private/external agency-funded.

[20] At the time of the first observed supervision session, Susan also did case management which had ceased before the second session observation.

[21] Even though Claire worked for the same organisation, she was not Roger's line manager at the time of this study. She did supervise and manage other people in the organisation.

[22] It was unknown if Jack had his own supervision (as a supervisee) at the time of this study.

[23] Mary was in private practice and a part-time counsellor in a different agency to Susan. Mary was contracted by Susan's agency to provide supervision for all staff.

Table 4.6:

Focus Groups: Participants' Roles

Group	Agency type	Roles					No. in this combination
Focus group participants (different combinations within groups) (Roles are in addition to social worker)							
1	Government [24]	Senior Manager			Supervisor	Supervisee	(*n=1*)
			Manager	Counsellor	Supervisor	Supervisee	(*n=1*)
				Counsellor	Supervisor	Supervisee	(*n=4*)
2	Government [25]	Senior Manager	Unit Manager		Supervisor	Supervisee	(*n=1*)
			Manager		Supervisor	Supervisee	(*n=2*)
			Practice Consultant		Supervisor	Supervisee	(*n=1*)

[24] All members were from the same agency but different units or programs within the agency. Most were clinical supervisors (as defined by their agency) and not line managers of people they supervised.

[25] All members were from the same agency but different locations and programs within the agency. Most were line managers who also supervised people they managed.

Table 4.7:

Participants' Activities, Processes, and Roles [26]

Manager		Leader		Supervisor	
• Recruitment and staffing • Budget and funding • Contracting, MOUs, partnerships • Handover preparation for relief • Media presentations • Community events • Structures and systems • New projects	• Policies, procedures, guidelines • Case allocation • Workload management • Referrals, intake, wait lists • Paperwork, records, and reports • Accountability, performance, and audits	• Modelling • Guidance • Supportive change management • Collaborative planning and decision-making • Open to discuss challenges	• Advocacy • Allaying fears/ reassuring staff • Style and approach • Morale • Maintaining standards	• Development • Learning • Reflection • Debriefing • Support • Validation/ reassurance • Thinking about practice • Building confidence	• Teaching • Modelling • Collaborative discussion • Unpacking • Making connections • Discomfort for learning • Challenging • Supervisee-driven

[26] Activities and processes were described by participants. I linked them to the roles. They are presented as separate for this exercise and there are potential overlaps.

Participants described a number of challenges that they confronted in their *manager roles*, which included, discussions with staff on behalf of senior management, "demand management", workload pressures and "busyness", being and "feeling" like a manager, preparation for absences, and their predecessor's style and decisions. In terms of their *leader roles*, they reported that challenges included, finalising matters of tension or closing issues versus walking away, placating staff, supporting staff while dealing with inconsistencies from other senior staff, picking battles, and sharing concerns with people they supervised or managed.

While all the participants provided supervision sessions for others, none appeared to identify *supervisor* as their primary role. Susan[(s)] said she had not acknowledged "supervisor" as one of her multiple roles before participating in this study – "I never had really thought of myself as a supervisor before, even though clearly I provide supervision" – yet, across the observed sessions, she described aspects of her work that were consistent with professional supervision. Supervisees in the observations seldom explicitly used the terms *supervision* and *supervision session*, which suggested their supervisor role was less obvious – either hidden and much less overt than others or integrated with other roles.

Separated or Integrated Roles. In this example, Susan[(s)] implied the integration of roles and conversations that were consistent with supervision within what she referred to as "management stuff"; "…responding to the needs of the staff as well, so it could be a lot of discussion. I go home and I'm like, 'I haven't done anything' but it's been discussion all day about certain things". In the focus groups, participants thought that the challenge of working in different roles was at the fore for Anna in the scenario and they acknowledged the related difficulties for both Anna and themselves in their own practice. Several responses in one

focus group featured the tensions between whether (or not) individuals should occupy different roles and how they should be separated or integrated.

One example was where dual or multiple roles were both external and internal influences in supervisors' own supervision sessions, in terms of what they talked about in their sessions and how they managed their different roles outside those sessions. Diane expressed a clear view that manager and supervisor roles were "not mutually exclusive". She suggested that a combination could serve professional development interests of supervisees. She thought that efforts to split the duality of management (as "accountability") and supervision (as "practice"), and "shifts" or "pushes" in expectations about the focus of supervision, presented difficult challenges for both supervisors and supervisees;

> I don't think it's separate, because part of my [supervisor] role, and part of what's been pushed for us, is that idea of being involved in performance appraisals and those sorts of things. So, there always is an element of, "we're looking for accountability, we're looking for appropriate practice in the service, but how do you grow within that?" I think maybe part of what we're talking about is that Anna has shifted her focus from "how do I help this person to grow their practice so that they're practicing well?" to, "how do I get this person to tick-off the things that I need them to have done?" They're not necessarily mutually exclusive but she's seeing the change as a real shift in the way that she's approaching it, and the response that she's getting from the people that she's supervising sits really consistently with them going, "hang on, something's changed here". (Diane, focus group)

In an observed session, Susan[(s)], a relatively new manager, commented that she was not sure what it "feels like" to be a manager. Mary[(ss)] provided the following overview which suggested that management, leadership, and supervision might be integrated;

> … you have a team and you're actually guiding and mentoring that team. I think that's what a manager feels like. It's not just about the service, it's actually about the team that you have underneath you and their sense of belonging and their sense of – not achievement, but their sense of purpose… And value. Are the directions clear enough? Because when something is not clear, or they're just not quite sure, if they can't get an answer, that sort of stuff then starts to eat away and eat away. (Mary, session)

Most supervisees in the observed pairs seldom made explicit distinctions between managing and supervising others. Their conversations often integrated them in stories and reflections about experiences with workers. In this example, Sarah[(s)] and Jack[(ss)] were talking about Sarah's pending leave and how she was organising work and handover simultaneously with supporting staff and preparing them for the transition;

> I don't have any control over [what happens when I'm gone]. That's very much what I've always said to the team, "You guys are capable. You guys can do it. Yes, you need a bit of support and you need someone to check-in with, but I actually feel like you're very capable and you know what you're doing and I wouldn't let you do, or have, the stuff that you do if I didn't think that you were. And, we wouldn't have employed you", and all of that stuff. I just hope that belief continues, because I think if it doesn't and they don't feel supported, they're going to make mistakes. They're not going to be as invested in work. They're not going to say "yes" to taking on extra things. (Sarah, session)

While management, leadership, and supervision roles were more often integrated, participants were much clearer about separating their counsellor roles from other roles. In the observations, three of the supervisees – Sarah, Audrey, and Susan – were counsellors as well as supervisors, and Sarah and Susan were also managers. All of them appeared to make explicit choices about when their counsellor role would be the focus of their supervision sessions, which varied; for Audrey it was the focus of every session, for Susan it was the

focus in some or parts of her sessions, and for Sarah it was no sessions. Susan talked about a balancing act between her manager and counsellor roles; "It's hard to get my head in and out of it sometimes". In Susan's[(s)] observed sessions, she and Mary[(ss)] mostly talked about staff and service management and, in one session, when they talked about some counselling examples briefly, Mary suggested, "maybe that's something that we could practice in supervision. Maybe for the next couple of supervision sessions instead of focusing on the management stuff, maybe we look at counselling and maybe do some role plays".

Sarah[(s)] was clear that although she was both a manager and counsellor she chose to use her own supervision to develop as a manager. She felt she had enough clinical knowledge and experience and reflective opportunities in her workplace. Sarah saw management as a separate area of knowledge and expertise and thought that her main challenges as a manager – such as, dealing with team tensions and interpersonal challenges – as well as her career, were a more important focus for her. She provided a brief look at what was considered "management" subject matter – "how the place runs, what we do, that sort of thing" – and noted some contextual links;

> Clinically, I probably have enough support systems built into place here, that the types of issues I would probably bring to supervision would be more around management of staff, ongoing kind of issues in terms of how the place runs, what we do, that sort of thing, and I guess my ongoing development and my career progression and professional interests. That would be the kind of stuff that I would more bring to that supervision rather than specific clients or specific clinical issues that arose in practice. (Sarah, interview)

When I interviewed Susan[(s)] and she spoke about her combined manager and counsellor role, she provided a vivid description of the distinction she saw between the two. She based it on

what each role involved, her confidence in each, and how "scary" she found the type or level of power in each;

> I think I feel more confident in the manager's role – because I guess it's a lot more administrative-type stuff – than I do in the counselling role. I feel like the power I have within that relationship is a hell of a lot scarier than the power I have in the manager's role, and I often question whether I'm qualified in the counselling role to be doing that… (Susan, interview)

Supervision Arrangements. All focus group participants, and all but one of the observed supervisees, were employed in an organisation and there were some notable variations in supervision arrangements between different organisations. One of the observed pairs was an internal supervision arrangement in a large government agency and the other two were external; in one large and one small non-government agency. In some organisations, managers provided supervision sessions for the same individuals they managed, while in others they had separate managers and supervisors[27]; "a manager in terms of performance, separate from the supervisor" (Amy, focus group).

In terms of supervision or support *for* managers and supervisors, some participants had their own supervision sessions. Some described those sessions as more administrative than reflective, for example in a focus group, Amy said, "I probably talk less about feelings and theory in my supervision now, and more about the people that I oversee and KPIs [28] and performance stuff for the service". Many participants who were managers attended some type of additional meeting – in place of, or as well as, a supervision session – with their line

[27] Broadly, with an administrative-organisational focus and a practice-client focus respectively.

[28] Key Performance Indicators.

manager to discuss managerial or administrative matters. For example, what Mary(ss) described as "not clinical supervision" that happened in her workplace [29], "but manager supervision, or 'rounding' we call it in [our agency], to have those things that you need to ask your manager about… you're maybe not too sure of [or] not comfortable with, or you just need more clarification".

Roger(s) and Claire(ss), and one of the focus groups, worked in an organisation which had a policy that line managers also provided professional supervision sessions. All other participants in this study worked, or had worked, in organisations where the manager and supervisor were different people, and the latter provided clinical supervision. Some participants in the other focus group had recently been expected to change and integrate supervisor and manager roles, or to integrate practice conversations with performance development. They reported that, for the most part, their organisation had purposefully constructed a distinction – no "crossover" – between the two;

> We've set up certain arrangements so that clinical supervision is provided by someone who might not be involved in the day-to-day performance management or practical… we have two social workers there and I have a role in overseeing. If there were performance issues, then I would play a role in that and that's separate to their clinical supervision [with the other supervisor], which continues so that there is not that crossover… We've made a very conscious effort to split that where we can. (Amy, focus group)

Some participants thought that the distinctions may not be so straightforward. In one focus group, when reflecting on Anna's situation in the scenario, Eric drew attention to this and the potential influence on supervisors and the supervision sessions they provided; "Anna is

[29] Where she was a part-time counsellor; not in Susan's(s) agency.

struggling between defining the difference between acting as a manager, connecting to supervision, and acting as a supervisor and clinical practitioner. I wonder how common an experience that is".

Internal and External Arrangements. It seemed that internal and external supervision arrangements could affect participants' understandings of supervision and might complicate how supervisors approached supervision sessions – such as, the integration or separation of both their own and supervisees' roles, especially if they had to factor-in another supervisor. Figure 4.1 provides an overview of the following internal and external supervision arrangements of participants:

- Internal arrangements. These took two forms in this study;

  Internal only, where managers also provided supervision sessions; and

  Internal-split, or *dual* or *joint*, where an individual had a manager plus another employee who provided supervision; most commonly referred to as "clinical supervision". In some cases, the manager also provided supervision sessions, reportedly with a different focus.

- External arrangements where an individual had both a manager who was an employee of the same organisation [30] and a supervisor from outside the organisation who was either paid by the organisation or self-funded by the supervisee.

Participants said they chose external supervision arrangements for different reasons, which included neutrality, safety, or alternative points of view. Mary(ss) noted a general reason that external supervision might be sought – "sometimes you feel that you can't discuss things with an internal supervisor that you can with an external supervisor" – and, at the same time,

[30] Who may have provided supervision sessions for others in the organisation, but not the person for whom they were manager, especially the organisation of Focus Group 1.

noted, “though, you should be able to discuss anything with an internal supervisor, but it's hard when they're your manager”. Valerie(ss) recalled when she first decided to engage an external supervisor. She wanted to extend the focus of the internal sessions – that were “catch-ups” and focused on workload and performance, which she thought was “not enough” – to more practice-focus, consideration of influences on her practice, and “balancing work-life stuff”;

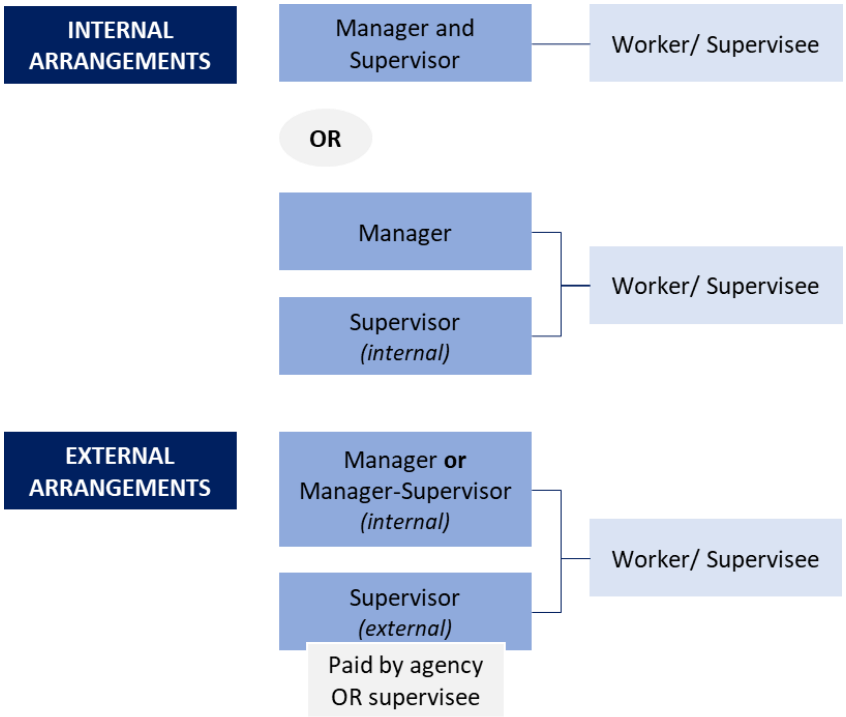
> … like monthly catch-ups or stuff like that. Whereas now, I think of that more in terms of, that is a part of supervision but it's not the full part of what I think of now. So, there's more that holistic framework that I think of now… [back then] I sought external supervision for the work that I was doing, because it wasn't enough to have the supervision; have that kind of monthly KPI sort of catch-up with my manager. It just wasn't enough for my head, to make sure that I was feeling like I was balancing my work-life stuff, so I sought external supervision with [a specialist agency], and I've always done that in my work because I think it is really important. (Valerie, interview)

Valerie later added that external supervision also provided opportunity for her to explore concerns she had about workplace behaviours, which was “tricky” to do internally for two reasons; her supervisor was also her manager, and her supervisor’s management style made it uncomfortable to have such discussions.

> I wanted to have an opportunity to talk about [the manager’s] style externally around what that was like. So, some of the stuff that I was observing in that office was really quite appalling behaviour, and I really benefited from having an external person that I could debrief with and talk about, “what is this? Help me make sense of what is going on in this office?” and that was really useful. (Valerie, interview)

Figure 4.1:

Internal and External Supervision Arrangements



The perceived neutrality of an external supervisor implied in the above also featured in part of Sarah's[(s)] decision to opt for an external supervisor. She said that she had some interpersonal challenges with senior staff and thought an external person was best suited for those discussions. Given the power dynamic that might have existed in those relationships, the external choice may have also meant more freedom to vent and discuss vulnerabilities. For example, in her interview, Sarah said, "sometimes just having that space to go, 'oh, this is so frustrating'. That's been really quite helpful, and I really valued having external supervision for that purpose". The neutrality in Sarah's supervision was reduced somewhat because Jack[(ss)] had knowledge about the program that she managed, albeit in a different organisation. Sarah recalled she had some initial concerns about a potential conflict of interest. She chose Jack because of his experience in her sector and in managing teams –

from which she thought he would be "professional" about the potential conflicts – and she knew him and felt "comfortable";

> … he has a lot of years' experience in [my sector], [and] managing teams, so that's probably enough to make sure that he is professional and, if necessary, we can put something into writing about how the supervision sessions will be conducted and what that means… it was more his level of experience that kind of drew me to him… I'd known him in different capacities and felt comfortable with him. (Sarah, interview)

Jack's(ss) description of external supervision connected roles and the organisational environment which, in turn, he related to the subject matter of his sessions with Sarah. He thought that their sessions could focus more on Sarah because he was not employed in, and did not know the inner workings of, the organisation. He recalled an internal supervision experience which provided a stark description of how he distinguished between internal and external supervision; Jack thought that internal supervision conversations focused on "people management" and were "operationally-focused", and external conversations could be about the supervisee – for example, "feelings" and "frustrations". He saw the fundamental difference hinged on external supervisors not working for supervisees' organisations and not knowing "the reality of the people" they talked about;

> When I [was an internal supervisor, supervising supervisors] … a lot of conversations were around work performance stuff and, "how do I get this person doing their job? How do I hold them accountable if they don't?" And it was really practical [responses]; "here is the work performance operational guidelines, here's the plan where you come up with what needs to be addressed"… almost an operational-type conversation… [in Sarah's supervision] I don't know the reality of the people she's talking about, I'm less likely to talk about the operational procedures, about the A, B, C. I'm more likely to talk about how it is making her feel, or how it is frustrating or whatever. So, in terms of supervising

> supervisors, the arrangement I've got with Sarah is less operationally-focused, if that makes sense. (Jack, interview)

Role structure and arrangements were coupled with other aspects of participants' organisations, such as, supervision policies and the predominant professions or practice models, which they described as added challenges for them and people whom they supervised. Those issues are discussed in the next section.

Conflicting Organisational Messages and Experiences

Many participants who worked in large organisations described negative impacts of their organisation's design, structure, and internal functioning, which were often tied to broader systemic features and changes, such as policy and funding. Their concerns extended to the implications of changes on them, people they supervised, and how they approached supervision sessions and their responses suggested a tussle with competing professional and managerial discourses. For example, in a focus group, Annette noted the following about the scenario;

> Anna feels like she has to defend her organisation when her peers and other people in her team are seeing that, what the organisation is asking, at least some of them feel that that's not the practice, or is a barrier to good practice… I guess that feeds into the tension that she finds herself having to be in a defensive role straight-up. (Annette, focus group)

Similarly, in the other focus group, Fran noted a challenge in navigating, or deciding between, "organisationally-determined" outcomes and "social work values" when she considered the Anna scenario and identified, "elements of anti-oppressive practice, where perhaps this idea of clinicians driven by organisationally-determined KPIs or performance

outcomes clashes with their core social work values. So, maybe they, in a sense, feel that's being replicated vicariously in supervision".

A significant example of mixed organisational messages and associated pressures was provided by the focus group whose participants worked for a large organisation where managers provided supervision. They agreed with each other that organisational messages about supervision were often mixed, confusing, or "tokenistic". They talked about changes over time in organisational expectations about supervision and "accountability" activities for supervisors which, they seemed to think, devalued supervision. For example, Annette lamented, "in previous times, the accountability around providing supervision… knowing who hasn't had supervision this month and who has, and why not – to [now] I wouldn't know the last time I was asked about providing supervision". When the group talked about current times, they described, "a significant change in culture and context within our organisation that's definitely affecting those supervision conversations". In turn, they linked that to internal and external expectations on middle, senior, and executive levels of the organisation, such as, this comment from Daisy;

> The context of supervision in our organisation at the moment [has] an undertone. It's being driven by expectations and the pressures that are coming down [from executive levels]. I definitely get a sense that senior managers are under more stress and accountability than they have ever been in my time working here… [external review and accreditation processes mean] our work is also becoming far more visible and far more accountable as well. (Daisy, focus group)

The group provided more background for the above challenges when they described seemingly constant shifts in organisational expectations about the focus of supervision sessions – from emphasis on reflective learning, support, data, and back again – and the

"absolute conflict" created by such shifts for supervisors and supervisees. They noted frustration when achievements were more often measured through data, rather than practice and client outcomes. This issue also suggested the *enmeshing* of manager, leader, and supervisor roles, and struggles for supervisors to either integrate or separate their roles across contexts or settings. In this related comment, Chloe noted the "conflict" and "competing" messages that were received by people in multiple roles;

> You've got lots of different pieces of different data being fed in, and messages like, "we don't have much time. We just need to get to this number. You've just got to show us this number". At the same time, the organisation is doing things like leadership training, which talks about acknowledging anxiety and slowing down. The two of them compete with each other… there's absolute conflict coming from the same [senior] person sometimes. (Chloe, focus group)

In the same group, Annette concurred about the "real conflict" and "absolute contrast" of organisational messages that had dual priority and urgency on providing data *as well as* achieving quality and, further, how that translated into the focus of supervision sessions;

> But then you have a [supervision] session, that potentially might be on the one day, where you are then looking at quality. So, you're looking at an audit tool of quality and trying to have a conversation about that, when that could be in absolute contrast to when that job was being directed around, "we just need it done. You just need a tick". And, the flipside of that is [being told] "hang on, the quality isn't actually here". And that can be from the one person, on the one day. (Annette, focus group)

Some participants in that group said they felt the "burden" of the organisation's supervision policy and practice expectations and thought they were unprepared or under resourced to manage the associated uncertainty. For example, Bianca said, "We are not necessarily provided with the tools to give really good supervision. And, it comes down to, in the end,

they just want the numbers and so, really, supervision can be kind of bumped down the priority list".

In the same organisation, Roger[(s)] acknowledged the "tough gig" of their work and pointed to how supervision was fundamental to support people working in the organisation;

> …the way that supervision supports a practitioner in a tough gig. Not a tough gig because we're child protection, a tough gig because we're in a changing environment in our agency… it's not just the practice. It's the supporting around the other bits and pieces as well. When people don't have that, I think you're a lot more on your own, and you don't have somebody critiquing you. (Roger, interview)

Supervision Conversations about Organisations

Both internal and external organisational environments featured in conversations in the observations, interviews, and focus groups. They included team and workplace contexts – which covered topics such as, employment and workforce issues, funding matters, and managing and leading others – as well as wider government policy and social contexts that governed how services were defined, types of practice, and how decisions were made. They were dominant topics of conversation in both the observed sessions and the focus groups' proposed sessions with Anna. Those contextual influences were also often used to explain supervisors' circumstances and challenges.

Organisational topics in participants' conversations are listed in Table 4.8. They covered both internal and external organisational environments. They related to participants' direct and indirect involvement in practices and interactions as supervisors – which included active engagement or observation – and the impact of processes or outcomes on them.

Table 4.8:

Conversation Topics about Organisations

• Benefits of a practice idea	• Marketing and publicity
• Contracts	• New site/location
• Funding and tenders	• Pay rates (remunerative and disparities)
• Government reforms	• Team and unit identity in larger organisation
• Impact of changes on clients/service	• Unit/ program disparities
• Increasing workloads	• Workplace tensions

For managers in non-government organisations, aspects of their work – such as, seeking funding, preparing tenders, and negotiating funding contracts – seemed to be distractions in some ways, but critical for the continued existence of the service or program. In an observed session, Susan[(s)] talked about the need for clarity about rights and responsibilities in funding and contracting processes – which was greater because it was a new experience for her – and frustration about obstacles that restricted her ability to get a program underway; "We want to get the word out [about the new program starting]. That's what we're in this for, and I hate that I'm tied up in all the bullshit [of negotiating contracts and staffing with the partner agency]".

Sarah[(s)] and Jack[(ss)] talked about Sarah's frustrations about how the organisation shifted different funding between programs to create positions, and how campaigns to secure more funding could affect practice quality and service provision;

> *Sarah:* …let's just sure up what we're doing already. Let's make sure that we're adequately staffed, and we can manage our demands in what we're already doing, before we're looking at expanding…
>
> *Jack:* So, I think, you're recognising a pattern that everyone gets excited about the tender opportunities and maybe losing a bit of sight of delivering on the products they've got. (Sarah and Jack, session)

Threads of organisation-focused discussions were often about bureaucracy and related decisions and their impact on supervisors and supervisees. Sarah's[(s)] dominant challenges with the organisational environment related to recruitment and workload management, alliances from which she was excluded, and differential treatment of individuals, teams, and units. Those challenges were coupled with Sarah's concerns about how to best support workers she supervised – especially as a team – when they were uncertain and worried about their workload and in preparation for Sarah leaving. The following is one example of exchanges with Jack[(ss)] about those topics that happened over the three observed sessions in which Sarah mirrored concerns of people she supervised and re-visited the challenge of reassuring them in an uncertain environment;

> *Sarah:* Because I think that's going to come up from staff… there's been a few comments around, "I'm not sure what the atmosphere is going to be like when you leave" and "I'm not sure how things are going to go" and "it seems like there's different kind of styles and approaches" …how do I appease them of that without bagging out anybody else, or giving answers that I actually don't know?
>
> *Jack:* It sounds like the unknown at the moment is creating a bit of anxiety, which is understandable. People take their jobs very seriously.

> *Sarah:* And they spend a lot of time there and they work very hard there, and we've worked really hard at building a culture where work is an enjoyable place to come, and I guess some concerns about, "how's that going to move forwards and what that's going to look like". (Sarah and Jack, session)

In the following example, Sarah[(s)] was concerned about lack of information about recruitment and relief processes which would help her plan and explain upcoming events to the team;

> In terms of what [relief arrangements] look like, I haven't had any guidance from management about what that transition phase looks like [and] how long before we start booking her clients because she's going to have to take some of the clinical load moving forward. So yeah, it's kind of like, [management saying] "Yeah, yeah, she starts on this day" [and me saying] "Okay. What's the plan from there?" (Sarah, session)

Sarah described how the team was feeling about their workload and her pending leave. The pressure of the two events appeared to coincide, wherein relief from one might alleviate the other – such as, clarity in information or practice – and both relied on organisational sources of information or support;

> *Jack:* Is the team okay? I know that you've sort of spoken about that.
>
> *Sarah:* Yeah, I mean I think they're unsure about recruitment and they're starting to get a bit antsy about it, and I think they're kind of the same opinion; that if we can clear the waitlist and if we can do something about that, you can deal with a backlog at the back end. And it's not too bad. It's not noticeable yet. (Sarah and Jack, session)

A common topic across Susan[(s)] and Mary's[(ss)] observed sessions was the work that Susan had done to create "structure" and "systems" in the agency. It included creation of policy and procedure documents, program reviews and redesigns, and a series of referral and assessment tools to better define their client group and match funding specifications. They also talked

about the same topics being covered in the group supervision sessions that Mary facilitated with the agency team, to prompt their creation or reflect on their use and impact on the team.

Conversations about those topics drew out Susan's "fears" and uncertainties, and her feelings of responsibility to the team and the agency. When she described her activities to Mary her confidence was boosted. Susan spoke about the pros and cons of creating "structure" through policies, procedures, and other documents; on the one hand they provided her and staff with a reference point that the agency did not have previously to guide and review practice, while, on the other, the task was time-consuming for her;

> I've just pumped out 12 policies for WHS[31] because there's fear around not having structure around those policies and I think that's – what's the word I'm looking for? I think it's becoming clearer to me that – it's kind of like the "hierarchy of needs" that we we're talking about. That feels like my bottom layer is those policies. I feel like I'm doing all this stuff without this [a guide or structure]. (Susan, session)

Participants talked about organisational demands and "politics" in practices and structures and how related expectations hindered their relationships and work. One example was the mixed messages previously discussed and experienced by one focus group. Another, was one of Sarah's(s) observed sessions, where she sounded frustrated by the time, energy, and politicking around ensuring adequate staffing when she was reliant on internal and external service providers; "A lot of this dynamics/political crap that's going on behind the scenes is just like – I don't necessarily want to keep dealing with that, you know, short-term contracts and all the rest of it". She also expressed concern about "politics-rubbish stuff" between

[31] Work Health and Safety.

different individuals and teams, and the impact this had on her and her team. The concerns extended to what might happen for the team after Sarah was gone;

> I think [the new person] will get along well with the team, but then they're starting to ask questions of me about her, like, "How is she going to handle all of this other pressure that's going on at the moment and some of these weird dynamics?" And, "What does that mean if she gets caught up into that?" (Sarah, session)

While *experiences of* organisations were prominent in the data, there was also some emphasis on *knowledge about* organisations. In a focus group, when talking about the Anna scenario, Eric said it would be important for Anna's supervisor to know about the organisational context, and its variations, to both support Anna to navigate her role change – "from a practitioner to a management-type role" – as well as support people whom she supervised;

> You would have to have some knowledge of the organisation that Anna works in. So, some conception of the structure and how she fits into that structure. Because I think that leads you to have conversations with Anna that revolve around her experiences; those two distinct experiences and her transition between the two of them, going from a practitioner to a management-type role. Because it varies from one organisation to the next. (Eric, focus group).

Power Appears in Different Forms

This theme covers power dynamics in supervision relationships and conversations. In the following examples of findings, descriptions from participants in each of the observed pairs and one of the focus groups suggested that power appeared in different forms – such as, collegiality, competition, and conflict – and that they were crucial power concerns for participants. The complexity of roles and relationships and the associated supervisor concerns drew-out power as a major influence on participants' practice and their supervision session

experiences. The versatility of power was denoted in how participants described how they and others exercised their control, authority, and influence in different ways.

Some participants who were managers experienced a power dichotomy between having delegated authority – as the "boss" in their team or unit – and simultaneously being marginalised in decision-making that affected them. Most participants who were managers indicated they felt disempowered or less-than because of exclusion from "alliances" and decision-making. Some used their own session to explore new means of empowerment for themselves and people they supervised.

Common manifestations of power appeared in participants' narratives and, oftentimes, more than one featured in the same interaction or experience – within or outside the supervision session. In this study, power manifested more commonly as:

- *Collegiality:* through comparable, "almost equal" authority, as well as cliques based on shared experiences and language;
- *Competition:* in-session, out-of-session, and in the workplace; around knowledge, expertise, and control of conversation topics and processes; and,
- *Conflict:* intra and interpersonal; around confidence, challenging, and role or relationship boundaries.

Examples were selected from each of the observed supervision pairs and one focus group to show how the various features of power played out. Most demonstrated the interplay between the manifestations described above in a single experience. The examples presented below include power features in one or more of the following:

- *Conversations:* control and direction of topics and processes;
- *Relating to others:* shifting roles and boundaries and the power of supervisees; and,
- *Responses and solutions:* reliance on knowledge-as-power and having answers.

Focus Groups

Power dynamics were central to the differences that participants identified between supervision of workers compared to supervisors. One focus group debated the challenges and "ramifications" associated with talking to their own supervisors about workers they supervised, and some saw it as a departure from how they would handle concerns raised by a worker in supervision about a client. They thought careful consideration would be needed before they informed their own supervisors of concerns about workers. They saw the proximity and visibility between workers and their supervisor's supervisor – usually a senior manager – as a potential risk for workers' credibility and employment. They considered this because that senior person was a decision maker about employees' work and future opportunities. As such, they thought it was "not value-neutral". Diane explained it this way;

> If I am speaking with my supervisor about someone I am supervising, and the challenges I am experiencing, then I am sharing some of those issues with a person who potentially then has some decision making in, or influence with, regard to [who I am talking about]. So, it is not value-neutral… Within an organisation where it is the supervisor discussing a supervisee with their supervisor, it's not a removed, unknown person. It's not someone who is not seen within an ongoing professional context, and there are no likely employment issues for a client in terms of opinions formulated by that manager. (Diane, focus group)

Other participants in the same group posed a different view. They aligned concerns about workers with concerns about clients and suggested both should understand – as a premise of

their engagement with their supervisor or worker – that some concerns would be discussed with other people. Amy used mandatory reporting as a parallel example and noted that there would be no question that risks presented by clients would be reported so, therefore, risk presented by workers should also be reported. The potential risk of clients having children removed was likened to the risk of workers' employment being affected;

> …if you are really transparent about that at the beginning, that is a better relationship… I think if Anna is open with people about, "sure I am your manager and there are these things that I am responsible for overseeing in terms of your practice… and if I was concerned about something this is the process I would follow". (Amy, focus group)

Audrey and Valerie

Audrey(s) connected power and vulnerability when she talked broadly about how supervisors' and supervisees' experiences in supervision sessions might be different. She first stated, "I feel more comfortable being a supervisor because I have more power". She re-thought her conclusion – "Not power. It's not power" – and suggested that supervisors were "not as vulnerable". Vulnerability was a thread in Audrey's thoughts about supervision. In her interview, she said it was, "good having my own supervision for lots and lots of different reasons" and suggested some covert benefits; "it's especially good to put myself in the shoes of my supervisees as well and to see what it's like, and to remember always what it's like to be vulnerable in supervision and to not know everything".

Audrey supervised clinicians – not supervisors – and she focused on her clinical practice in her own sessions. She did not say if she thought the same vulnerability would exist for supervisees who were also supervisors. She described her own sessions as a place to talk about concerns and "struggles". She thought that supervisees brought those to supervision

sessions more often than examples of what they were “doing really well” and what was working in their practice;

> I try never to go, "Yeah, it's all good. I'm doing really well". I try to really be honest about the things that are bothering me, the things I worry about, the clients that I struggle with, and not to pretend that I know everything. So, I will often bring the clients where I think I'm floundering a bit. Probably 80 percent of the clients I work with, it's going really well, I feel the therapeutic relationship is stable and healthy, and I don't need to bring those to supervision. (Audrey, interview)

Roger and Claire

Roger[(s)] talked about a shift in other people’s positive recognition of him, which paralleled new people at more senior levels. Their expectations were different and Roger made choices to engage or disengage in senior level decision-making. Claire[(ss)] prompted his reflections with; “You can place all your emphasis on irritations that flow from above or, you just know they're part of the landscape now, and you focus on the things that you actually put more meaning on” – which she suggested could be to “refocus [the team’s] attention on building more internal connections with peers” rather than “pressure or questions of scrutiny from above”.

Roger described a cycle of intra and interpersonal conflict that he had moved through as part of “understanding the new landscape” – from “pushing back” to being “pissed off” to “working with” the changes. It suggested power as an issue for Roger as he managed his own emotions and behaviour and his willingness to engage with others;

> [A worker] asked me the other day how I would feel if [name] was my boss, and I said, "If she's my boss, I've got to work with that". Six months ago, I would have lost my shit over it. So, I think that is accepting the change in the landscape … So that's a good thing that we move with the times, but it's somewhat disappointing to see the old disappear. (Roger, session)

Roger and Claire had spoken about Roger introducing a new program and approach, which he thought was opportunity to demonstrate his value and to interact with people with whom he had avoided interactions; as Roger said, "exposing myself into the very spot that I dislike so much". He prefaced that with the following explanation about the crossover of challenges and benefits which suggested empowering himself in what may have otherwise been an antagonistic experience;

> I thought, why will that be challenging? Because it's going to involve a lot of work with the executive, in terms of trying to get some proposals, but then that's a good thing… at a time when I might not be the flavour-of-the-month with the executive, it gives me that opportunity to go, "you know what, I can show you what I can do". (Roger, session)

In addition to navigating power relationships with more senior people, Roger also inferred that his supervisees could exercise power over him. On a few occasions, he referred to himself as "the boss", which seemed to be in his everyday usage and a colloquial reference to his identity. It also denoted the significance of his delegated authority or what he called "inherent power". In the following example, Roger told a supervisee, "It's really hard to be a leader" and seemed to imply that the worker needed to consider their actions in the context of Roger's experience and challenges;

> I genuinely thought I worked in a spot where we weren't like that. So that's new to me… it's been hard. And when I spoke with [worker]… I said, "I thought we were mates, and you came in here and you were just bagging the shit out of me and my leadership". I said, "It's really hard to be a leader. You know that. I don't need you coming in here and…". She said, "Look, I'm sorry. What do you want from me?" I said, "I want you to own your bit about your behaviour." She said, "Well, I will." (Roger, session)

Roger's[(s)] reliance on loyalty and commitment (if successful) meant he could avoid conflict and maintain a non-threatening collegial relationship with supervisees. His conversations with Claire suggested that when it didn't work, he was trapped in trying to work out how the undesirable outcome had come about because he thought he was a "decent bloke". To get himself out of the situation, his "instant response" – "from my gut" – was an apparent powerplay that used his delegated authority to move workers out of the team;

> When I unpacked it, rightly or wrongly, to me... Why do they want to be mean to me? I'm a decent bloke. So I think there's some elements there that I go, wow, yeah, it was all new to me and it's hard for me not to look at that – you know, my instant response was I'm going to fuck you off my management team, and then I went, hang on, what's that mean for the kids, the work, the team – who do we back? – things like that. But my first response was from my gut, going, I don't want you as part [of the team] … That's not always going to be an option for me, so I've got to start thinking how do I [do it differently]? (Roger, session)

Sarah and Jack

Power seemed to play out in Sarah[(s)] and Jack's[(ss)] sessions in both their relationship and conversations. They both felt disempowered when they did not have adequate knowledge to explain situations, to "answer questions", or where subject matter was unfamiliar. The power features in Sarah and Jack's sessions appeared to be the influences on how Jack perceived his

authority and controlled and directed conversation topics and processes, and Sarah's experiences of exclusion from decision-making and alliances between others and how she searched for means of empowerment. Both often appeared simultaneously. For example, when Sarah repeatedly sought ideas for supporting the team when they were uncertain, anxious, and worried about her pending leave and replacement, Jack mostly responded with either reassurance about the difficulties or prompted a change in topic. In this example, Jack asked about performance concerns about the same workers whose worries Sarah wanted to resolve;

> *Sarah:* But yeah, the guys look to me for reassurance in terms of, "How is all this going to work and what's this going to look like?" I don't necessarily have those answers. All I can say is, "Look, I think you need to treat that person the same way you would treat me. She seems very approachable. You need to be raising concerns with her and she will then raise them in the way that she sees most appropriate", and just kind of looking at, what are the other support options? I guess.
>
> *Jack:* Without needing detail and stuff or digging for detail, is there any staff members that there is work performance issues or there's real clinical risk issues that does need a bit of a handover? (Sarah and Jack, session)

In his interview, Jack related his discomfort or reluctance around exploring issues and challenging Sarah to her knowledge and expertise – her "almost equal" status – and possible emotional reactions. Jack's view that their relationship was "collegial" and conversations were "softer"[32] had mixed influences. Sarah's knowledge and expertise were given credit,

[32] As part of the distinction that Jack drew between supervision of supervisors and students, which was discussed in the theme, *supervision has mixed meanings*.

Jack could hide internal conflicts about the relative adequacy of his own knowledge and skills, and the pair might never get to the nub of Sarah's concerns.

Sarah indicated in the sessions that she was not aware of alternative support strategies to reassure staff and provide them answers – a premise of knowledge-as-power – and she required assistance with alternatives. Her need for alternatives also seemed aligned with her deliberate choice to use sessions with Jack to develop as a manager;

> ...fitting in with the entire service, team dynamics types of issues… because sometimes I'm that conduit between individual staff and the management team… looking at how do I strike a balance here between my responsibilities as one of the senior staff on site and validating and empathising with that individual staff member?... how do I validate for that individual and how do I kind of push and negotiate with the manager around, "we need to make something happen here"? (Sarah, interview)

Sarah highlighted numerous points of disempowerment for her, such as, a lack of control over her circumstances and her seemingly minimal influence on more senior people. Jack often responded with queries about Sarah's leave and handover and suggested responsibility for the issues that Sarah raised lay with someone else; "So, that is difficult stuff to hand over, if you hand over at all that sort of stuff. I'm just sitting here thinking it probably is more management's role to hand over how they want the dynamics to be".

Power was central in Sarah's concerns about being excluded from decision making and not being treated commensurate with her delegated authority and related responsibilities for her program and team, for example, "This is news to me. If this is all going to come off the ground, that would probably be something that would be nice for me to know". A familiar thread in her sessions was workplace tensions and politics, and Sarah's sense of disempowerment appeared in her descriptions of their effect on her and the team. She talked

about other people who were "allies" of senior people – which Jack framed as a "two-tiered type feeling" – which resulted in differential treatment of Sarah and comparatively lower control and influence than those with similar delegated authority. She was concerned about the effect the tensions and politics had on the daily work life of her and the team;

> … stuff that I've talked about with management and feeling like management has a few key kind-of allies that get treated quite differently to the way that I perhaps get treated, the way some staff groups get treated, and they're very much aware of that, and when they've kind of raised feedback … it's not necessarily listened to or taken on board in the greatest fashion. (Sarah, session)

Sarah's experience also provided vivid examples of the interplay of common power features identified in findings of this study. For example, *collegiality* in her loyalty to others, *competition* between her different options and the associated dilemma, and *conflict* both internally – weighing up interests of self and others – and externally – interpersonal challenges had prompted her consideration of options. Jack summed-up the challenges, and encouraged Sarah to change employment;

> That's unfortunate, the political side of things can end up overshadowing the clinical joy or the good outcomes you have with client work, and political shit can actually smother all that other good stuff. But, I can sense that in your talking, that you're torn between that you've done it well, you've enjoyed it, you're comfortable in it, versus this sort of leaving and taking on something new. [Other agency] is definitely the direction to go. (Jack, session).

Susan and Mary

Features of Susan[(s)] and Mary's[(ss)] observed sessions that related to power often centred around Susan's relationships with others – workers she supervised and people from other

agencies – and the premises of the challenges were primarily related around "power imbalances" related to role authority and knowledge-as-power. Susan talked about funding and contracting negotiations she had with an external agency with whom her agency was to partner in a new program. She felt that if she demonstrated adequate knowledge she could establish her bona fides with others and garner their respect and acceptance. Susan had no previous experience in contracting and talked about the challenge of learning how to do it through conversations with others and "Google", while simultaneously, negotiating with another agency;

> …because there are challenges in there that it's been really helpful for me to kind of have a space [supervision sessions] where I can talk about that power imbalance and the impact of that on our ability to then go out and do the work we want to do, so the challenges of them taking control of certain things… . (Susan, interview)

Susan felt the disparity between her own and the other person's knowledge. Coupled with that concern, she felt bullied and intimidated in those conversations – because of the other person's style and fuelled by Susan's sense of inadequacy; "They're lead agency; I get that. But asserting their power in certain ways that prevent us from being able to do the work that we know is valuable". In one of the observed sessions, Susan related to power and control when she described an internal dialogue and conflict when she spoke to the other person;

> *Susan:* When it's happening, and I can see it happening, I want to say, "Actually, I'm feeling really bullied right now. I feel like you're trying to control this situation and that's not okay with me." That's what I feel like I want to say.
>
> *Mary:* What's stopping you from saying that?
>
> *Susan:* The fact that they do hold all the power and the fact that she could – there's nothing… (Susan and Mary, session)

In some ways Susan described competition between the two. In others, conflict featured as both interpersonal conflict between them, and intrapersonal conflict for Susan who was navigating uncertainty about knowledge and feeling disempowered by bullying and intimidation. Overarching those challenges was Susan's sense that, in what should otherwise be a collegial relationship because of the partnering objective, the other person capitalised on what was may have been perceived as Susan's lack of knowledge and unequal professional authority; "She has lots of words but in a way that completely shuts down any way of [negotiating]", and "We deserve to see a copy of that contract. We haven't seen that. I haven't asked her for it, because she's made it abundantly clear that it's their contract, it's none of our business".

When Susan framed her experience as power and control, Mary drew attention to ways in which Susan also held power in the situation;

> It's interesting you say, "they hold all the power" when, to be perfectly honest, they don't. They don't have this contract without you. In reality, they don't hold all the power. She has just bullied you and intimidated you into thinking that she holds all the power when she doesn't. Because if you pulled out, they lose that money. (Mary, session)

Susan's developing sense of her own power and authority as a manager extended to relationships with people she supervised, and how her change in role could affect how they related to each other. Susan talked about how boundaries between her and some workers at the agency had "well and truly been blurred" because she had held several different positions at the agency over the years that the others were also employed. When Susan became the manager, she felt "uncomfortable" and challenged by what she referred to as a "shift of power" in those relationships and what might be greater power as the manager. This appeared

starkly for Susan when she decided to introduce more structure to the supervision sessions that she provided;

> For me, going into the manager's role, although everyone was really supportive, it was then like, oh, we have to sit down and do supervision. So, you who used to be my worker is now going to be my employee sitting there having supervision with me. So, I felt really uncomfortable with that shift of power… (Susan, interview)

It highlighted that authority, control, and influence could be dispersed between supervisors and workers – for example, based on knowledge and experience – and that workers were not always subjected to the greater power of managers; "There's that dynamic where now I'm in a position of power but still look up to her and admire her as a worker because I know how powerful she can be as a worker. So, that's a bit messy…" (Susan, session).

A strategy that Susan introduced that she thought might help her manage the shift in power was a supervision document. She saw it as a "guide" and "structure', to which everyone was subject and explained how things should be done and accountability expectations. Susan described it as an objective or neutral tool that "removed the personal", that could be used as a "safety net", and used to back-up the delegated authority that she exercised in responses, requests, or "instructions" to workers. Other perceived benefits implied in Susan's description – especially around "safety" – were that the documents might circumvent interpersonal conflict and maintain a degree of collegiality via shared accountability to meet requirements;

> *Susan:* I think that situation was the turning point for me to say, "I need this layer to guide me". If that makes sense. Because I felt like with that situation, I had nothing, you know. No kind of…
>
> *Mary:* You get the framework out and you could go, "Look."

> *Susan:* Exactly. That's exactly right.
>
> *Mary:* "It's not about this. It's not about our friendship."
>
> *Susan:* "It's not about you and I. This is about: let's put this family through this process and see what we've missed"… I didn't have anything like that. And, that's where I'm feeling…
>
> *Mary:* … unsafe?
>
> *Susan:* Yeah. Lost… I feel as though if I'd had that structure – if I had that safety net…, instructionally, then it would have – we would have been able to look at it removed. It wasn't personal, but it certainly felt personal. (Susan and Mary, session)

Supervision as Process and Development

Findings across the observations, interviews, and focus groups indicated that supervisors' own supervision sessions could be opportunities for their professional and personal development. Examples included exploring the influence of personal values on their work, ways to improve their practice and relationships, and career plans and prospects. These findings also showed how supervisors-of-supervisors could play a role in supervisors' development, which included questioning, advice-giving, guidance, information sharing, and modelling. Chloe used the Anna scenario as an example when she summed up the opportunities available to *all* supervisors to create "safe spaces" for supervisees to learn, improve, and "replicate" practice, through "acknowledging" and airing "vulnerabilities";

> We can create safe spaces where it is okay to demonstrate vulnerabilities and learn from that and do something better next time, then Anna can replicate that and [her supervisees] can replicate that. So, the idea that it will flow down. And acknowledging, me giving her permission to be vulnerable. Some of that is about practising and getting things wrong. (Chloe, focus group)

This theme has connections with the other themes about *power* and *relationships*, and the findings extend on what was discovered about participants' understandings of the purpose of supervision – such as, "reassurance," "validation," "debriefing," and a "boost" or "evolution" of confidence – to how those purposes were achieved when supervisors brought challenges to their own supervision sessions. They also cover how supervisors supported change and development through different processes and techniques for exploring topics.

These findings indicated some complexity in developing supervisors and that it might be different and have more layers than supervision of clinical practitioners. As an example, in the first focus group, Diane thought that supervisors should consider their "use of self for a purpose", "the things they are thinking about", and "assumptions or theories" that underpin what they do – with a view to making "thoughtful, reasonable approaches". Diane summed-up the complexity as "double-double thinking" wherein supervisors considered their own development as well as the development of others;

> You are thinking about when you say to someone… "what are you identifying that you need developed?" [and at the same time], what am I seeing as the areas in need of development, and then how do I make sure that I am doing that. (Diane, focus group)

Determining Topics

Topics were determined in different ways by the observed pairs. For some, topics evolved during conversations – "what shows up in the room". Even if the pairs made a structured start to their sessions, initially-determined topics often prompted others during their conversations. Roger(s) and Audrey(s) stated topic choices specifically upfront – a verbal agenda – which most often occurred after their supervisors asked what they would like to talk about. For example, in his first session and without request, Roger immediately outlined two topics he wanted to talk about then provided a summary of a pressing issue with the team;

> I guess there's two things today that I want to take the chance to talk to you. One is consistent with our leadership-management discussion for the past 500 years, so there's some particular elements that I'm not sure of, how it's managed. And then, there's another part today around just some feelings I've had about some of the staff. So that's where I want to go today. (Roger, session)

Similarly, Audrey opened her sessions with an overview of what she hoped to achieve – "to make a plan" – with a focus on a specific client for almost the session entirety. For example;

> I wanted to make a plan about setting boundaries in the future, after having not set great boundaries with a client, and to kind of – I don't want that to happen again. It wasn't a really terrible thing, but I don't feel great about it. I'll just tell you about the client and what happened. (Audrey, session)

Supervisor-initiated openings were either broad or a check-in – such as, "how are you?" or "how have you been since our last session?" – or they linked a query to previous sessions or other conversations, such as, "Still recruiting?", and "Just to reflect back on what we just discussed out there [in group supervision], how do you feel that sort of went?". In one session, Mary(ss) used a combination approach, where she first asked Susan(s) what she would like to talk about, then followed up with a suggestion;

> *Mary:* So, what do you want to discuss today? So, what's been happening?
>
> *Susan:* I'm not really prepared today actually.
>
> *Mary:* What's been working well since I last saw you? (Susan and Mary, session)

In her interview, Mary talked about the importance of "flexibility" around topics, and she used different approaches that included, seeking what the supervisee wants to talk about, linking with other conversations, and working on "what shows up";

> So, whatever shows up in the room is what I usually work for. And I always check in from our last session: “So that stuff that we talked about last session, how's that working out for you?” …I think you’ve got to be flexible. I think you’ve got to work on what shows up for the clinician in the room, or what they bring. (Mary, interview)

Shifting and Changing Over Time

Some of the observed supervisors commented on how the focus of sessions had shifted over time to consolidate supervisees’ development. For example, Mary[(ss)] noted that Susan’s[(ss)] greater confidence meant their emphasis had moved from validation to conversation about Susan’s ideas for practice. Mary said she created opportunities for dialogue and, potentially, different points of view;

> I think it has definitely changed, so it's more now about sometimes bouncing ideas… about new programs or new projects... She might come in and go, "I've got this really great idea. What do you think?" …[we] bounce ideas, and that's not validating… just having a conversation; "Maybe you can do this" or "Maybe this might be a good way to go" or "What do you think about this?" (Mary, interview)

Claire[(ss)] described a purposeful shift in attention from individuals to the team that Roger[(s)] supervised. This related directly to Roger’s personal challenges in managing others’ behaviours and emotions, having multiple conversations with different individuals about team issues, and his objective to be more consultative;

> Our conversation has, in the last two years, moved much more away from individual development of his managers to, how do they work together, and how does he learn things about himself to work with the collective rather than the individuals? So that's been a real shift. (Claire, interview)

Intimacy between supervisors and supervisees – what they knew about each other and how each responded to different circumstances – appeared to be an important factor in the intention, occurrence, and depth of supervisors' efforts to develop supervisees. Such knowledge could then be called-on as new or repeated issues arose and used to analyse situations and develop possible responses. One example from the observations was a comment from Claire that summed up what the pair had learned about Roger's approach to managing emotions and tensions. It suggested intimacy through a depth of analysis by Claire – from observation, experience, and "many conversations that we've had over the years" – which informed a summing-up of Roger's "nature" and primary methods used to manage those issues and their consequences;

> Well, your nature is to not sit with the emotional tension, it's to ease that emotional tension by either having it out and having a big dust-up – but then it's done and dusted – or expelling it, or whatever. It's the resolution of your emotional tension, and it is your emotional tension that you're always trying to seek equilibrium for, and that's why you'll push until it either explodes or it fixes. (Claire, session)

Supporting Transition to New Roles and Identities

Both focus groups identified transitioning to a new role and identity as an important explicit topic of conversation with Anna. It was also featured in-part in Susan[(s)] and Mary's[(ss)] sessions, because Susan was a relatively new manager and supervisor. One focus group focused on Anna understanding and developing in the new role and balancing and setting boundaries around the dual roles she had just started to occupy. Carol's idea was to have a "big reflective session" to explore Anna's perspective on her challenges as a foundation for supporting her to "balance" the roles;

> A huge part for me would be around exploring the balance between the managerial and the practice considerations. You could talk for a long time. I'd be putting it back on to Anna, a big reflective session on how she thought that she was going and what she saw as some of the challenges and also some of the positives. That would help me better understand where she was coming from. (Carol, focus group)

In the other focus group, Daisy expanded on this and part of her plan for sessions with Anna included a comparison between what was working and what was not working, to support Anna to better "juggle" the two roles;

> …how does she navigate those changes for herself, and for other people as well, in terms of; what things does she think she is doing well at the moment? What's actually working well? What are those areas that she feels like she is just missing the mark? …[as] an indication of need for skill development? (Daisy, focus group)

The second focus group emphasised the competence shift for Anna – based of her selection because she was an "impressive practitioner", which one participant referred to as "Golden Girl" – and how her existing skills could be transferred;

> *Daisy:* [She was] acknowledged for being a good practitioner in client-based work, and now is in a role where people might be questioning, you know, "do you have the skills to do this?" So, maybe moving from that really competent position…
>
> *Bianca:* … she would have felt she was quite good at her job and was getting good outcomes, and now she might feel like she is out of her depth and not doing as well as she wants. (Daisy and Bianca, focus group)

The group then talked about what they would discuss with Anna in her supervision sessions to focus on the competence shift. Chloe suggested the following;

> I'd want to know what her skills were before they were transferable, so what's going on for her now… that she feels out of her depth, what she doesn't know [and] "well, what do you know that's relevant?" – to boost her confidence a bit and make her feel a bit more capable. (Chloe, focus group)

Susan[(s)] saw her sessions as fundamental to her development, as "guidance" for developing as a relatively new manager. In one session, she told Mary[(ss)], "I think I was just surprised that people want to hear what I think about something. Yeah, I think I felt more of a manager than ever before. I don't know what a manager feels like, but…". In Susan's interview, she outlined the benefit of sessions in supporting her transition from case management and counselling roles to manager and a type of continuum of knowledge that was informed by experience;

> …there's some topics that we can debate quite well, and others where I learn a lot from Mary and her experience, not only in social work practice but in management, which I think has been really useful for me, because I'm new to the role, or relatively new now, but just to kind of have that guidance as well. (Susan, interview)

Roger[(s)] and Sarah[(s)] were more experienced supervisors and their sessions contained some discussion about their futures and alternative career options. Roger talked with Claire[(ss)] about the future of the unit and programs that Roger managed and his career prospects. Claire initiated their conversation with the imagery of a "horizon" to represent Roger's career. They debated the value of Roger thinking about doing something different – either within his current employment or something elsewhere;

> *Claire:* But what do you see on your horizon? What's out there? What's your new horizon? We talked before about the job of a good leader is to paint the new horizon, but what's your new horizon? …
>
> *[brief exchange]*
>
> *Roger:* … I think I'm not at a point where I'm actually looking for a new horizon, and I don't know whether that is something that just comes upon people or whether they've got to be actively seeking that.
>
> *Claire:* But even if it is not in your horizon in terms of a different job, I mean what is your new horizon? Where do you see yourself, professionally, growing and being nurtured? (Roger and Claire, session)

Sarah's[(s)] sessions focused a lot on her pending leave from the organisation, as well as her career prospects if she decided not to return; "I swing between going 'Yes, I'm definitely doing this. I'm done', and then other times I'm like, 'I really like [this agency]'. So, I don't know. I figure I'll just keep my options open". She and Jack[(ss)] spoke about her recent job-seeking. They also talked about Sarah's efforts to gather information for professional accreditation so she could work in private practice; "That's my goal at this point in time. Sometime in the next six months I'll get the accreditation. I probably need to do it in the next three, really, before the end of the financial year".

Facilitating Learning and Development

Observed and suggested approaches to developing supervisors incorporated a range of interpersonal skills to facilitate their learning and development. They included empathy, questions, summarising and paraphrasing, reframing, and challenging or confronting. Some supervisors in the observations used those skills extensively, as presented in some of the following examples. Other times, they were used comparatively less. For example, when

Sarah[(s)] expressed concerns about not being able to answer the team's questions about their future, Jack[(ss)] mostly either concurred that such events were "difficult" or made reassuring and favourable statements that expressed confidence in Sarah's ability to deal with them, such as; "Difficult questions for you to answer" and "You should be proud of what you've done too. You have been there a while and it's got a good reputation. So, you've kicked some goals".

Questions were common in both conversations in the observed sessions and those proposed for Anna by the focus groups. They included closed, open, and rhetorical questions. The purpose of questions varied between information gathering, exploration, challenging a view or position, developing ideas, and in some cases, reminding and reassuring the supervisee. They were also used to structure sessions, such as, to open and close sessions and direct conversation paths. The following are some examples from the observations.

In the first example, Claire[(ss)] suggested that Roger[(s)] consider the question, "what do you do now?" as a prompt for deciding future action to manage himself as well as a pending conversation with a supervisee;

> So, you do have to deal with being really cross, and that really ties back into the "what do you do now?" bit. So, what ideas have you got now that we've had a different discussion about what, if anything, should you do now, which will be part of the groundwork for what you then do with [worker]? (Claire, session)

In the context of Sarah's[(s)] pending leave, Jack[(ss)] asked about her plans. He posed two options that Sarah might consider; between closing-off or keeping her options open;

> Before finishing up, are you just looking at sort of wrapping up and not thinking about work, or with these new potential things happening do you definitely want to keep your hand up and be thought of for all this stuff when you come back? (Jack, session)

Check-in questions were used sometimes. Towards the end of an observed session, Mary[(ss)] prompted a check-in with Susan[(s)] about her self-care – "So just to end, I suppose, how are you caring for yourself then? I'm going to ask that question" – which followed their conversation about some challenging subject matter.

Some supervisors combined seeking information, exploring feelings, and using professional knowledge to draw some conclusions, as demonstrated in this suggested approach for the scenario and conversations with Anna;

> I would probably want to start looking at what the experience of moving – changing role – has been like for her. Thinking about the cycle of change and that idea of what was different, in terms of going from social work role to manager-with-social work-background, or whatever that happened to be. (Diane, focus group)

In the following exchange, Valerie[(ss)] initiated an exercise through curiosity about how Audrey[(s)] might approach a conversation with a client where the pace was quick and the story overwhelming. She prompted Audrey's thoughts then provided her own examples of possible questions. There were layers in this exchange in which Audrey wrote notes about what stood out for her, and the examples and conversation led Audrey to pose an analysis of the dynamics she often managed with clients and her ability to control or "hold the reigns" in sessions;

> *Valerie:* …I'm wondering how would you then communicate that to your client?
>
> *Audrey:* Um, I'm just writing that down. I probably don't enough, and that's something I could do more of.
>
> *Valerie:* How would you like to do that?
>
> *Audrey*: I could say, "I'm noticing that our minds are going very fast, and are you experiencing that too?"…

> *Valerie:* So, "I'm observing that this is what's happening for me as we're talking. Is that happening for you too? What would it be like if we just slow that down a bit?"
>
> *Audrey*: [*writing*] … I'm just thinking of particular clients… it's so packed, you know… There's lots of competing things and a lot of fear. So, that's probably when I just go out in sympathy with them and don't hold the reigns as much. Although it's probably still helpful. (Audrey and Valerie, session)

Supporting Exploration and Analysis

Many participants explored and analysed what might be going on for themselves and people whom they supervised or for Anna in the scenario. As with other observations on language, participants seldom referred explicitly to their thinking or their statements as *analysis* per se. Examples included "unpacking" and "unravelling". Their wonder and curiosity – mostly channelled through questions and comparing each other's ideas –seemed to be about trying to understand what might be happening for workers they supervised and, in turn, the people with whom those workers connected and worked. In one focus group, Chloe suggested potential supervisor questions for exploring development that might help Anna understand herself and "unpack thinking" and "take that away" to confidently approach the issue; "I'd go over the particular issue or an anxiety and there would be, 'so, tell me about your thinking', 'what did you do?', 'what did you consider?'… curious questions, no judgment, 'do you think you could have done something different?'".

In the same focus group, Eric noted that personalising questions might be difficult for supervisees and might limit their responses. He proposed that they be asked;

> "Imagine that someone else is in this position" to reduce pressure on her and perhaps empower her by asking …what are some of the strategies that she thinks, looking on that circumstance, that might actually work or help in some way to move past that struggle? (Eric, focus group)

A similar approach by supervisors in the observed pairs was to draw parallels between aspects of practice that supervisees were confident in and use that knowledge and experience to respond to issues they had raised. In this example, Susan[(s)] and Mary[(ss)] were discussing Susan's uncertainty about funding and her experiences with someone from the partner agency. She had described feeling bullied and intimidated and felt she had inadequate knowledge to respond. Mary drew a connection between Susan's client work and her current manager work, and suggested existing knowledge could be applied in a different context;

> *Mary:* … if you put this in the context of any sort of intimidating behaviour, the things that they tell you are to control you. Do you know what I mean? The information that she is giving you is just to keep you nice and controlled.
>
> *Susan:* Yeah. It's working.
>
> *Mary:* What would you say if a client was coming in and saying that to you? Do you know what I mean?
>
> *Susan:* I'd point it out…
>
> *Mary:* Look at it in the context that it's occurring. (Susan and Mary, session)

In the next session, Susan reported back on a conversation with the person about whom she was concerned and how she applied what she took from their previous conversation. This was also an example of how development could happen over time and across supervision sessions and how supervisors could transfer knowledge between roles and contexts;

> So, I went down to [agency] and I'm like, "I'm not going to let her bully me. I'm going to do this"… she responded really well to it. I looked at what she was saying to me a bit differently and saw it as bullying behaviour, and it was quite interesting… I was kind of stepped-back and watching it, if that makes sense, and I felt removed from it, and it was like, "here she goes again". I was able to respond appropriately and stick up for us and what we wanted… [I] went in prepared. I had two pages of things I wanted decisions on. [She was] really reasonable and genuine. (Susan, session)

Claire[(ss)] proposed that Roger[(s)] do some thinking about techniques to address his tendency to rush to defining and solving problems and not consult others or tailor responses. Claire suggested that Roger continue to work on ways of anticipating such responses, such as, identifying "alarm bells" or "triggers" to try and change the timing and type of responses. Claire used the term "unravel" for analysis of Roger's observations and experiences;

> You need a few alarm bells, a few triggers, a few somethings… start thinking about, and start noticing between now and the next time we meet. Even if you're noticing the times when you find yourself in that place where [as you said] you're going, "how the fuck did I get here?" and we can unravel them a bit, and look for, could someone or something have given you a trigger that might have helped you stop? (Claire, session)

Modelling

Many participants described modelling as a primary element of supervisors' role as a developer of practice. In a focus group, Diane pointed this out in relation to the Anna scenario and noted the "outcome-focused" approach of her own supervisor was "causing Anna to question the way in which she is supervising other people";

> The focus [of her own supervision] seems to be strongly along accountability and managerial aspects… it is at a time when she probably needs more focus in her [own] supervision with regard to skill development and how to do this appropriately – how to work effectively with engaging her supervisees – that there is not actually a lot of space to be able to do some of the reflection around that skill acquisition and practice. It's more about outcome-focused. (Diane, focus group)

In the observed sessions, supervisors approached modelling either implicitly or explicitly. Implicit modelling was a conversation with the supervisee that the supervisee might, in turn, choose to mirror in their own practice. For example, when Roger[(s)] and Susan's[(s)] talked about using approaches they had observed their supervisors using in group sessions. Explicit modelling was where supervisor and supervisee talked about, and sometimes practised, conversations so the supervisee could try them out in conversations with others. Two previously discussed examples were; Susan and Mary's conversation about managing bullying behaviour, and Audrey and Valerie's conversation about how Audrey might slow the pace of counselling sessions.

In a focus group, Chloe suggested that Anna's supervisor in the scenario "start drawing some parallels" between Anna's own supervision session conversations and her future sessions with supervisees. The proposal focused on twofold development; in-the-moment during their conversations and future-oriented for Anna to work on improving her practice and relationships. Chloe thought Anna's relationships with supervisees might improve, and thought that might be heightened if Anna could do "some practise so she could then go and have a go with her staff";

> I'd like to start drawing some parallels between my supervision with her and her supervision with her staff. We'd practice together; "let's have a discussion about expectations of what our supervision is going to look like". Then she can go and practice it a couple of times and see how it kind of works. So, [questions such as], how are we are going to work? What's your expectation? What's mine? What's worked well in the past when you have had supervision? What kinds of things do you wish you could have had?... If supervision was going great, what would it look like? (Chloe, focus group)

In her interview, Valerie(ss) talked about the value of Audrey(s) exploring what she was feeling at the time she recounted a previous session with a client. Valerie considered the important component for learning as Audrey's thoughts in the here-and-now, rather than when she was with the client. Valerie linked this to the model she used as both a therapist and a supervisor,[33] which she said incorporated the idea that "all things that we experience – feelings, thoughts, behaviours – all can be considered behaviours". Valerie translated those ideas into the supervision and learning context through the following explanation of how to be "curious" and for both to respond to behaviours "contingently" during supervision sessions;

> …when we attend to those [behaviours] contingently… that has a stronger outcome than responding to something that happened a day ago. So if we're talking about what's happening between Audrey and a client which might have been a week ago, then we can look at that and be curious about that, but we're going to get a far stronger outcome, if you will, if we bring it into the present and say, "What's happening to you as we talk about this now? As you think about that client, what does that bring up?" … [This] relies on me being aware of what's going on for me and noticing the stuff that I'm observing in

[33] Functional Analytic Psychotherapy (FAP), informed by radical behaviourism.

> the room, and talking about that can support the conversation that happens next time with the client. (Valerie, interview)

In terms of out-of-session modelling, two supervisees in the observed pairs – Roger[(s)] and Susan[(s)] – also attended group supervision where their supervisor was the facilitator. Both Claire[(ss)] and Mary[(ss)] reported awareness of the modelling potential, their responsibility in the facilitator role, and how it connected with their individual session conversations with Roger and Susan. Claire explained that group supervision was established because she thought the multiple conversations that Roger was having with individuals about team tensions might be better managed in a group setting; she said to him, "So, why aren't you talking about it together?" and Roger said, "I wouldn't know how to do that". Claire provided the following background on the decision, and articulated the intention was to support development of Roger's group skills through observation of Claire's approach, the dynamics and process of which they would analyse in their individual sessions;

> From that conversation, he could see that he had a team where there was really no cohesion and trust and commitment to each other, and that had to be built… he asked me to help him do that, and we agreed that group supervision would be really useful… Part of the intent of that was for him to observe me managing his group of managers so he could learn from that, and we could then talk about what I did and what worked or what he said didn't work… There was some really important learning. (Claire, interview)

Both Roger and Susan saw the observations of their supervisors' facilitation of group supervision as opportunities to develop their skills and approach in working with the team they supervised. Susan was particularly interested in how Mary "challenged" group participants, and how Susan might apply that in her own conversations with workers – in-session and out-of-session – to normalise differences and manage the group;

> Although I'm used to and thrive on Mary's way of challenging me – which can be really confronting in certain moments – not all the team respond well… they get quite defensive, but Mary pushes, and I enjoy that but not all the team does. So, it's interesting because I'm really protective of my team – so I don't want them to be in a situation where they feel really uncomfortable – but at the same time, I love seeing somebody else coming in and challenging and watching the dynamics and how they respond. It not only helps find a resolution for the issue we're talking about, but it's kind of modelling to me how I could challenge them and work with them to not just always agree… actually [talk about] "we're not doing this as well as we could be, so how can we address that, and what's stopping us from doing that?" (Susan, interview)

Knowledge

Findings indicated that knowledge was an important element of supervisors' development, and that their supervision conversations and the type of knowledge differed. Professional knowledge – such as, theories, perspectives, models, frameworks, literature, and research evidence – was seldom used to support analysis, understanding, and development. Conclusions drawn from analysis of situations and behaviours were more often connected to contextual knowledge – for example, about the organisation and its policies and procedures – or knowledge based on experience and opinion. Professional knowledge was related more to clinical practice or therapy compared to supervision, management, or leadership. When the latter were covered, examples of theories or models that participants listed were "roles", "change management", "cycle of change", "organisations", "systems theory", and "developmental" and "learning" models. They were often titles-only with little description or connection made, such as, in this exchange between two focus group participants when they answered my question about knowledge relevant to the scenario;

> *Chloe:* Strengths-based. We've got to go strengths-based in social work.
>
> *Daisy:* Can we throw a systems theory in there?
>
> *Chloe:* It's ecological. We've moved on from systems (Daisy and Chloe, focus group)

Some focus group participants did provide more detail and put their example into the context of a supervision conversation. For example, Betty suggested "change management stuff" for the Anna scenario; "Because it's not just changes in her role, it sounds like there's changes in the organisation in the way they are structuring it as well, so it's probably some discussions around that, I'm sure".

In one of her observed sessions, Sarah[(s)] referred to "change management", as well as "leadership" theories, to address her need to answer the team's questions about pending changes. It was prompted when Jack[(ss)] initiated a review of the pair's original supervision plan. Within the following conversation exchange Jack and Sarah discussed different types of theories covered – between clinical and management-related theories respectively. In his post-observation interview, Jack said, "I interpreted that as she felt we could have done more conversation around mental health and youth theory, but I didn't think it was around supervision theory";

> *Sarah:* …I probably haven't really done theory as much as we potentially could, but I think the rest of it we're probably done.
>
> *Jack:* Maybe a bit more theory on the…
>
> *Sarah:* We probably haven't done a lot of theory, if we're being honest.

> *Jack:* On the Focussed Psychological Strategies? [34]
>
> *Sarah:* Yeah. Or, I don't know, leadership, change management kind of stuff, potentially, given what we're moving into. Because I think until someone [relief person] is on board… I think that uncertainty is going to continue to grow, and I'm going to continue to field questions [from the team] around, "What does this mean?" and "How is this going to work?" (Sarah and Jack, session)

In a focus group, Amy talked about "empowerment-type theories" and how they could be translated from client practice to conversations with supervisees;

> I suppose it is the same as what we do with our clients, but in engaging with people that I provide supervision to, if they're in a sticky situation; [discussing] what's worked for them before, what have they got that they can use to help them problem-solve or move their way through whatever sort of situation they're trying to make sense of, and how have they made sense of that before, [and] who else can they draw on around them that can help with the situation they might be struggling with. (Amy, focus group)

In the other focus group, Daisy proposed "motivational interviewing techniques" because, "Anna is clearly a person with a lot of strengths – and just trying to keep building on those for her. And, also, as her supervisor, not to be imposing, necessarily, any of my own solutions to Anna's challenges".

Some of the observed supervisors shared topical knowledge from their own practice experiences or from conferences they attended. Claire[(ss)] believed that "gathering" and "transferring" knowledge was core to her role as a "practice leader";

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[34] Specific mental health treatment strategies derived from evidence-based psychological therapies, e.g., cognitive behavioural therapy, psychotherapy, motivational interviewing.

> They expect me to come back from something and go, "I heard about this"… my conference notes do have… tell this one, tell that one, what about adolescents? What about this? What about that? – because that's how I'm processing what I'm hearing. And, I'll come back and go, "I wrote down here that I've got to tell you about this, because that's about that", and blah, blah, blah. So, they look for that. I think that's part of my role as a practice leader, that transferring of knowledge. I've never kept knowledge to myself, but the knowledge gathering I think I do now is always about, how can it help someone, or help us all, do something better? (Claire, interview)

Information provided from conferences covered knowledge currently applied in the industry or sector and demonstrations of their application by different practitioners and agencies. Sometimes embedded in those were theories or models used by others that might be applicable to supervisees' practice. For example, in an observed session, Claire had just returned from an international conference that featured Appreciative Inquiry (AI). During one session, she mentioned the usefulness of AI a few times and suggested ways that Roger[(s)] could incorporate it into both client work and work with the team he supervised;

> You could do an Appreciative Inquiry-type conversation with [the team] around you initiating that chain of actions by saying, "I don't know what to do" and them all generating ideas, activity, energy, and getting results… that would help them bring it to their own consciousness; what they did that was different and why that was so immediately effective. (Claire, session)

In another pair, when Audrey[(s)] wondered how to shift the pace of some client interactions and behaviours, Valerie[(ss)] combined knowledge about the brain with her own experiences to reassure Audrey. This also seemed to prompt experiential learning;

> *Valerie:* So, what's interesting to me is that you are kind of saying it is about noticing, when I slow down, they slow down. When I speed up, they speed up.
>
> *Audrey:* Yeah.
>
> *Valerie:* So, we know those mirror neurons are working beautifully. That's what they're supposed to do. It's interesting: I find that when I do kind of speed up with my very depressed clients, I'm noticing the impact of how that lands with them, so if I'm like, "Come on in! How are you going?" and I'm vibrant, it's almost like sometimes it is impossible for the client not to react. And then if we've got a super-anxious person and we're really slowing it down, you know, just letting the mirror neurons do exactly what…
>
> *Audrey:* … mm, what needs to happen.
>
> *Valerie:* Absolutely. So, it will be interesting to do more of that checking in, like how am I mirroring? What's happening right now. (Audrey and Valerie, session)

Roger[(s)] talked about how he and Claire[(ss)] had established a "character traits" framework to draw attention to how his personal values informed the challenges he had with certain people and issues and his associated approaches. Roger considered it an important factor in his development to work on "things [that] keep coming back up";

> Because we've spoken about them, we know what they're like, and we can say, "Oh, well that's not working well for you" or, we're about to enter-into a new topic, or conversation, and we've got this basis of four or five particular character traits that we've all got. I've named all mine with Claire and we know them well. We've seen how they play out. That's a great position to be in. (Roger, interview)

Participants often indicated an uncertainty about professional knowledge – related to both client and supervision practice – and its significance in positing explanations and responses to situations they confronted. In one of the focus groups, when I asked about professional

knowledge relevant to the scenario,[35] there was a pause and no response. The following extract from their transcript showed two prompts to elicit more information, which included applying existing client-oriented knowledge. Fran suggested that the "silence" after my question and first prompt was an indication of limited thought they put into professional knowledge. Amy then outlined some of the contextual knowledge that might be helpful in the scenario and made general reference to knowledge about "frameworks";

> *Researcher prompt:* What kind of knowledge do you think might be relevant to understanding and responding to Anna and her situation? That might help with analysis, for example, and help with understanding. A lens to look at this.
>
> *[Pause]*
>
> *Researcher prompt:* It might help for you to start with the theoretical frameworks of your practice, and parallel that, or translate that, or use that in relation to Anna, and maybe go from there. Because you guys use theories, models, and frameworks in your work, don't you?
>
> *Fran:* I think the silence, I'll own the silence as indicative of how much thinking I put into that question.
>
> *Amy:* It's good to understand context of the person, of their role, of their relationships that they have. I think that's a good starting point. The context of the agency… To really get your head around what it is exactly that they are doing day-to-day and their relationships in that context. You need to be able to understand their role, to understand the different frameworks that might influence their practice. *[Pause]* (Fran and Amy, focus group)

[35] What professional knowledge and research evidence might be relevant to understanding and responding to this situation and supervisee (e.g., theories, models, practice concepts, frameworks, etc.)? (a) What knowledge do you have? (b)What knowledge do you need?

When theories or perspectives were known or considered applicable some seemed to be downplayed or avoided. Susan[(s)] talked about a planning session that she conducted with the team where she avoided using the term “strengths”. She said “it was all about language”, a reason that was not extended in any detail in the session;

> We did a bit of a – sort of like strengths. I didn't call it strengths, actually. I wrote “strengths” and then rubbed it out because I didn't like it. It was all about language yesterday. So, it was like what we're doing well and what we could improve on. (Susan, session)

Participants’ confidence with, and references to, professional knowledge were greater in the observed conversations that were about client practice. For example, some participants mentioned practice theories and models, such as, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Motivational Interviewing, and Functional Analytical Psychotherapy (FAP). Mary[(ss)] was quite specific that the use of theories and models of practice was more relevant to conversations with Susan[(s)] about her counselling or “therapy” practice; “the theories come into it because she's doing counselling. So now, we're actually talking more about the therapy that Susan’s doing and the theories that are underpinning that”. Even though Susan and Mary also covered topics in their observed sessions that related to management, leadership, and supervision, the same commitment to theoretical connections was not present. For example, in one session they talked about Susan’s counselling and Mary asked; “So what have you been using in the sessions? What sort of therapy? What's your approach?”, which invited exploration and application of knowledge.

The following example demonstrated how a practice model could be discussed in a supervision session for professional development purposes. Susan[(s)] talked about her ability in counselling work and some uncertainties she had in creating structure and benefit for the

client. In this exchange, Mary[(ss)] explained the purpose of ACT and how it might be used, then followed with some reassurance and clarification to support Susan's future practice;

> *Susan:* … I feel like in my sessions with clients it not enough for me to sit there and listen and reflect. It's not enough for me to do that, and I want to be able to give something more than that; for me as well as the client, I think.
>
> *Mary:* ACT is behavioural therapy. That's what it is. If you're an ACT therapist, you're a contextual behaviourist. So, it's the behaviour in the context. What is the function of that behaviour in the context that's occurring? That's what we are. It's about understanding that. So, it's about the best thing is when that behaviour shows up – so, you know, when they bring anxiety into the room, target it then-and-there. Zero-in.
>
> *Susan:* And that's the risk if I'm not focused.
>
> *Mary:* That's right. You won't see it. "I see you're a bit uncomfortable. What we've been discussing has turned something up. What's shown up for you?"
>
> *Susan:* And, see, I've done that. With my DV comment, like, "You've been quite open in that." So, I don't know what it is about. Maybe I just need to get over it. Maybe. I'll keep doing it and I'll keep reading.
>
> *Mary:* That's very un-ACT. "That's very un-ACT", I'm going to say. Just be willing to make space for that. (Susan and Mary, session)

Building and Trading on Relationships

Findings related to relationships showed they were a central feature of participants' conversations, and their ideas about relationship qualities and concerns were extensive. Relationships and relating to others appeared to be complex and very influential on supervisors' thinking and practice. They presented as a process-imperative; a necessary grounding or conduit for supervision conversations. There were connections between these

findings and the other subthemes related to *power* and *process and development* which were interwoven with how participants related to each other and the nature of their relationships. A fuller view of participants' relationships was limited because this study presented a moment-in-time for participants and their supervision partners. As such, other relationship dynamics may have been absent or not talked about in this study.

The tethering of *trade* with relationships appeared in different ways. It was about trade as a craft or artform – how relationships were "built", sustained, and navigated, and the achievement of a particular quality of relationship, such as, "strong" and "steady". It also related to the transactional meaning of trade, as an exchange of benefits or opportunities, relationship as "currency", and people's choices to engage with others or not. Whatever trade appeared as, it seemed mostly informed by the nature and experiences of participants' relationships. Complementary to the subtheme of *power*, these findings suggested a commodification of relationships, where bartering of actions and decisions correlated with types of relationships. Emblems of trade in participants' responses were first prompted by Roger's(s) reference to his team saying they could no longer "trade" on the relationships he had with decision makers who had left their work environment. This extended to how participants described gaining or losing something because of their own or other people's relationships.

All the supervisees in the observed sessions focused a lot on interactions and relationships with other people. The types of relationships that participants talked about varied. They included those with individuals and teams they supervised, with their managers and other more senior employees, and with people external to their organisations. Relationships between team members and between teams and supervisors were a common relationship concern or challenge discussed in the observations. Some observed pairs covered

distinctively different team topics which spanned challenges, such as, tensions and conflicts within teams and uncertainty about work arrangements and related support needs. The commonality across participants who were managers was how team dynamics and events affected them individually as well as their relationships with their teams.

Commonalities in the elements of relationships that participants discussed included how they expected themselves and others to behave – especially incongruencies between expectations and behaviour – and the influence of "role changes", "power", "politics", and "tensions" on their relationships. Sarah[(s)] presented one example, wherein she was concerned about mixed messages the team was getting about how to do their job. She linked the concern to its effect on her relationship with the team, especially in terms of being open and acknowledging the incongruencies, and her ability maintain integrity as a social worker. She coupled that with her interpersonal challenges with the manager, which she thought had the potential for broader, negative implications;

> I will say to do it one way, and then the manager will come to them when I'm not there and say, "Have you done this?" or "You need to do it that way?" and they're like, "It doesn't even make sense? What we've done is sufficient". … [it] may very well be mine and the manager's stuff as opposed to service stuff [which] then kind of plays out at a wider level… *[after some exchange that led to some team members' behaviour]* … if I talk to [the team], they're going to turn around and go, "Well, [the manager] does it all the time" and I sort of tend to agree with them a little bit, but at the same time, how does that fit with my values as a social worker and not wanting to put somebody down, and being respectful to everybody? (Sarah, session)

Focus group participants saw context as important to relationships for Anna in the scenario, in particular, Anna's change in role that led to relationship changes. For example, Daisy said, "I think the other key piece of information is the fact that she is managing people that she was

a team member with. So, significant change in role and relationships for her in that same environment". Valerie[(ss)] reiterated the influence of contexts and how personal "models" of relationships are referenced, when she noted the following to Audrey[(s)] in an observed session;

> …what goes on between us happens in relationships outside as well, because we bring *us* with us into the room, and with us comes all of the models of every relationship that we've ever had and the way that we interact with people. (Valerie, session)

Relationship Qualities

Participants described different relationships and what they considered to be important quality features. They presented a continuum that ranged from strong or steady relationships through to less steady and tense relationships. Findings related to that continuum are presented below and it was evident that "trust" and feeling "safe" were fundamental determinants of the value of a supervision or professional relationship.

Participants used a number of descriptors for "good" or "positive" relationships, which included: "steady relationships", "strong relationships", "trusting relationship", "mutual relationships", and "close working relationships". Valerie[(ss)] drew a parallel with "attachment relationships" from therapeutic practice. Although she thought it was not always available in human services work, she considered the supervisor and workplace as a potential "secure base" for a worker;

> We go out into the world. We sometimes do some really tricky work that can potentially make us feel pretty vulnerable, and the ideal would be to go back into a workplace environment where we feel like we can hold that, and have that consolidated and have support around that. (Valerie, interview)

In parallel, the suggested fundamentals of strong, steady, and other positive relationships were elements such as “trust”, “support”, and “safety”, which participants implied led to critical benefits like, “faith” and “confidence”. Both Sarah(s) and Susan(s) suggested that an amount of “alignment” between supervisor and supervisee was important. When Susan talked to me about her and Mary(ss) she said, “our values align and we're passionate about very similar things”, and when Sarah talked about her connection to Jack(ss) she said, “I imagine that we probably both practice in similar ways”.

Overall, those elements indicated the importance of reliability, consistency, and predictability. Audrey(s) provided an example of what she considered a “good therapeutic relationship” with one of her clients; “I think because it was the one place that she could come and grieve and be validated, because [everywhere else] she has felt really judged”. When Susan(s) talked about being challenged, she thought that her good relationship and the safety she felt with Mary(ss) promoted her learning and professional development; “I've always felt safe, but it's pushed me into being able to defend every decision I make with some really good evidence”.

Claire(ss) proposed that good, strong relationships are “not all one-way”. She suggested that trust equates to reliability when she told Roger(s) that he could send a simple email about a decision, such as, "I'm onto it” and she would have confidence it was in-hand, because they had “a very strong relationship”. This evolved from Roger’s sense of not being trusted by other supervisors because of requests for him to respond constantly and in detail about his actions and decisions. In his interview, Roger talked about the importance of “having a person in your corner that has skill, experience, and wisdom” and who can “corral” responses and feelings. He said that, without that protection, he felt “much more nervous” and noted that the absence, for him;

> …manifests itself into [me] being a bit more wayward in the way I do things. I seem to be managing to piss most people off these days, whereas before, that was corralled somewhat by Claire. So, yeah, it's a great nervousness when you don't have a boss or supervisor that has all those things we've described. (Roger, interview)

Claire regularly highlighted "trust" as a common feature of their conversations over time – especially Roger's surprise at others' inconsistencies and his reluctance to trust others. Claire identified themes from what she had come to know about Roger over time, for example, she spoke of things that "shifted" and "changed" for Roger; "…a reawakening of old behaviours [and] your perception about who you trust and how far." (Claire, session).

In his interview, Jack[(ss)] recalled a formative supervisee experience for him, where "trust and faith" featured and he felt respected by the supervisor who "also did the basics very well; the listening, making sure they were paying attention, not answering phones when they ring, and stuff like that". In what appeared as an exchange-based trade, Jack thought that he readily engaged with that supervisor because a positive supervision relationship and process was created;

> … I could get stuff off my chest, even about the supervisor who was the boss as well, I knew I could say, "You gave me the shits when you did that", and it was absolutely safe and heard and listened to. So never any dramas with that. (Jack, interview)

With regard to team relationships, Susan[(s)] and Mary[(ss)] discussed the new perspective one worker had brought and the related improvements in "structure" and functioning. They thought it also showed the benefit of team members asking questions and expressing "discomfort" with others' views and or decisions to achieve working team relationships, as well as the importance of supervisors creating "safe" spaces for such challenges;

> *Mary:* And that's what she has brought to this team – structure – because that's where she comes from.
>
> *Susan:* And I desperately needed it.
>
> *Mary:* …she's got the courage to question things that she's not comfortable with, even though she's a newbie – she's a new one on the team – she still questions what she's uncomfortable with. That's good. That's what you need.
>
> *Susan:* Yeah, definitely, and I'm so grateful that she feels safe to do that because that's what we needed. I needed fresh eyes to come in and say, "Oh, I've never seen it done like that before". And I'm loving having that different perspective from everyone. She brings a whole other set of eyes, which is amazing. (Susan and Mary, session)

When participants talked about less steady relationships, or those where they felt "uncomfortable", the features previously discussed were generally absent or unstable. As a counterpoint to the importance of transparency noted above, Valerie[(ss)] raised "collusion" when she commented to Audrey[(s)], "I wonder to what extent we can collude with that when we also don't talk about it". In her interview, Audrey[(s)] described "floundering a bit" around uncertainty about how to guide conversations with a client who experienced distrust in relationships which was brought into counselling sessions with Audrey. She identified discomfort for the client who "doesn't trust anyone, and over the time that I've been seeing her, her distrust, her mistrust has just grown and grown and grown, and so it's a theme that is really prevalent". Audrey identified prompts that she knew indicated her own uncertainty, such as, "I just don't know what more I can do, or what am I missing?". On that basis, in her interview, Audrey noted that it was those relationships, and relationship challenges related to values, that she was most likely to raise in her own supervision sessions. In particular, she sought to explore the "ones I judge – often that's what I will bring to supervision, because judgement is really unhelpful".

Focus group participants thought that the change in Anna's relationship with supervisees in the scenario would be a critical focus for conversations in her own supervision sessions. They also thought Anna's relationship with her own supervisor was fundamental to her ability to learn about dual roles, through the supervisor "modelling how you juggle holding both". In one of the focus groups, Betty suggested a relationship impasse in the scenario which might limit the focus of supervision sessions that Anna provided; "How is it going to be quality supervision when you've got a supervisor that's struggling and a supervisee that's reluctant to engage in supervision?".

Similarly, Roger[(s)] reflected on his values and self-perception as an impetus for confusion in understanding others' behaviour and, in turn, difficult relationships. The following example exchange between Roger and Claire[(ss)] is one of numerous references they made across their sessions to misalignment between Roger's values and what he observed in others, and the impact those values had on how he interacted with others and their expectations of him;

> *Roger:* I've seen a more overt response to people wanting to be mean. There's always been bits of it, but not to the degree I've seen in the past month or so. You've known me for a long time. I generally think most people are pretty good, so it really has shocked me to go, "Hang on, I don't want to be around people that are miserable and grumbly" because we've all got a great deal with our lives. So, it's quite…
>
> *Claire:* …It's quite fundamental for you. You're not moving on as easily as you would have in the past. (Roger and Claire, session)

In a team context, Sarah[(s)] talked about tensions between different teams in her agency around roles and responsibilities, with example statements, such as, "'Well, it's your job to do this. It's your job to do that'. I don't actually think it is [their] job to tell [my team] what their job is". A challenge was to navigate expectations placed on one team by another, as well as

impediments to achieving a solution, for example, “raising feedback about that to the manager who supervises the [other] staff and not necessarily getting a helpful response”. The latter was especially difficult when Sarah had relationship struggles with that manager.

Team tension and conflict was a dominant topic in Roger’s[(s)] supervision sessions. There was in-depth discussion about team dynamics and individuals-within-teams which expanded to how relationships might have influenced what had happened after an event of particularly strong tension and how it was managed. The analysis included thinking about relationships – within the team and with Roger – and why team members might criticise their team peers; “Lots of people support good practitioners. So, there's something underneath that, for people to want to feel that they have to take it down”. Roger was especially concerned about how individuals’ behaviours and tensions between some team members “really infiltrated” the team’s achievements and their “celebration of the win”.

Relationship Skills and Process

Many participants considered some of the more critical elements for good relationships as, “transparency”, “being really open”, and “putting it out there”, and noted the importance of having “space to talk”. A number used the metaphor of putting topics and issues “on the table”. Examples of “talking transparently” to supervisees or clients about relationships were provided, a skill and process that Roger[(s)] identified as part of the “non-technical side, the relational component” of building and sustaining relationships.

In an observed session, Valerie[(ss)] provided Audrey[(s)] with an example approach for a therapeutic relationship and suggested that openness could be supported by “structure” or context by saying to a client, “I'm not about judging you because of that. I'm just curious. I've been feeling like I don't know how to help you, and I want that to shift”. Valerie also outlined

a broader transparency example that Audrey might use in her practice; “we want to be really curious about what's going on between us in this relationship, in here; tell me about the times when you feel connected to me and the times when you feel disconnected from me”.

In one focus group, Amy referred to the Anna scenario and suggested that open discussions about Anna’s dual roles would be important, to explore her relationships and, importantly, that putting light on the “unspoken” could assist her relationships with others;

> …being really transparent about that and putting that on the table to discuss, and what challenges that might bring up for the other people and what they can do to try and address that if they are going to continue to have the supervision in that way. Because sometimes, if you don’t ever talk about it, it is just this unspoken thing and these people might not realise it is something she is considering or it is something that is impacting her as well, if she hasn’t spoken about it with them. (Amy, focus group)

Diane concurred about the dual benefits of open conversation for Anna and suggested it provided a platform for supervision to be “meaningful” within a session – including modelling the “juggling” of dual roles – and afterwards when Anna, or any supervisor, is supervising others;

> In that relationship, not only allows for that relationship to be a bit more meaningful but also then provides some modelling for her, of some ways of her doing that in her own practice. Identifying, “there’s a couple of things we’re doing here. We’re wearing a few hats. How do we make sure we’re doing all these things, but that this is meaningful and useful as well?’ (Diane, focus group)

In one of the observed sessions, Claire[(ss)] provided a transparency example for Roger[(s)] when she suggested a way to build a relationship with his new supervisor so that he might feel more comfortable and respected. Claire said that the supervisor could possibly, “learn some

of your ways as much as you learn some of hers". Like other participants, Claire proposed to Roger that he "simply put the issue on the table" and "out there";

> …say, "Look, whatever history there has been, and whatever others have said to you, we probably need to just talk it through and just have it out and work out where we stand with each other, and what kind of a go we're each going to give each other", and maybe there's some real value for you in putting it out there. (Claire, session)

Mary[(ss)] described a collection of elements that she thought should feature in supervision conversations – such as, "respect", "not controlling", "guiding them", "flexibility", and "understanding" – that she thought would not only help explore subject matter brought by supervisees, but strengthen the supervision relationship;

> So, providing options for their supervisees, not controlling… and giving them the understanding that's out there, and hopefully guiding them but not directing them, not telling them what to do… to think more creatively, to be more flexible in their supervision maybe, and to understand that sometimes there can be a bit of a conflict if you're a line manager and you're supervising staff under you. (Mary, interview)

In a similar way, Sarah[(s)] described how she created a "mutual relationship" with supervisees she treated as "expert", which she presented as shifting between directive and facilitative approaches;

> I very much try to make them the expert and make them responsible for coming up with solutions. So, I think that works well. There's times when you want to go, "Have you tried this? Have you done this? Maybe this about this…" and then there's other times where it's like, "What do you think? How could you respond?" and it's got to kind of be that mutual relationship. (Sarah, interview)

Susan[(s)] saw the expression and navigation of differences as fundamental. In her interview, Susan explained the benefit of trust in her relationship with Mary[(ss)] and how it could sustain differences; “I trust that I can disagree with her and that's okay, or not follow through with what she suggested I do, and know that I can go back into the next session and say, ‘You know what? I chose not to do that, and this is why’”.

Other participants also acknowledged the influence of their personal values and attributes on their relationships. Roger[(s)] struggled with what Claire[(ss)] referred to as “managing the complexity of people”, especially trust, emotional expressions and tensions, and the need to take time and tailor responses to individual needs. In his interview, Roger noted, “it does go counter to my desire as a leader who just tells people what to do… this is an ongoing challenge”. Roger and Claire agreed that his propensity to rapidly define and respond to issues was unlikely to build or mend relationships. Claire saw consultation with the team as a way for Roger to create better relationships. In one observed session, Claire said it was important for Roger to access supportive conversations for himself to prompt him to consider relationships; “set up something for yourself that creates an awareness for you to give them a bit more attention, or seek out the conversation with someone, me or someone else, who will have the conversation with you around an issue”.

Relationship Boundaries

Establishing and navigating relationship boundaries was discussed in relation to both supervision and client relationships. Susan[(s)] noted that boundaries were “really tricky” and relevant in different aspects of work; “…boundaries with clients, but also boundaries as a service, boundaries with each other. It's huge”. Susan also talked about boundary-setting similarities between client work and supervision, which she had seen more since working with Mary[(ss)]; “I hadn’t seen the staff as my clients, but I do now, and I think that's helped for

me to be able to set those boundaries, more clearer boundaries, with our relationships". In relation to boundaries with clients, Susan spoke in her sessions and interview about how "really long" worker-client relationships could "blur" boundaries and restrict workers' abilities to see critical issues. As one example, Susan thought the familiarity between a worker and father was problematic, "in a way that prevented her [worker] from seeing some child protection concerns".

Some participants saw the influence of their own values on why and how they set boundaries. For example, at the start of one of her sessions, Audrey(s) said she wanted to discuss boundaries and referred to interactions with a client to explore them. The pair talked about Audrey's personal values, her assumptions about some clients or their behaviours, and her desire to not work with certain client groups. Valerie(ss) then drew the conversation back to Audrey's plan for the session and wondered what the "boundary violation" was in the example. Audrey summed-up and, in this instance, her personal concerns and reluctance to have a working relationship with the client were translated as boundaries related to timing;

> *Valerie:* Because you came in saying, "We'll talk about the boundaries". Where do you think there was a boundary violation with him?
>
> *[Audrey initiated some detail about an event and Valerie briefly clarified]*
>
> *Audrey:* … He talked about a guy who he saw for one session and he really seemed to get a lot from that guy, a lot of insight, and I think he respected that guy… I said to him, "…I reckon you would work better with a male who specialises in this area. It's not really my area, and I know of someone…" … So, I gave him [that person's] card and I said, "I just think you would work much better – you respond well to men… I would like you to go and see him. I think you'd really like him…" and I kind of got rid of him. He took it well. It wasn't completely rude. But I guess the boundary issue is, I wish I had of done all of that much earlier, and next time I will. (Audrey and Valerie, session)

Boundaries were also noted within some of the observed supervision relationships. Jack's[(ss)] reluctance to raise or pursue certain issues with Sarah[(s)] was one example. Another example was Valerie's[(ss)] comment in an observed session that indicated that she and Audrey[(s)] had done some preparation for the observations – such as, how my presence would be managed and what would not be discussed – when she asked Audrey's permission to talk about a certain topic;

> I wonder if it's okay – and I'm certainly conscious about your past experiences and of not wanting us to kind of bring that up at the moment, but I'm also really – I guess I want to make space for it in this conversation. I wonder if it would be okay for us just to take a moment to acknowledge it, because it's there, right? (Valerie, session)

In an example that Susan[(s)] provided in one session about a situation with a worker, she described an intrapersonal conflict when she had to raise concerns about the worker's behaviour. Susan said she felt "petrified" about talking directly with the worker about the issue because, "it felt like the first time that I've really had to say something". Susan suggested that part of the challenge could have been "blurred" boundaries that may have come from the pair's history of varied roles and relationships;

> I don't know whether the boundaries between my relationship with her were too far gone for me to be able to sit as a manager, as her supervisor… because we'd been co-workers and all the drama that had happened in me getting this position, we were too familiar… because when I challenged her about [the incident], it was nearly like there was a tantrum, for lack of a better word, and she wouldn't take me that seriously enough to act on it, and that she was so strong in her opinion of it that it was like what I said about it wasn't enough for her to act on it. (Susan, session)

Mary[ss] sought Susan's thoughts about alternatives – "If that happened again what do you think that you could do differently?" – and drew attention to the challenges and the "hard job" managers often confront in navigating role and relationship changes, and sustaining relationships while calling others "to account";

> You are a manager, but that doesn't mean that you can't have close relationships with your workers. I mean, it happens: friends get promoted and so you can be colleagues and all of a sudden one is in a higher position, and sometimes that is a hard job of being a manager; that you have to sometimes call that worker to account. (Mary, session)

Relationship History and Duration

Some participants talked about the influence of time and longevity of relationships. They described a "history" of shared experiences that was significant for the "evolution of relationship" and "knowing" each other. Susan[s] thought her "long history" with one worker may have contributed to some of the role and relationship struggles they had experienced. For others, duration seemed to mean reliability, which Claire[ss] referred to in her interview as "a bit of a pattern that is quite comfortable for me". In her interview, Sarah[s] said that her sessions with Jack[ss] were "in some ways, quite casual and conversational" because they had known each other for some time in different roles and, "[that style] developed as our relationship has developed a little bit". In one of Roger's[s] observed sessions, he described re-starting relationships as "really hard" because he had to "go back and build the faith and confidence" that he had already established with someone else, which he defined as "currency".

Claire[ss] described her conversations with supervisees with whom she was in longer term relationships as very different to those in newer relationships. In the latter, she said there were more "niceties" and that she was "learning" and "less proactive";

> There are not always the niceties that might go on. Also, I think there's something about this agency, those of us that have been around, where we just cut to the chase a lot [which] has probably penetrated in supervision... I've had one round with all of my new three managers and it's nothing like the supervision here, because it's new and it's different… I'm less proactive. I'm more facilitative and searching and inquiring than with this lot. (Claire, interview)

Susan[(s)] had the same view about the influence of relationship history on supervision conversations. She talked about how "robust" conversations might be, as well as her confidence and others' perceptions. The example was a worker with whom Susan had experienced challenges and had a long and varied role and relationship history;

> I'm more likely with the other staff members [with less experience and a different relationship history] to have a more robust discussion, giving advice or sharing my opinion. Whereas, with [worker], I think I hold back a little bit because I don't want her to feel like I think I know more about a certain topic. (Susan, interview)

Claire[(ss)] also connected longevity to operating in codes of organisational and interpersonal "shorthand" or "shortcuts". Such descriptions indicated collegial and clique relationships. Along the same lines, in the observed sessions and the focus groups, participants often finished each other's sentences or assumed existing knowledge – such as, "you know", "and so on", "yeah, yeah, yeah", and "blah, blah, blah" – which appeared, at times, to imply that they were in agreement on the subjects of conversation even though there was no explicit confirmation. The shorthand may have been more related to time-saving, such as Jack's[(ss)] explanation for the limited exploration and analysis in his sessions with Sarah[(s)]. When I

asked Jack how much bearing his inside knowledge and experience of Sarah's program [36] had on their sessions he emphasised the time-saving benefits. He said he knew it was a "shitty job with a whole lot of stress and expectation" and that Sarah did not need to describe policies and practices because;

> It just saves a lot of time. Sarah doesn't have to talk about the funding or doesn't have to talk about the [design] and explain it all to me because I know what it all is… It does save time. I understand a lot of it, the stress. (Jack, interview)

Relationship Investment – effort, motivation, and trade

Common premises for determining actions and exchanges in relationships were "motivation" and "effort". Many participants provided a picture of turbulent relationships influenced by factors that they saw as often outside their control or which required "effort" from which the outcome was uncertain. For example, Sarah(s) talked about "picking battles" when deciding whether to continue attempts to address concerns with more senior staff. The extension, in trade terms, was what Sarah or the team might get in return for Sarah's efforts. Sarah's past experiences had influenced how she engaged with others and her attempts to resolve relational concerns;

> I've tried to raise some of these conversations and haven't necessarily had it approached in a particularly useful or open way. So, I'm kind of like, do I bother? What do I pick my battles over? … I've tried to address it a few times and I'm now kind of going, where's my motivation?… Do I really want to put myself out there and make an issue of things? (Sarah, session)

[36] In a different organisation, i.e., a government-funded program that operated across different organisations.

Roger[(s)] talked about effort he should put into resolving team tensions himself. He suggested an important distinction that supervisors needed to make was between relationships that were working and those that were not, and queried the usefulness of greater weight more commonly put on the latter. In doing so, he highlighted a confronting balancing act – to attend to different relationships, in different ways – and the risky binary position that could be taken;

> I'm putting all this effort over here, but I'm seeing [manager] and her team that are doing great, and I'm going, am I putting my effort in the wrong spot? Do I just let there be some discontent, or do I try, and continue to try, and stop that? ...[or] do I just let it go?
> (Roger, session)

Claire[(ss)] used "investment" as a premise for considering Roger's dilemma around effort and resolving team tensions; a frame of currency and exchange. She noted Roger's tussle around the possible consequences if he acted, or not, and she asked Roger "why" to determine his motivation; "the most pressing question, if I've heard you right, is what investment do you now make in dealing with it or not? So, where have you landed in weighing that up? Why would you invest more in that?" Roger later noted that it was important to invest in resolving team tensions because the team's performance reflected its "identity" and integrity. He also inferred a trade on those relationships, such as, what you put in, is what you get out; "I genuinely want… an environment where people are happy. … [others might not] care too much if someone is an arsehole or is mean… [but] for me, it is an extension of our group almost, and our identity".

Some participants identified the flow-on effect of their relationships. Sarah[(s)] suggested that the tensions between her and a senior person impacted how that person engaged with Sarah's team. In the following portion of a session, she also acknowledged the risk of her influencing

others' bias. Jack[ss] concurred about the bias potential and also related it to navigating different people's approaches;

> *Jack:* But it's tricky, this whole, this personality, that person, this is how you work with them, this is how I find it best with them, given that half of that is how you interact with them and what your personality is like as well.
>
> *Sarah:* And I don't want to bias things for that person either. Like, potentially some of the stuff that's going on is my stuff, not anybody else's stuff, and it doesn't mean that it necessarily has to continue. (Sarah and Jack, session)

Another example was "trade" benefits for Roger[s] and his team from the relationships that Roger had with decision makers who had since left the organisation. Roger reported in one observed session that his team said, "we've got to work harder because you used to have these relationships with [others]", which he summed up as, "we don't have anything to trade on now". Susan[s] talked to Mary[ss] about the team's successful efforts to adapt to changes. She described supportive and collaborative team conversations and she thought the team "fitted together" well. The trade return that Susan got from the collaborative approach was that she felt "comfort" and confidence to allocate responsibilities;

> [A potential community partner] wanted to know about our team and it was really nice to be able to say that at the moment we've got such a unique, eclectic mix of experience and skills, and it's fitting together really nicely. That feels really nice. Like, I'm completely comfortable with how we are as a team and I can say [to them], "You're responsible for that, and you're responsible for that". (Susan, session)

Similarly, trading on "loyalty" appeared in some participants' descriptions of relationships. This included how being "loyal to the team" influenced decisions about their own careers or to challenge workplace practices that had potential to impact the team. Sarah[s] talked about

how her “loyalty” to the team drove her to keep on preparing for her pending leave and to deal with continuing relationship tensions outside the team;

> *Jack:* So where are you at with the whole “not my problem when I finish” or do you still worry…
>
> *Sarah:* If I wasn't loyal to the team, I'd contemplate going on leave now. Just tired. Really exhausted. (Sara and Jack, session)

In one of his sessions, Roger[(s)] described some team members being loyal to him when they supported him by getting their jobs done at times when they thought he was struggling. He said, “It's not their job to monitor me, but they're my friends and they do that. So, I'm really encouraged by my guys coming together”. At the same time, he worried that such an exchange should not be solely based on having a good and supportive boss;

> … and both of them have said in around-about ways, “We can tell you were really doing it tough, so we had to do it for you”… that's a pretty big deal… which is a really lovely thing, but… what happens if you don't have that relationship? What if you’ve got a boss that's a real dick? You can't have everything relying on, “I'm going to bust my arse for my boss”. (Roger, session)

Conclusion

Participants in this study showed that supervisors have a lot to talk about in supervision conversations where they are the supervisee, and that their focus extends beyond clinical practice to supervising, managing, and leading. The most prevalent topics of conversation were relationships and organisational environments, which encompassed challenges, uncertainties, and dissatisfaction. Power and authority were significant elements of many experiences that participants described and discussed, in which power in alliances and having

answers for supervisees were prominent. Participants talked about themselves, not just others, and described personal and professional uncertainties. Some participants used reflective processes to recall experiences and to consider circumstances, other people, and themselves, from which they attempted to understand events and behaviour to determine their next steps. There were numerous examples of how supervisors' own sessions were, or could be, used to develop their management, leadership, or supervision of others. Many of the findings aligned with other studies located in the literature review which will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter provides a discussion about the major findings from this study, based on data from observations, interviews, and focus groups that were used to consider the research question; *What happens in social work supervisors' own supervision sessions?* The emphasis of discussion in this chapter is on two major findings in particular; the limited talk about supervision sessions in participants' own sessions as part of developing supervisors, and the multidimensional roles and experiences of supervisors. This chapter also presents a *Multidimensional Supervisor Development Framework* that I created from this study's findings (Figure 5.1). It is a proposed framework for supervision practice to be used by supervisors in their practice and supervisors-of-supervisors to develop other supervisors. As each *dimension* of the framework is presented in this chapter, it is also used to guide the discussion about findings from this study. At the end of this chapter, conclusions are presented, followed by recommendations for further research and supervision practice and development.

A comparison of findings from this study with other supervision studies was somewhat challenging. There was a paucity of supervisor-specific studies. This study provided a rare opportunity to see inside the supervision sessions of some supervisors and offered something new by focusing explicitly on supervisors-as-supervisees rather than the common focus on client practitioners as supervisees. The added dimension offered by this study was that it considered what supervisors' experiences as supervisees might be like *because* they were also supervisors; that is, the supervisee and supervisor experiences of *one person*.

Overview of Major Findings

An overview of the major findings is in Table 5.1 which is divided according to the research sub questions into content, process, context, and development. They are discussed in some more detail in the following sections. The major findings informed the *Multidimensional Supervisor Development Framework* that I created from the findings. The dimensions represent *what* participants talked about and *how* they talked about – or in the case of the focus groups, proposed to talk about – supervisor experiences.

Table 5.1:

Overview of Major Findings

Content (topics)	Process (relating)
• Relationships with supervisees, supervisors, and colleagues. • Organisational arrangements, dynamics, and politics. • Team dynamics. • Expectations of self and others. • Personal and professional development.	• Reflection and various interpersonal skills were used to facilitate thinking and dialogue. • Power dynamics existed in different forms. • Analysis was based more on experience than other knowledge and evidence. • Individual/self-reflection featured more than critical reflection and contextual analysis.
Context (influences)	**Development (of supervision practice)**
• Definitions and understandings of supervision were mixed and influenced by organisations, experiences, and roles. • Most participants occupied dual or multiple roles. • Professional and managerial discourses competed in participants' organisations.	• Sessions were used for developmental purposes. • Limited talk about supervision sessions. • Greater emphasis on workplace and *managerial* supervision. • *Supervising supervisors* was understood more conceptually than practically.

Supervising and Developing Supervisors

> Social workers who take on supervisory duties do not, by such a move, leave the profession; they extend it. (Brashears, 1995, p. 696)

This study was premised on a view that supervision is practice and social workers are social workers, no matter what job or role they occupy. Participants in this study experienced insecurity and uncertainty and many used their supervision sessions for development purposes, but not specifically for supervision sessions they provided. The findings challenged seemingly popular notions that supervision processes such as reflection and analysis are not necessary for work that is not *clinical* or *direct* with clients. Participants' ideas about the purpose or intention of supervision and supervision sessions were important aspects of their understandings of supervision. Those interpretations were influencing factors in supervising supervisors because they could determine if and how supervisors approached their own supervision sessions.

The findings showed the potential for both supervisors' own supervision sessions and their supervisors to support their personal and professional development. Participants in the observed sessions provided a first-hand look at the practical impact on self-development of supervisors' conversations with their own supervisors, such as, how they referred to previous conversations, used suggestions back in practice, and talked about the outcomes of those efforts in subsequent sessions. As such, the findings captured how supervision sessions could be used to develop supervisors in their practice and to adapt to new or changing roles.

Many aspects of the conversations in the observations and those proposed by the focus groups resembled reflective, experiential, and action learning processes (informed by, for example, Kolb, 1984; Schön, 1983) that sit within some of the process models and frameworks presented in the literature review, for example, reflective models (Davys &

Beddoe, 2010; Rankine, 2017b). The depth of processing and exploring experiences varied between participants and, when it did happen, it was mainly about personal issues and concerns rather than broader, structural issues. Noteworthy was that most personal concerns that were discussed occurred in organisational contexts but conversations remained predominantly on the individual with some cursory acknowledgement of participants' surrounds. Approaches in the observed sessions and the focus groups also showed what different *functions* of supervision might look like in practice — that is, administrative, educational, supportive (Kadushin, 1993; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014) and mediation (Morrison, 2005; Shulman, 2010) – including the common juggle between them. The mediation function appeared not so much as the supervisor mediating between the organisation and the supervisee, but discussions about how supervisor-supervisees might mediate on behalf of those they supervised or, at least, the desire or intention some of them had to mediate for others.

Techniques used by the supervisors in the observations were factors in facilitating development. Most participants demonstrated the dual purpose of supervisors-of-supervisors developing another supervisor in-the-moment, as well as prompting that supervisor to mirror them and develop their supervisees in similar ways. The development focus extended to supervisors-of-supervisors, two of whom in the observations were supervising a supervisor/manager for the first time. Participants provided important insight to how supervisors-of-supervisors perceived both their role and relevance with a supervisee who was also a supervisor.

Findings demonstrated an array of approaches and techniques used by supervisors to facilitate conversations, engage in dialogue, and explore topics that could develop supervisors. In both the observed sessions and the focus groups, approaches differed in *how* topics and issues

were explored. There were variations in how observation participants engaged in their sessions and focus group participants had different perspectives on how to support and develop Anna in the scenario. Participants' limited references to professional knowledge to inform their conversations, conclusions, and decisions was striking, especially supervision, management, and leadership knowledge. There were numerous missed opportunities to use varied knowledge to analyse experiences and inform development, such as, worries that Sarah(s) raised about team and workplace relationships and the potential connection to her own management and leadership. Such use of knowledge could support a more critical approach to conversations and thinking, in both supervisors' own sessions and those with their supervisees.

Participants in the observations and focus groups had mixed experiences of supervision as supervisees, from which they had decided both what to do and not to do in supervision they provided. Most lacked a framework and conceptual understanding of supervision of supervisors, especially using their own supervision sessions to consider sessions they provided. Some findings from the observed sessions and the focus groups' ideas for the Anna scenario did show how supervisors' own supervision sessions had potential to be used to develop supervisors and their practice. Such an approach would be less osmosis and self-directed learning and more strategic with a developmental and learning focus. Importantly, their own supervisor would be aware of, and act on, their role in developing another supervisor.

Limited Talk about Supervision Sessions

> It is noteworthy, therefore, how limited the opportunities are for managers to reflect in depth on their supervisory practice; to examine the skills they are using and to identify process dynamics at work below the surface in supervision. (Patterson, 2019, p. 50)

When I started this study, I expected to explore how supervisors used their own supervision sessions to talk and learn about the supervision sessions they provided for others. I had wondered how supervisors developed the ability to, for example, facilitate supervision sessions, use supervision models, and cultivate the types of conversations that are popularly promoted as essential for good practice. I queried how they learned to facilitate those conversations, especially because most supervisors are reliant on their observation of others and some limited training, usually early in their supervisor career (Atzinger et al., 2014; Ausbrooks, 2010; Egan, 2012a; Kavanagh et al., 2008; Patterson & Whincup, 2018; Scott & Farrow, 1993). I thought participants would explicitly describe and break down supervision sessions or conversations through some form of description, reflection, and analysis. That did not happen. It was possible that their supervision sessions prior to my observations contained more detailed reference to supervision sessions they provided, although follow-up interviews with most observation participants suggested that was not the case, except for Claire[(ss)] who said she and Roger[(s)] had those conversations before they moved to a team focus. Most participants did, however, show such processes around other subject matter related to supervising, managing, and leading. Findings provided possible explanations for the absence of those conversations. Prominent, were the different frames of reference for supervision and the multiple roles of participants in this study which appeared to demote talking about supervision conversations, especially in-session, that they had with others.

Most participants' surprise or interest about the idea of talking about supervision sessions in their own sessions was one of the most intriguing findings in this study. This began with challenges for many participants to conceptualise the *idea* of using their own sessions for that purpose, through to those with a conceptual understanding and less clarity about what that would look like; specifically, what would be different. It was interesting for a raft of reasons, not least of which was the importance placed on supervision by the profession, social workers, and other practitioners, and the myriad suggestions over time about its benefits and links to outcomes for clients and practitioners (Carpenter et al., 2012; Harkness & Poertner, 1989; Mor Barak et al., 2009; Poertner, 2006). Such importance implied that supervision should be thought out and executed well by supervisors. Another reason why supervisors' own sessions might be prioritised as methods for supervision practice development was the views of some participants in this and other studies that their supervisee experiences were inadequate for their needs or interests, especially new supervisors (Schmidt & Kariuki, 2019).

At the same time, as discussed elsewhere, participants did talk about, reflect on, and plan around other roles of manager, leader, and counsellor. In doing so, they demonstrated capacity to think about their connection to others. Their other roles and preferred identities may have distracted and overwhelmed them and the limited time set for their supervision sessions – relative to their expansive roles – may have restricted wider focus as well. Another explanation could relate to Audrey's[(s)] response as to why she did not talk about supervision in her sessions with Valerie[(ss)]; because she did not have any problems.

It might also be related to a lack of clarity or definition about the purpose of supervisors' supervision and what roles would be the focus. For example, early discussions to establish supervision relationships – such as, negotiating shared understandings of supervision and a supervision agreement (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012) – might not incorporate a focus on them as

well as their supervision of others. Additionally, if they were a new supervisor, there may not have been an overt marker in the process or relationship that their supervision experience would change. The latter could address common experiences reported by supervisors in this and other research about distinct differences in their experiences – such as, no more theory and less focus on themselves –compared to previous clinical or casework supervision (Gibbs, 2001). This also begs the question, is it their senior position alone that is the explanation for not providing what other practitioners experience?

An additional factor in considering supervising and developing supervisors is the experience and related perspectives and skills of the supervisors of supervisors. The way that most supervisors learn to supervise might mean that intergenerational supervision practices have evolved, some of which may remain unchecked and unchanged even though contexts, needs, and expectations shift. The experiences and concerns reported by some participants about practitioners moving to supervisor – including minimal introductory development and a return to managerial supervision experiences as supervisees – could also be the case for supervisors-of-supervisors. Mary(ss) was supervising a supervisor for the first time and she appeared to identify primarily as a counsellor; "When I provide clinical supervision to *another counsellor*". It was possible that Mary did not have a reference point for how supervision of Susan(s) would differ from other (clinical) supervision that she provided. Additionally, even though Mary supervised many people, she said that her own supervisee experiences were not about supervision of others, which other supervisor participants also reported in this study.

In some ways, the circumstances just described are not surprising because of findings in this and other studies that supervisors commonly develop their approach to supervising from their own supervisors (Gibbs, 2001, 2009; O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2012a; Patterson, 2015,

2019). Most do not, however, specify if that is done through a deliberate or entirely conscious process, or if the supervisor's own supervisor is actively involved. For example, do they purposefully observe their own supervisors and plan their approach in advance? Or, do they find themselves in a supervisor situation and recall (then) what their supervisor did or might have done? Learning from one's own supervisor is important. More important is the process through which such learning happens and the active role of the supervisor of the supervisor. For example, is a supervisor left to determine their practice without structured and time-dedicated support and development guided by their own supervisor, or does their own supervisor know they are the key informant for the other supervisor's development and responds proactively?

Overarching the range of possible explanations above was the question as to whether participants saw supervision as practice. The findings about similarities and differences between supervision of client practitioners and of supervisors were important because they spoke to understandings and interpretations of supervising supervisors and supervisors-as-supervisees. In turn, they appeared to influence if, when, and how such supervision would occur and what it would cover. The challenge of discerning supervision conversations about client practice from those about supervision practice was greater for participants who were simultaneously a supervisor and a counsellor, and more so if they chose to focus on client practice in their own supervision sessions. The way in which those participants framed supervision was at the heart of differing views that supervision of supervisors was either no different to supervision of client practitioners, or that supervision – if thought about as *clinical supervision* – was not relevant for managers and supervisors because they did not work with clients. An associated possible explanation could be that they had greater clinical practice knowledge compared to supervision- and management-related knowledge; a

familiarity, perhaps comfort zone, that may help or hinder supervision practice and which may not have been named and explored explicitly by them as supervisors.

A return to the definitions presented in the literature review is helpful to draw out some of the contradictions related to supervision sessions for supervisors. Those definitions do not specify that the supervisee is only a practitioner who works directly with clients, service users, or program participants. Kadushin and Harkness (2014) specifically noted, "supervisors do not directly offer service to the client, but they do indirectly affect the level of service offered through their *impact on the direct service provider*" (pp. 11, emphasis added). Similarly, it could be said that supervisors-of-supervisors have the same potential influence and that their "impact" precedes the same of the supervisors whom they supervise. In part of their definition, Davys and Beddoe (2010) suggested that, "supervision is a professional activity in which practitioners are engaged throughout the *duration of their careers* regardless of experience or qualification. The *participants* are accountable to professional standards and defined competencies and to organisational policy and procedures" (pp. 21, emphasis added). Their reference to two or more people participating, and elsewhere in the definition describing supervision as an "interactive dialogue", suggested equal significance of the supervisor. The emphasis on career-wide could include supervisors, especially if supervision was considered social work practice. Participants in this study provided examples of interactive dialogues about challenges in their work which extended beyond clients, service users, and program participants. Less noticeable was more detailed discussion about the connection between what they did and their influence on the frontline of practice. That may be another explanation for the relative absence of conversations about the supervision sessions they provided.

Many human service organisations promote supervision through policies and expectations on employees to engage in regular supervision. With a somewhat greater emphasis, many also promote professional development and education of practitioners about models and approaches, as well as agency-defined policies and procedures that contribute to practice. The importance placed on such development is far greater than the importance placed on developing supervisors who would support those practitioners to translate training and other learning experiences to achieve organisational practice standards. If it is important for a practitioner to learn and think about how they work with a client, it should be equally important for a supervisor to learn and think about how they work with a practitioner. Further, supervision sessions are promoted as, and often are, the main setting in which such conversations occur, so they should be a focal point of supervisor development.

Multidimensional Supervisor Experiences: Developing a Practice Framework

The findings from this study demonstrated a multidimensionality to supervisors' experiences and how they approached supervision; as supervisees and as supervisors. They indicated that the depth and complexity of the multiple dimensions depended on the number and type of roles a supervisor occupied simultaneously. This could potentially compound the challenge if it was assumed that important supervision conversations should be covered from the perspective of all those roles. Most individual participants in this study did not cover all those perspectives, however, data across the participant groups suggested that explicit consideration of the depth and breadth of multiple roles and their integration would be critical in developing supervisors.

I created a *Multidimensional Supervisor Development Framework* from this study's findings and the supporting literature. A visual depiction of the framework and its dimensions is

presented in Figure 5.1 which shows the multidimensional experiences and practice of supervisors. The intention of both this diagram and the related analysis that follows in this section is twofold. They describe important elements within and around supervisors' own supervision sessions that were observed and discussed during this study and they present how the findings from this study might inform both supervision practice and developing supervisors. It is intended as a framework of reference points that could be explored using different supervision process models, such as, the examples presented in the literature review (Table 2.1). They can also be considered and responded to from different theoretical perspectives.

Figure 5.1:

Multidimensional Supervisor Development Framework

The three dimensions in the proposed framework that will be discussed in the following sections are summarised in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2:

Framework: Three Dimensions

Dimension	Focus
Location and perspective	Where conversations happen. The different perspectives from which a supervisor may consider their roles, experiences, and concepts: • As supervisee • As supervisor • As supervisor-supervisee
Multiple roles	The variety of professional, organisational, and other roles that a supervisor might occupy simultaneously and their associated sub roles.
Experiences and concepts	That arise in practice, for exploration, reflection, analysis, and action: • Roles and identities • Relationships • Power • Contexts and systems • Content • Process • Knowledge

Location and Perspective of Conversations

This dimension has two parts. One denotes where conversations happen – in-session and out-of-session. The other is the three perspectives from which a supervisor might consider each element in the *experiences and concepts* dimension and the cyclical connection between those perspectives. In terms of location, some participants pointed out the extension of supervision beyond supervision sessions. That was relevant to supervising supervisors as far as it showed the expansive focus that might be taken in their own sessions, including the

distinction and integration between places in which they had supervision conversations. It indicated the breadth of what supervision practice entailed, what could potentially be discussed in supervisors' own supervision sessions, and the possibility of a wide-focus in efforts to develop supervisors' practice. Participants in this study demonstrated the importance of supervision conversations that are separate to or extend beyond scheduled supervision sessions. This was particularly so for supervisors who were also managers and who saw their supervisees in various settings and mostly daily. They also suggested that both in-session and out-of-session interactions should be connected in purpose, and that both can be the focus of supervisors' conversations about their supervision of others. Out-of-session locations would include training and other development activities for supervisors.

Table 5.3:

Framework: Three Supervisor Perspectives

Perspective	Where	What
As a supervisee	Their own supervision session or conversation with their supervisor	Exploring experiences and concepts in relation to them (self) and their own practice in all their roles.
As a supervisor	A supervision session or conversation they facilitate	Exploring experiences and concepts with a supervisee and how they relate to the supervisee's practice and roles.
As a supervisor-supervisee	Their own supervision session or conversation with their supervisor	Reflecting on their supervision of others. Talking about how they explored the experiences and concepts with supervisees, their plans for future conversations, and development plans for themselves and their supervisees.

Regarding perspective, the three supervisor perspectives in this framework are described in Table 5.3. One example in this study was Roger's[(s)] description of conversations he had at various times and in different locations with individual supervisees. He talked about relationship issues from his perspective in terms of how it affected him and also what might be happening for the supervisee to explain their behaviour and inform Roger's response. This came full circle when Roger spoke to Claire[(ss)] in his own supervision session about the conversations he had with others and how he might approach them in the future.

Multiple Roles

This dimension covers the various roles a supervisor may occupy simultaneously. Those depicted in Figure 5.1 are the roles that participants in this study occupied, some of whom occupied the full complement.[37] Outside this study, an individual supervisor may have more or fewer roles. Role titles may differ for individuals, for example, *counsellor* may be *caseworker* or *case manager*, and *manager* may be *director* or *coordinator* or similar. An adjunct set of sub roles was also included to demonstrate the depth of various roles a supervisor might occupy, which extends examples of how they might provide supervision and support. Most of the supervisor participants in the observed sessions demonstrated those sub roles at some point, which was consistent with those identified in supervision literature (Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Ungar, 2006). For example, the educator role was shown by Mary[(ss)] when she explained elements of the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy model (ACT) to Susan[(s)], and when Claire[(ss)] told Roger[(s)] about Appreciative Inquiry (AI), and when Valerie[(ss)] talked to Audrey[(s)] about mindfulness processes and activities.

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[37] At the start of this study, in addition to all the roles in the figure, Susan[(s)] was also a case manager. At the second observation she no longer occupied that role.

Research and commentary in supervision literature identified the influence of supervisors' dual organisational roles on supervision sessions they provided. Some concluded it was problematic, especially where the supervisor was also the supervisee's manager. That is a view that has been influential in promoting external supervision; which some supervisees in other studies said provided opportunities, such as, expressing opinions about their organisation in safety and exploring issues of concern that they experience with their internal supervisor (Beddoe, 2010, 2012; Harvey & Henderson, 2014). For many organisations, that option might be limited by policy or resource constraints (Hair, 2013; Rankine, 2017b).

Social workers and organisations have different opinions about managers providing supervision and a binary approach has been observed, of splitting or integrating roles (Beddoe, 2012; Egan, 2012a; Itzhaky, 2001; Ung, 2002). Some participants in this study concurred with findings from other studies, where supervisees expressed concerns about managers also providing professional supervision to the same supervisee. They supported the conclusion that two different supervisors were needed to make sure they could separate-out accountability and reflection on practice to maintain professional standards, such as, line managers not providing supervision (Cooper, 2006; Egan, 2012a; Kavanagh et al., 2008; O'Donoghue, 2010; Rankine, 2017a, 2018; Robinson, 2014).

Other participants in this study had a different view which, coupled with other findings from this study, suggested that it would be feasible for one supervisor to provide supervision across different functions and that accountability was an inseparable element of professional practice. It is possible that each view was based on established knowledge and shared beliefs about who should provide supervision, which was relevant in this study because the participants represented organisations with both types of arrangements. It was possible that participants thought one arrangement was better than the other simply because that was all

they knew. That view might have also been consolidated because of the lack of structure in participants' transition to become supervisors and the limited exploration of such arrangements. Additionally, most participants' baseline supervision experience was providing clinical supervision which may have rendered it challenging – perhaps impossible – for them to view supervision in a different or broader way.

In terms of the same person providing all supervision, much of the supervision research and literature so far was about how it affected supervisees and their supervision sessions, rather than what it meant for supervisors (Pack, 2012; Wong, 2014; Wong & Lee, 2015). For example, the weighting of managerial elements – such as, data and performance reporting – over reflective and practice-oriented conversations were thought to disadvantage supervisees and raised safety and trust concerns about supervision as surveillance. Participants in this study talked about this from both perspectives and demonstrated the difficulty when their organisation wanted different things from them as a manager and as a supervisor. It was possible that this was further complicated because they had just one supervision session to discuss different roles and demands.

The explanation for those tensions could be more about supervisor values and skills than organisational design. Some participants showed how supervisors defined their roles and how supervision sessions could be used for non-clinical roles of manager, supervisor, and leader. Three of the four observation pairs focused on management development and to a lesser degree supervision practice. Some demonstrated how they wrangled different roles, chose one role over another, and balanced demands from their organisation, their manager, and their supervisee as attempts to meet various role demands.

As a further extension of roles, supervisors are also supervisees. Findings across other studies about what supervisees want and need can also be applied to supervisors when they are

supervisees; simply, by virtue of being supervisees regardless of any other roles. Adjacently, as supervisors, they are expected to acknowledge, address, or meet those same expectations with people they supervise. So, on the one hand, they have needs and wants and, on the other, they respond to others' needs and wants. They might well be seeking certain things from their own supervisor while, at the same time, be expected to provide certain things for people they supervise. To further compound that, their wants and needs as a supervisee may differ to those of the people they supervise and, thus, may not be so easy to navigate and meet. Differences in desire aside, the duality of supervisors' perspectives and experiences – as both supervisor and supervisee; like being in two places at the same time – is critically important to developing supervisors' practice. What this means is that not only do they need to navigate the multiple roles they might occupy in their organisation – such as, manager supervisor, counsellor – they also have dual roles and vantage points *within* supervision sessions; their own and those they provide.

Roles and identities are discussed further as part of the *experiences and concepts* dimension.

Experiences and Concepts

This dimension is based on the findings from the observations, interviews and focus groups which were used to suggest core focus areas of supervision conversations and supervisor development. They are intended to be explored as standalone elements as well as how they relate to each other and to a supervisor's various roles. This dimension is similar to the layers in Rankine's (2017b) *Four-Layered Practice Model of Reflective Supervision* – self and role; the organisation; relationships with others; and socio-political and socio-cultural context. The framework created from this study overtly draws out reference to power, content, process, and knowledge because of their significance as influences and considerations for supervisors and their development.

In summary, the following are the *experiences and concepts* proposed for reflection, analysis, and action with and by supervisors. Each is described in more detail below.

- Roles and identities
- Relationships
- Power
- Contexts and systems
- Content
- Process
- Knowledge

Roles and Identities. This dimension is additional to the previously discussed more descriptive dimension of *multiple roles* because findings indicated the importance of supervisors exploring their roles in detail and the related formation of identity. Such exploration could include informing decisions about how they use and attend to those roles and, importantly, how their roles merge and separate. For example, Susan[(s)] had not considered herself a *supervisor* until prompted by this study, even though she supervised and met with staff of the agency she managed. The interplay between supervisor, manager, and leader was also evident here which, as discussed in the findings chapter, have similarities and crossover points (also see, Table 4.4).

Roles and identities are part of the overarching explanation for many of the findings of this study and the multidimensional experiences of supervisors. Dual or multiple roles were important subject matter in supervisors' own supervision conversations, such as, how they navigated, separated, or integrated their different roles and how they thought others perceived or respected them in terms of their roles. They were equally important determinants of how supervisors might prioritise what they talk about in their own sessions and the perspective from which they might consider experiences brought to supervision conversations.

Participants' organisations had structural arrangements around roles – such as, policies, practices, language, and expectations – that determined if and how supervisors engaged in supervision sessions and conversations. For many, those arrangements meant they had limited opportunity to distinguish their supervisor role from other roles. Similarly, different

organisational roles informed the varied interpretations or definitions of supervision, who was expected to participate in supervision sessions, and the subject matter in different fora. This seemed to be exacerbated where supervisors met with their own supervisors and the emphasis was entirely on their manager role and associated tasks, workload, and performance matters; that is, rather than reflective conversations about their experiences in those roles and how they facilitated supervision conversations with people they supervised. This finding related to other comments about how supervisors' own supervision – in and out of session – could influence the type of supervision they provided.

Relationships. The importance of relationship discovered in this study was consistent with other supervision studies and literature that promote relationship as a central tenet of good supervision; a make-or-break element determined most often by the performance of the supervisor (Gibbs, 2001; Kavanagh et al., 2003; Pack, 2011). Relationship was both content – conversation topics about relationships with supervisees, other staff, colleagues, and their own supervisors – and a critical space or channel for the process of exploring content.

Participants talked about the significance of relationship to their work within the organisation, as well as how their style and approach influenced how others related to them. Some also talked about the emotional and career impacts of some supervisory and collegial relationships. Reflections on their own approaches suggested that they understood the importance of having good relationships with people they supervised and their responsibility to do that well. Not all participants explored this in detail in their supervision conversations – perhaps due to discomfort or no invitation – and, as such, relationships arose as subject matter that could promote as well as hinder supervision conversations.

Duration and history of supervision relationships – which for some meant a degree of intimacy in knowledge about each other and each other's work – was not always a catalyst

for development. It might equally thwart development if supervisors limited the exploration of supervisees' stories and concerns because supervisors had their own experience and perspective of topics, contexts, and challenges. In turn, such an approach might not give due regard to the uniqueness of a supervisee and their own experiences, which is fundamental for reflection, critical reflection, and reflexivity (Adams et al., 2009; Fook & Gardner, 2007; Gibbs, 2009; Munro, 2008). Examples of limited exploration were in Sarah[(s)] and Jack's[(ss)] sessions and something I commented on during their interviews, not knowing if that had happened before. I thought there were opportunities for Jack to explore in some more detail Sarah's experiences and worries that related to relationships and possible connections to management and leadership. His short and reassuring responses provided some validation – which was part of what Sarah sought from supervision – but they differed to supervisors in other pairs who used questions, challenges, and prompts for reflection and action, and sometimes complemented them with suggestions, advice, and coaching on how situations might be handled. One possible explanation was Jack's reported use of his own experience as a time-saving technique. Additionally, his views about different power dynamics in his supervision relationships shed light on his possible reluctance to explore issues with Sarah because she was a fellow supervisor, as well as some worries that it might have created tension, conflict, or emotional upset.

This extended to findings related to collusion in relationships. They suggested an inclination by some supervisors and supervisees to preserve their relationship over talking about topics that might be difficult or conflictual (Milne et al., 2009), which Valerie[(ss)] also noted to Audrey[(s)] about counselling relationships. Nothing new there in terms of common knowledge about tension in supervision processes and relationships, however, how can supervisors develop their ability to facilitate conversations about difference, which may involve conflict,

so that, in turn, the supervisee can adopt the approach in their practice with other supervisees or with clients?

It was difficult to determine the extent and reliability of this finding given pairs were observed at a particular point in time and stage of their relationships. However, some of the approaches that were shown and proposed by participants suggested the importance of "professional curiosity" (Revell & Burton, 2016, p. 1596) from supervisors to create openings for reflection and exploring subject matter that might be difficult or otherwise avoided. Mary's[(ss)] query when Susan[(s)] was experiencing bullying from an agency partner was one example of where she indirectly prompted Susan to confront the behaviour by curiously exploring what Susan would say to a client who was being bullied. And, Claire[(ss)] used a more direct, yet similarly action-oriented, query when she asked Roger[(s)] how he might manage himself; "what do you do now?". While collusion is presented here as part of relationship, it also sits alongside other manifestations of power that appeared in the findings of this study – collegiality, competition, and conflict – all of which demonstrated the enmeshment of relationships and power. The proceeding discussions about trust and safety, and later about power, also apply to collusion.

Parallels and Flipsides. Participants in this study provided opportunity to see the flipside of challenges and issues that supervisees raised in other research about their experiences of supervision sessions and their supervision relationships. One example was around trust and safety. Some of the findings were consistent with supervision research and literature that promote trust and safety between supervisor and supervisee as cornerstones of good supervision (Crocket et al., 2007; London & Chester, 2000; Pack, 2012). When participants in this study talked about relationships with certain supervisees, some expressed trust and safety concerns about having conversations with those supervisees.

When talking about external supervision, some of the common reasons found in this and other studies were connected to the supervisor's trustworthiness and the supervisee's sense of safety to talk about certain issues, such as, their supervisor, organisation, peers, uncertainties, and inadequacies (Beddoe, 2010, 2012; Egan, 2012a; Harvey & Henderson, 2014). The significance of the flipside is that findings from this study showed what can be happening for both supervisor and supervisee at the same time when each is wondering if the other can be trusted and when they are making choices about if and how to engage in supervision conversations safely. Each may be entirely unaware of the uncertainties of the other – uncertainties that may lead to behaviours that one or both interprets as untrustworthy or unsafe. This is equally important because of assumptions that may be made that a supervisor has adequate knowledge and skills to provide supervision that is tailored to individual needs and expectations. Simultaneously, oftentimes, they are expected to do so in changing and increasingly complex organisational environments within which supervision definitions and expectations vary (Egan, 2012a; Ingram, 2013; McFadden et al., 2015; Pack, 2009, 2011; Tsui, 1997). The limited availability of structured training, development, and support for supervisors – ongoing, not one-off – could be one explanation for difficulties associated with individualising supervision.

Those findings also suggested that trust and safety would be an important focus in supervisors' own supervision sessions; not simply a statement of importance, but an in-depth exploration of their meaning, how to talk about it with supervisees, and what it might look like across different supervision relationships and conversations. This could extend to the social constructionist framework that Hair (2013) suggested to tackle safety, trust, and power differences. That is, support and develop supervisors to have co-constructed conversations with supervisees as "opportunities for collaboration, critical reflection and support" from which "unspoken beliefs, statements and social practices that have been marginalised or silently endorsed can be surfaced through supervisory questions for shared examination" (Hair, 2013, p. 20).

A key question is – outside of dedicated supervision conversations – where do supervisors learn to facilitate safety and trust conversations? That is, especially with the attention required to explore influences on trust and safety and to navigate what could well be complicated conversations and agreements about trust. To say and agree such conversations are important is one thing but, like any practice, to learn how to do it and then practise and consolidate it is another. It is questionable if such skills will come solely from one to two-day supervision training, particularly given the expansive subject matter and tight timeframes of most supervision courses (Hair, 2013; Kavanagh et al., 2003; Kavanagh et al., 2008).

Another example of a parallel and flipside, which was consistent with other studies, related to concerns that participants expressed about the tendency for supervision sessions to focus on data and other information to indicate performance, with limited time devoted to reflection and support (for example, Egan, 2012a; Ingram, 2013; King et al., 2016; McFadden et al., 2015; Pack, 2009, 2011; Tsui, 1997). Findings from this study indicated it can be equally challenging for supervisors to mediate between and achieve the two demands *and* meet

supervisees' needs. Added to this, and as shown by some participants in this study, supervisors' own supervision sessions may focus strongly on managerial issues as well. This is not to say that is not important – as it is their role – but it increases the likelihood of them replicating that focus in sessions they provide. Focus group participants pointed this out when they considered the scenario and how Anna's supervisor focused more on outcomes than on how Anna was developing in her new role.

Power. The considerable concerns about power expressed by participants in this study were consistent with research and literature about its significance, especially in relationships (Beddoe, 2012; Bogo & Dill, 2008; Crocket et al., 2007; Egan et al., 2017; London & Chester, 2000; Pack, 2012) and in organisations where supervision is used for surveillance and performance monitoring (Bruce & Austin, 2001; Egan et al., 2018; Hair, 2014; Kadushin, 1991; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2012b; Rankine, 2019b; Ruch, 2007a; Wilkins et al., 2017). Power was dominant in different forms in the findings of this study and the observations and focus groups indicated that explicit reference to power in supervision conversations was a necessity, while simultaneously, an area for development (Bogo & Dill, 2008; Pack, 2011). It appeared at the core of many participants' experiences, or was a possible explanation for some experiences.

Participants' approaches and ideas suggested that both supervisors and supervisees could acknowledge power in their relationships and use control, authority, and influence in supervision interactions and conversations. Some of Susan$^{(s)}$ and Mary's$^{(ss)}$ conversations directly referred to "power", such as, the discussion about Susan's experience of bullying. Sarah$^{(s)}$ and Jack's$^{(ss)}$ conversations alluded to power and authority at play in their supervision relationship – both avoidance and control of subject matter – and in Sarah's organisational relationships in which she described being subjected to a manager's power.

Knowledge-as-power was a common feature in the findings, and many participants focused strongly on the necessity to have adequate knowledge to understand and respond to issues. Participants' accounts indicated that they felt disempowered when they were not given information to provide "answers" to others. Greater value was placed on knowledge about people and organisational information, compared to knowledge about practice- or discipline-related theories and perspectives. Such knowledge might help them and supervisees to interpret circumstances from a different perspective and, thus, empower them through different knowledge. Findings suggested that most participants had limited knowledge about supervision, management, and leadership, which is discussed in the *knowledge* section.

In terms of power in supervisors' own supervision sessions, a critical finding was the view that supervisees were of "almost equal" status to the supervisor because they were also a supervisor. Perhaps, for some, it meant or was assumed that they had comparable experience and knowledge which would have implications for power dynamics. The common ground – that both were supervisors – prompted the idea of collegiality, which could be both a strength and impediment in relationships and conversations. It could mean greater collaboration and openness to each other's views. It might also create other power-related obstacles, such as, collusion or competition. In either event, intra and interpersonal conflicts for both supervision participants could be pivotal. It was evident in findings from this study that any one of those possibilities hinged on the sense that participants and others had of their own power, and how each exercised it in different ways. This study showed that power, control, and authority can be concerns for supervisors as much as they are for other practitioners. Some of the challenges that participants confronted demonstrated how both supervisors and supervisees exercised power – not always in the same direction – and that authority, control, and influence could appear in different ways and situations to the benefit of either or both.

Assumptions that supervisors understand and can handle power could be challenged by this study.

All participants at some point talked about a sense of inadequacy in being subject to others' decisions and not being able to challenge those decisions or their effect on people whom participants supervised. A lot of the conversations were about managing and coping with power; their own and others. For example, when Audrey[(s)] re-framed power in her interview and talked about "vulnerability", it indicated a discomfort and intrapersonal conflict with the term "power" and what it implied, especially given that she shifted her language from "more comfortable" to "not as vulnerable" when she discussed supervisor positioning. Another example was presented by Roger[(s)]. While he had delegated authority and had established collegial relationships, when supervisees made choices to not engage with him or to make decisions contrary to his desires, they controlled the situation. Roger's initial response – to "get people away" – drew out some competition between types of authority and control and seemed to place greater weight on delegated authority and being "the boss" over professional or personal authority which both he and supervisees might carry.

The significance for the focus of this study is how supervisors understand and manage their power through their own supervision to, in turn, support and develop supervisees with their experiences of power. That is, a supervisor might talk in their own supervision session about how they *experienced* power, and could also have a conversation about how they should or did *talk about* power with a supervisee – as experienced by the supervisee both within and outside the supervision relationship – and the learning for the supervisor across those conversations and experiences. This is another example of the importance of co-constructed conversations promoted by Hair (2013) and an organisational learning environment that features collaborative approaches (Dill & Bogo, 2009). This aspect of the findings provided

insight to the subject matter that might be the focus of supervisors' own supervision sessions, in terms of how they handle their power with others, and how they respond to others' use of power and authority. They pointed strongly to the importance of supervisors being supported by their own supervisors to navigate and re-shape power dynamics in supervision relationships.

Contexts and Systems. This dimension level is broad and covers organisational, professional, social, economic, and political contexts. It includes various systems and system levels within those contexts, for example, child protection or mental health service systems. Participants in this study spoke more about the organisational environment and related demands than they did about broader contexts. This was both surprising and unsurprising. One reason it was surprising was that all participants were social workers, a discipline centred on person-in-environment and in which critical perspectives can be used to explain people's experiences and acknowledge rights, and promote social explanations over pathologising individuals (Adams et al., 2009; Allan, 2009; Australian Association of Social Workers, 2010; Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2015). Given that theoretical basis, it was also interesting that participants did not explicitly name broader contexts and managerialist or neoliberal influences on their demands (Baines et al., 2014; Beddoe, 2012).

It was unsurprising in light of findings that identified the multiple roles of participants. This meant different possible explanations for the absence of conversations about broader contexts and systems. There were the exhaustive demands and distractions that participants reported from their organisations. Not least of those was changing notions and expectations of supervision, such as those described by the second focus group and which demonstrated competing managerial and professional discourses (Egan, 2012a, 2012b; O'Donoghue et al., 2018; Rankine, 2019b). Another possible explanation was the emphasis on clinical

supervision, focused on work with individuals. In itself, that should not deter a critical/ structural focus but – as was the case for the first focus group – if participants worked in an agency strongly influenced by the medical model it was less surprising. There are opportunities to explore contemporary systemic and organisational changes with supervisors, in terms of how they understand them and then explore them with people they supervise.

The organisational context was a major influence on participants in this study. In the observed sessions and the focus groups, organisational roles and rules were both topics of conversation as well as influencers on what supervisors talked about and what they thought they should talk about in their own and others' supervision sessions. For example, participants reported that organisational drives on data collection and reporting overwhelmed the sessions that supervisors provided and superseded their preferred focus on reflection and improving supervisees' practice. From a study in the UK that recorded and analysed caseworkers' case discussions, Wilkins et al. (2017) concurred with this concern, which they termed a "deficit" that created a "system that focuses too much on 'what and when' things happen and not enough on 'how and why'" (p. 942).

A question here is if supervision sessions were the appropriate place for such discussions and if alternative fora were available for the participants. Even more relevant, is whether that shift was the responsibility of the organisation or the supervisor. This is an area for supervisor development, in terms of talking through why and how supervisors take on organisational expectations and how they talk about and explore those decisions and actions with supervisees. This might also be another example of how supervisors' critical capacities might be developed – such as, critical perspectives, reflection, and pedagogies in supervision sessions (Noble et al., 2016; Rankine, 2018) – and the relevance of co-constructed conversations (Hair, 2013). Relatedly, experiences of participants in this study were also

consistent with other studies that drew attention to the organisational challenges for social work practitioners and supervisors and the influence of neoliberalism (Baines et al., 2014; Beddoe et al., 2016; Egan, 2012b; Hair, 2013; Rankine, 2017a) and questions as to how social work supervision fits the contemporary practice landscape (Noble et al., 2016; Noble & Irwin, 2009).

The dimension of *contexts and systems* also includes how supervision is defined. Findings from this study suggested that, like supervisors, supervision has its own identity challenges. A common frame of reference for supervision sessions was those where the supervisee was a worker and the focus was their client practice. An understanding of social work supervision that is contained to the *clinical* may do social workers – including social work supervisors – a disservice because it discounts the relevance of supervision, reflection, and critical reflection across the social work profession which is comprised of more than clinical practitioners (Australian Association of Social Workers, 2010). Many participants' understandings of supervision were influenced by their past experiences of supervision, especially as a supervisee, which was consistent with findings from other studies (Gibbs, 2001, 2009; O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2012a; Patterson, 2015, 2019). For some, frames of reference were also determined by organisations' policies on supervision, such as, manager and supervisor roles that were split or merged. The two focus groups in this study differed on that basis, although a couple of participants in the first group – whose organisation had a split policy – had recently experienced a shift to a partially-merged role.

Participants had differing ideas as to whether supervising supervisors was the same or different to supervising workers about their client practice, or a bit of both. This was alleviated somewhat when participants provided descriptions or demonstrations of what they

considered as the intention or purpose of supervision generally, which included support, development, debriefing, reflection, reassurance, guiding, and making connections.

Content. The three following elements of this dimension of the proposed framework – content, process, and knowledge – are, in themselves, items for explicit conversation, reflection, and analysis by supervisors in their various roles. They are an extension of the interpersonal skill of *immediacy* (Egan, 2010), for example, where focus is on content being discussed as well as *how* content is discussed and what goes on between people when content is discussed.

Discussing *content* is critical, predominantly because of the various roles and perspectives of supervisors and the parallels between content covered by supervisees and supervisors in their own sessions. It draws attention to comparable and different experiences of the same event or issue. Findings in this study about the content of supervision conversations showed an alignment between what supervisees might talk about in their supervision, whether they are a client practitioner, manager, or supervisor (see comparison examples in the findings chapter, Table 4.4). This suggested that many issues, concerns, highlights, and challenges confronted by supervisors run parallel to those of client practitioners. They might be identical or, in-principle the same, but experienced from a different perspective by virtue of role. For example, in other studies, client practitioners expected to cover exploration of client problems, understanding clients better, and developing strategies for client work (Kavanagh et al., 2003; London & Chester, 2000). This was not unlike participants in this study – both supervisees in the observations and focus group participants – who defined challenges related to supervisees, their intention or effort to understand what was going on for supervisees, and how they might work through those issues with the supervisees.

This study showed both convergence and divergence between supervising supervisors and supervising client practitioners. At their base, the observed sessions presented no major differences. In addition to some conversation topics, they converged around the structure of sessions and conversations, much of which aligned with fundamental social work approaches and skills. They diverged around topics related to the roles of supervising, managing, and leading, for example, creating structure, systems, and guidelines, or taking the lead on reconciling team tensions. Even though conversation topics were both separate and common ground, supervisors in this study often talked about the same practice *challenges*, such as, relationships and organisational demands. The differences were with whom or in what situations those challenges were experienced – staff or client – and in some instances, responsibility to address the challenge.

Some of the supervisor challenges described by participants aligned with findings from another study where supervisors identified common "difficult scenarios" (Pack, 2011, pp. 51-52). They included:

- *Discussing performance issues* – which were observed in separate sessions of Roger(s) and Susan(s) and the first focus group. For the focus group, the emphasis was on separation of roles to avoid the need for clinical supervisors to have performance conversations.
- *Breaking confidentiality* – was a concern for participants in the first focus group – where they compared reporting concerns about a client and about a staff member/ supervisee. Audrey(s) and Sarah(s) talked about challenges around confidentiality that related to shared clients or supervisees, and protection of team members.
- *Multidisciplinary relationships* – Susan(s) talked about navigating dynamics within a team with mixed experiences or qualifications, while Sarah(s) described challenges related to territoriality between different teams within the one organisation.

The significance of content for supervisors' own sessions and their development, is that the similarities and differences in content discussed by supervisors and supervisees could be drawn out in supervisors' own sessions. This is another area of parallels and flipsides such as those discussed earlier. They show the extent of shared experiences and concerns between supervisors and supervisees, albeit from different perspectives.

Process. There were various elements in the findings that related to process. They were primarily about connections between people, between practice and knowledge, and between people and contexts. Some findings suggested overt exploration of processes in supervisors' own supervision sessions could be of value – that is, processes between supervisor and supervisee (e.g., immediacy and other interpersonal skills), and processes used by supervisees and supervisors in practice (e.g., models, methods, interventions). For example, Mary[(ss)] spoke about her deliberate move between areas of development for Susan[(s)] which were discussed openly with Susan in the observed sessions. They had focused on Susan's manager role for some time and had agreed to move to focus on her counsellor role – all based on Susan's sense of confidence and development which she described in the session. Similarly, Roger[(s)] and Claire[(ss)] reported that they had shifted over time from primary focus on Roger's provision of individual supervision to team and group supervision. That was based on both Roger's development needs and the repetitive experiences in attempting to resolve certain issues with individuals rather than the team.

In both of those examples, the pairs demonstrated a process of experiential learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2017; Kolb, 1984), where previous lessons were used to inform practice that was, in turn, reported back on and informed their next steps. Although not stated explicitly, they also demonstrated ways in which developmental models appeared to be used by the pairs (for example, Hawkins & Shohet, 2012; Stoltenberg, 2005). In both examples, those observed

supervisors reported conscious decisions to move supervisor-supervisees along a path or continuum. For Susan[(s)], it was her development from new to experienced manager and supervisor, and for Roger[(s)], the expansion of skills from individual to group settings. Similarly, Sarah's[(s)] choice to focus her supervision with Jack[(ss)] on management, rather than clinical practice as a counsellor, had a developmental focus given how she reported her choice in our interview.

As with all supervision, the supervisors in the observed sessions were fundamental to content, process, and dynamics in the sessions, determined by how they guided and facilitated each session. They demonstrated different approaches to the sessions and conversations to support supervisees to explore experiences. Some were more structured than others, some more deliberate than others, and some more explorative than others. All of the sessions were an "interactive conversational exchange" (O'Donoghue, 2014, p. 64) and most of the observed sessions, to varying degrees, had content that was consistent with that described in other studies, for example, all comprised support, evaluation, feedback, and praise, as well as discussion and problem solving (Kavanagh et al., 2003; Kavanagh et al., 2008; London & Chester, 2000; O'Donoghue, 2014; Spence et al., 2001). Most included some form of teaching, skill introduction and development, and providing ideas. Modelling skills were incorporated in most observations and proposed by the focus groups for the Anna scenario.

An important finding was the "double-double thinking" discussed in one of the focus groups, which denoted a layered and back-and-forth process for supervisors. That is, while supervisors were in conversations with supervisees, they needed to think about the supervisee while also thinking about the supervisor (self), how the conversation was approached, and what sense was made by the supervisor and the supervisee about the supervisee's thoughts and comments. They extended this with an additional layer in which the supervisor would

also consider potential benefits for clients working with the supervisee. Those ideas promoted the dual track of conversations for supervisors in supervision conversations wherein they focus on self and others. Added to their multiple roles and associated perspectives, that finding suggested significant demands on supervisors and complicated experiences. This is another area suggested for exploration in supervisors' own supervision sessions; explicit acknowledgement of the dual purpose of supervisors' own supervision sessions and developing their practice.

Participants showed varied use of reflection, critical reflection, and critical analysis in both the observed sessions and the focus groups. Most supervisees in the observed sessions considered their own values, ideas, and perspectives and how they influenced others. Supervisors in the observations each provided a safe space for the supervisees to freely express their thoughts and emotions and describe initial reactions; a fundamental feature of reflective supervision (Beddoe et al., 2014; Franklin, 2011; Rankine, 2017a). The more obvious missing elements were the criticality of their reflections and deeper exploration and unearthing of assumptions (Fook & Gardner, 2007), and the almost absent connections with knowledge to support analysis and inform conclusions and responses – which is also discussed in the *power* and *knowledge* sections. That finding was considered a fundamental informant of practice implications from this study because of the connection between those processes and skills and the major demands and challenges participants reported were imposed by organisational and wider contexts. It was also fundamental because of the findings about the significance of *relationship*; a (often concerning) feature of participants' experiences, a conversation topic, and a common determinant of supervision quality and engagement. Much of those were not considered or analysed in-depth in this study.

Knowledge. Findings from this study suggested that the content and experience of supervision *for* supervisors should be different – at least in some way – to when they were client practitioners. One reason is because there is some different knowledge and perspectives that inform supervision of others, or some knowledge that may be the same but applied differently. The relative absence of obvious referencing of knowledge – theoretical and conceptual, and about supervision models, methods, and interventions – was a finding from this study that has major practice implications, especially because knowledge is identified as one area of supervisor competency (Milne et al., 2011; Watkins Jr, 2012).

Technical knowledge and practice wisdom were evident in some of the observations and focus groups. Otherwise, more formal or practice knowledge was confined to some practice theories with little or no detailed description or application. The possible avoidance of knowledge use by supervisors could be an issue. Most reasons were unclear in this study. However, Susan provided one possible explanation when she chose not to write or say "strengths" in a team session that was focused on building the team and agency. Based on topics that Susan raised in parts of her observed sessions – such as, supporting supervisees who felt inadequate compared to their peers – her action could suggest a discomfort around referring to professional knowledge because it might exclude or marginalise team members who did not have that knowledge. On the one hand, that was positive because it limited the risks for those workers, while on the other, it reduced possible development opportunities.

Explicit reference to knowledge related to supervision, management, and leadership was absent, however, the findings indicated that platforms or approaches already existed for the insertion of such knowledge. An example noted in the findings was when Mary[(ss)] talked in her interview about exploratory questions she would use in supervision sessions about a supervisee's counselling; "So what have you been using in the sessions? What sort of

therapy? What's your approach?" The same questions could be asked about a supervisor's conversations with a supervisee, and the "approach" they used might be informed by one or more supervision, management, or leadership-related theories or models.

The limited reference to theoretical and empirical knowledge related to supervision especially, and to management and leadership, was significant for the purpose of this study given the roles occupied by most participants. This was an interesting finding because the limited range of knowledge on which participants relied equally limited their capacity to have "answers" for supervisees, which many considered disempowering. This might also be consistent with the inadequate conceptual framework that participants had about the idea of supervising supervisors, and of supervision knowledge more broadly. Equally, there was some constancy with the limited knowledge-informed analysis that happened in the observations and focus groups. Many participants' search for knowledge and answers, to some degree, appeared to be in a vacuum of existing knowledge wherein they attempted to find answers to something different using what they already knew. That sense of disempowerment could be a prompt for widening and extending supervision knowledge.

The relative absence of explicit knowledge sources in this study was considered important in terms of how knowledge might be used in supervision conversations to interpret and analyse reflections on both supervisor and supervisee experiences and as part of supervision's educative and learning functions (Beddoe & Davys, 2016; Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Goodyear, 2014; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Lawlor, 2013; Noble et al., 2016). Some participants named some examples of related models or theories. For example, Sarah referred to the titles of some when she and Jack reviewed their supervision agreement – "leadership, change management kind of stuff" – and some focus group participants named some examples, such as, "change management", "emotional intelligence", and "development".

The use of different types of knowledge could be viewed similarly to the merging and separating of supervisors' roles that was previously discussed. For example, some practice theories may transfer directly into supervision, such as, suggestions from focus group participants about "empowerment-type theories" and "strength-based" models. Examples of known theories and models that might translate with modification into supervision could be developmental models and, perhaps more specifically, learning theories and models. Both could inform supervision approaches tailored to different individuals. For example, the way that Claire[(ss)] and Mary[(ss)] changed their approaches with Roger[(s)] and Susan[(s)] were examples that could have been informed by developmental models, even though they were not stated as such, and their reflective processes may have been intentionally informed by experiential learning models.

Those findings were more significant when coupled with the findings about power and related experiences. While most of the concern was reserved to knowing what was going on in their organisations, the findings suggested a more concerted focus on knowledge by supervisors would be an important element of supervision practice development – to inform explanations and actions in-sessions and out-of-sessions. For example, the previously discussed ideas about how supervisors could explore power, safety, and trust – for their own development and in supervision sessions they provided – could extend to the *knowledge* that might help to understand power, then manage it differently. There was no explicit example in this study, however, an example of potential use was demonstrated in one of Susan[(s)] and Mary's[(ss)] sessions. They talked about Susan's experience of feeling bullied by an external colleague. Mary asked Susan how she would suggest a client respond to a similar situation which led to Susan thinking aloud and describing what she thought. The potential was in how their conversation could have explored theories or models that informed bullying and Susan's

client work, which could be brought back to her experiences as a manager and how power was the same or different.

Thematic Conclusions

This study highlighted that the project of discerning supervision of supervisors is fraught with challenges and confusion. It is like Abbot and Costello's famous act, *Who's on first? What's on second.* Supervisors are also supervisees, and while they are supervisees, they talk about being supervisors. It extends to how supervisors – both in and out of supervision relationships and conversations – occupy two or more other roles, from which some may extrapolate a primary identity or attempt to integrate them into one. Added to this are expectations of themselves and from others about how they should enact their roles and, in terms of their chosen or perceived primary identity, the relevance they place on participating in their own supervision sessions. This is a challenging starting place for supervisors, which might be compounded when – like all the participants in this study – they do not choose a primary identity of *supervisor*. Questions such as; Who am I? What am I? Where am I? How will I do this? Why should I do this? were highlighted as pertinent to supervisors' choices about whether to use their own supervision sessions to talk about their supervision of others, especially about supervision sessions they provided.

Findings from this study and others demonstrated that supervision is a dynamic character and that it shifts and changes in its dimensions, purpose, role, relevance, and relationship with professional development. Supervision is a *banner* for different supervision activities – including supervision sessions – as well as an *activity* and a *process*. The term *supervision* evokes different understandings and once different people facilitate or experience supervision, its meaning splits-off based on individual interpretation and application. It was perceived and experienced differently by participants in this study which, in turn, determined

if and how it was used. This fluidity and the related complications heighten the importance of critically analysing ways in which supervisors learn about and sustain supervision practice, and the role of their own supervisors in that development.

Supervision Sessions as Part of Supervisor Development

This study made a valuable contribution to research about supervision sessions, through its new focus on supervision sessions with supervisors rather than client practitioners and casework practice. Participants in this study demonstrated the place and content of supervision sessions for supervisors and, significantly, they showed how supervision conversations can be used across roles, as supervisor, manager, leader, and client practitioner. The content of the observed sessions and the focus groups' planning for the Anna scenario provided guidance on challenges that supervisors faced in communicating with supervisees and supervising and managing in organisations. As such, this study complements existing research about the experiences and challenges of *supervisees*, and draws attention to similar supervisor experiences of the same issue, as noted in the *flipsides and parallels* discussed previously.

Some participants in this and other research noted that when they became managers their supervision conversations reduced to focus on managerial functions and related tasks and data (Cooper, 2006; Dill & Bogo, 2009; Gibbs, 2009; O'Donoghue, 2012). Participants in this research showed how sessions for supervisors and managers could sustain their focus on the gamut of supervision functions, including their own support and development. For example, they showed the parallels between social workers in different roles in terms of emotional content and work and environmental pressures, both of which could be related to supervisees in similar ways as they are to clients in *clinical* practice roles. As such, this study challenged

notions that supervision is only suitable or applicable to social workers who work directly with clients, service users, or program participants.

Observation data in this study was inadequate to explore how supervisors used their own sessions to develop an approach to facilitating sessions for supervisees. The absence of conversations about the supervision sessions that supervisors provided outside their own sessions was a standout finding from this study. This study added to supervision research in its intention to find out what happens in supervisors' own supervision sessions, and it opened up the question as to whether what did happen included how they facilitated supervision conversations with others. The minimal attention paid to those conversations in the observed sessions in this study was a finding in itself. Primary explanations for their absence appeared to be the prominence of multiple roles as well as organisational pressures. Additionally, the self-reliance emphasis on supervisors developing their supervision knowledge and skills cannot be underestimated as a contributing factor; which, as reported by participants in this and other studies, is primarily observing their own supervisor to determine their approach (Gibbs, 2001, 2009; O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2012a; Patterson, 2015, 2019). This suggests that the key parts are there for supervisor development – a supervisor-supervisee and a supervisor-of-supervisor – and that the supervisor-supervisee's observation of their supervisor can be complemented with their supervisor's active involvement in a structured and concerted approach to supervision practice development, including supervision sessions for supervisors.

Multiple Roles and Role Tensions as Focal Points for Supervisor Development

Overwhelmingly, the combination of dual or multiple roles occupied by supervisors influenced the purpose, process, content, and use of participants' own supervision sessions and how they supervised others. Organisational or external demands to prioritise certain roles

were prevalent and it was less clear how supervisors themselves set priorities and made choices about their roles. With competing demands and roles, and time constraints on opportunities to discuss all their roles and related experiences, this study suggested that supervisors' development may be narrowed because of time, role, and external expectations.

Participants' dual or multiple roles were relevant to supervising supervisors for various reasons. They could determine how supervisors chose to use their own supervision sessions, especially if they only had one regular supervision session. They might not cover all their roles in one session. Additionally, role factors might influence what they chose to focus on, such as, their primary role, the role that was most confronting or challenging at the time, or the role in which they were most comfortable. If they had no other opportunity to discuss their roles and related activities, it was likely that one or more of their multiple roles were given less attention in their own supervision sessions – which, for many in this study, was their supervisor role, especially supervision sessions they provided.

Researchers and authors commonly agree that the favouring of organisational demands, managing risk, and other aspects of a neoliberal environment is of concern for social work supervision (Adamson, 2012; Egan, 2012a; Goddard & Hunt, 2011; Harlow, 2013; King et al., 2016; May & Stanfield, 2010; Noble & Irwin, 2009; Schmidt & Kariuki, 2019; Tsui, 1997). In that climate, concerns have been noted about the suitability or currency of traditional social work supervision sessions and conversations for the *contemporary* environment. This study opened up consideration that it may be as much about the skills and approaches of supervisors as it is about that environment. A common solution to contemporary challenges, and to ensure opportunities for practitioner reflection, has been the separation of management and professional supervision, especially, through split and external supervision arrangements. Such arrangements are not always possible in some organisations

because of policy or resources. More importantly, there are potential problems associated with separating supervisors from the organisational accountability components of supervisees' work, or, treating organisational accountability as entirely separate to good practice. The current solution of separation may be too narrowly defined. The splitting of reflection and accountability should be seen as problematic because the two relate as elements of good professional practice; for example, the definitions of supervision presented in the literature review included both organisational and professional elements (Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Munson, 2002). Occupying, navigating, and integrating multiple roles is complicated and requires particular attention.

Contextual Knowledge and Critical Analysis are Key

Participants provided further evidence of the significance of organisational and broader contexts for social work and social work supervision. They drew attention to the complicated nature of social work in any role, especially in organisational environments. Other researchers acknowledged those complications (Adamson, 2012; Egan, 2012a; Goddard & Hunt, 2011; Harlow, 2013; King et al., 2016; May & Stanfield, 2010; Noble & Irwin, 2009; Schmidt & Kariuki, 2019; Tsui, 1997) but this study provided an inside look at the perspectives of some supervisors on those issues. The findings around knowledge, and how participants did not explicitly articulate explanations for organisational and systemic pressures, indicated the need for social work supervisors to incorporate more critical reflection into their own sessions and in conversations with supervisees. In part, that finding extends on other research that focused on social justice and related social work values and their place in supervision (for example, Baines et al., 2014; Hair, 2015) and also suggests more critical supervision may be worthwhile (Noble et al., 2016). This study provided an inside view of how supervisors explore (or not) their own social justice-oriented views and

positions which could, in turn, explain or demonstrate the occurrence or need for social justice conversations in the sessions of client practitioners. The associated critical perspective and approach to supervision would be a professional imperative for social work supervisors, but also fundamental to managing and supporting people through what participants in this and other studies identified as complicated organisational challenges. The findings also indicated that analysis and navigation of that terrain required a solid knowledge base which would include various social work perspectives and, because of supervisors' mixed roles, expand to knowledge related to supervision, management, and leadership.

Recommendations for Further Research

Recommendations from this study for further research and practice are summarised in Table 5.4. In terms of research, this study addressed the absence of research specifically about supervisors and their own supervision and the findings highlighted the importance of establishing a supervisor-specific research agenda. It also demonstrated the value and possibilities of extending beyond self-report research methods and retrospective accounts of supervision experiences, which is consistent with other researchers' recommendations to conduct more research of supervision-in-action (Beddoe et al., 2016; Harkness & Poertner, 1989; Manthorpe et al., 2013; O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2015; Saltiel, 2017).

Given this study was confined to a particular geographical location and set of organisations and social workers, similar research in other areas and practice settings would be valuable in considering if approaches to supervision with supervisors differ. This would be especially valuable in terms of the major findings of this study and the limited talk about supervision sessions by supervisors in their own sessions.

Future research could be directed more at supervision sessions and conversations, such as, how supervisors learn to facilitate those conversations, how they facilitate in-situ, and their reflections on how they facilitate supervision conversations. Such research would require a specific focus on the supervisor role, regardless of any other role that participants occupied. This would complement this and other studies that used observation or recording of supervision sessions – where the others looked at session process and content of the supervisee's role and contribution – with what the supervisor does to facilitate the process and draw out content.

Future research could expand the supervisor-specific agenda to supervisors-of-supervisors. It could explore how those supervisors learned to supervise, what is different in their approach to supervising supervisors, and what informed those differences. This might include studies that gather comparative data from observations to determine similarities and differences between the same person supervising client practitioners and supervising supervisors. Research focus on both supervisors and their supervisors would be consistent with the recommendation of Milne et al. (2011) for more qualitative examination of the process of supervisor development and could tackle the dearth of research about becoming a supervisor (Schmidt & Kariuki, 2019).

Table 5.4:

Recommendations for Research and Practice

	Research Recommendations	Practice Recommendations
Supervisors' Supervision Sessions	Studies that focus specifically on supervisors and supervision session conversations that they facilitate, including their approaches and experiences of those sessions. Studies that explore how supervisors occupy and manage multiple roles and what influences their role and identity choices. Studies that explore the translation of supervisors' learning and ideas in their own supervision sessions into the sessions they provide.	Use the *Multidimensional Supervisor Development Framework* created from this study (Figure 5.1). Explicitly attend to supervisors' multiple roles – as both separate entities and as they relate to each other. Increase supervision sessions, or add complementary fora, to cover the expanse of supervisors' multiple roles. Incorporate supervision knowledge – and where role-relevant, management and leadership knowledge – into supervisors' own supervision sessions.
Supervisors' Development	Participatory action research that: (a) develops and explores difficult scenarios and tensions experienced by supervisors; (b) identifies practice ideas; and, (c) translates findings into supervision practice and development initiatives. Studies that advance research with new social work supervisors – before, during, and after their transition – with emphasis on support, supervision, and development.	Experience-based learning programs specifically about balancing different roles and supervision functions, especially, managerial and professional supervision, using scenarios to practise supervision processes, e.g., the Anna scenario in this study. Experience-based learning with supervisors-of-supervisors, about developing other supervisors and exploring differences with supervision of client practitioners.

Establishing clear links between research and practice would be beneficial for supervision practice development. It could help heighten the learning and development focus of supervision and provide supervisors with at least part of a knowledge base to use in supervision of others. Future research should emphasise methods informed by participatory and cooperative methodologies, which could mirror and promote relationship and co-constructed conversation elements of supervision. Opportunities should be created within research projects for direct translation of research learnings into the practice arena, wherein action learning from research might be complemented by experience-based learning in practice. This could have the added benefit of boosting supervisors' confidence and competence, which other researchers suggested could happen through combinations of training, peer support, networking, mentoring, and action learning (Collins-Camargo & Millar, 2010; Dill & Bogo, 2009; Kaiser & Kuechler, 2008).

Implications for Supervision Practice and Development

Recommendations for practice based on findings from this study are presented in Table 5.4. They include use of the *Multidimensional Supervisor Development Framework* that I created from this study's findings and presented earlier in this chapter (Figure 5.1). The fundamental feature of any approach to supervision of supervisors should be matching their multidimensional experiences with multidimensional supervision. Supervisors' multidimensional experiences are, equally, potential impediments to them providing good supervision and fundamental to developing their supervision practice. As such, well-rounded supervisor development and practice should attend to that multidimensionality, with emphasis on a layered approach to supervision that takes account of the experiences of both the supervisor and the supervisee.

A critical foundation of the recommendations for practice is exploration and knowledge development around multiple roles which appeared as a central concern or influence in this study. Participants in this study showed that supervisors look at themselves as well as others, and back again at themselves as to how they looked at others. Multidimensional, cyclical, multilayered, or, as Diane concluded in one of the focus groups, "double-double thinking"… however it is described, it is complex. Conversations in supervisors' own supervision sessions should acknowledge, unpack, and develop ways to handle such complexity.

If managers cannot adequately integrate managerial and professional supervision – which would acknowledge that professional supervision *is* part of accountability – they might be well-served through explicit supervisor development that focuses on integrating different functions and accountabilities, managing their different roles in and around supervision sessions, and negotiating and balancing the various demands from their supervisors and their organisation more broadly. As such, supervisors' own supervision sessions might focus on how "both professional and managerial discourses can coexist within the context of supervisory practice" (Egan et al., 2016, p. 14). The tension between supervision roles and functions could be a topic in supervisors' conversation, reflection, and analysis in their own sessions; about whether or not they explicitly talk about the roles they occupy, how their roles separate and integrate, and how they navigate their roles with supervisees. Importantly, their development might include a critical approach that (for example) looks at how they balance roles and assumptions that perpetuate ideas that such balance is not possible.

The extent of roles and subject matter presented by participants in this study indicated that development of supervisors necessitates a wide scope in supervision sessions for supervisors. The framework that I proposed from this study (Figure 5.1) provides important reference points for covering that range. However, supervision sessions alone are likely to fall short for

such extensive coverage. Complementing supervision with training and other supervisor development fora would be an important addition. For example, a valuable supplement to structured and focused supervision sessions would be the continuous learning cycles of training, peer consultation, and in-situ learning that featured in the research of Collins-Camargo and Millar (2010). Importantly, any suite of development for supervisors should be both ongoing and connected, which might be similar to or borrow from the integrated framework that O'Donoghue and Tsui (2012a) identified as the means by which supervisors learned to supervise, which included supervision experiences, practice wisdom, approaches, style, and emotional intelligence. The significance of connectedness between development activities extends to series of supervision sessions over time which can form a structured and individualised development program (Milne et al., 2008). .

Given the challenges of supervising and managing that were described by participants in this study, supervision training that only looks at *supervisees* and processing issues with them would be inadequate for supervisor development. Training and other dialogue and learning fora should focus more on the *supervisor* and take account of where the supervisor is at in their supervision perspective, knowledge, and skills. It should cover knowledge relevant to supervision knowledge rather than client practice knowledge – or, possibilities for translation of practice theories and models for supervision practice – and attend to the double-layered experiencing and exploring that is a feature of most supervisors' practice. That is, double-layered in so far as supervisors should explore the combination of their own experiences, supervisees' experiences, and in turn, their experiences with supervisees. As such, the division of training and other learning should be at least twofold; one part, about becoming and being a supervisor (supervisor-focused), and the other about facilitating supervision conversations and relationships (supervisee-focused).

Conclusion

It seems contradictory that there is common agreement that social workers in direct work with people accessing services and programs require supervision for good practice and professional growth, but the same emphasis is not placed on social workers who supervise others. This seeming distinction between client and supervision practice suggests less importance on developing supervision practice, or, a view that such development occurs somewhere other than supervisors' own supervision sessions. This is strengthened by popular views about training as the primary means for supervisors to learn how to supervise others. Less attention is paid to how they are assisted by their own supervisors and how they use their own supervision sessions to complement other modes of learning and development.

Although this study focused on social workers and social work supervisors, the findings and the proposed framework are relevant across human services, in government and non-government agencies, and in both agency- and community-based programs and services. As noted in the literature review, professional supervision has its roots in social work and its expansion to other professions has been suggested as "social work's gift to the helping professions" (Wepa, 2007, p. 13). The significance of relationships, power, and contexts in the findings of this study are likely parallels and the challenges and issues confronted by supervisors in this study would be comparable to other professionals in similar environments.

Finally, I started this research because of my own supervisor experiences and hearing from people that, as supervisees, they were not getting what they expected, wanted, or needed from their supervisors. Rather than think about what they were doing or not doing to create that situation, I wondered what their supervisors were doing or not doing. Once I started this research I discovered that the supervisor angle that I chose to explore opened up a new avenue of supervision research and practice. That was exciting and concerning at the same

time. The little existing research on supervision sessions, and the absence of the same on supervisors' own sessions, meant this was important research. The findings from this study demonstrated that importance and they provided lessons about supervisors' experiences of supervision as both supervisors and supervisees. The limited reference to supervision conversations in their own supervision sessions was an important finding and one possible explanation for the supervisee concerns that initially prompted this research. This research has the potential to change or strengthen supervisors' approaches to their practice, including supervisors-of-supervisors. It has certainly supported me to think about my own approach to supervising others, especially supervisors. It has drawn attention to the inclination for supervisors who occupy other roles to demote their supervisor role in their own supervision sessions or, at least, the necessity to learn and develop in facilitating supervision conversations, no matter where they happen. This study demonstrated that more consideration needs to be given to both the role of supervisors' own sessions as a site for supervision practice development and the role of their own supervisors to achieve supervisor development that is more critical, valuable, and individualised than training alone.

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Appendix A: Observations and Interviews: Participant Information Statement

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Participant Information Statement for the Research Project: Supervising supervisors: Developing social work supervision practice

Document Version 3, 18/05/15

Research team

Project supervisor:	Dr Amanda Howard, Program Convenor & Lecturer, Social Work, UoN
Co-supervisor:	Dr Kylie Agllias, Conjoint Lecturer, Social Work, UoN
Student researcher:	Lou Johnston, PhD Candidate, Social Work, UoN *(Referred to as 'the researcher' in this document)*

You are invited to participate in the research project identified above which is being conducted by this research team as part of Lou Johnston's PhD studies at UoN.

Why is the research being done?
The purpose of the research is to explore what happens in social work supervisors' own supervision sessions. The research will consider how social work supervisors use their own sessions to discuss, develop, sustain and build on how they supervise others. This includes how supervision practice might be developed outside traditional training methods. This research project will use a case study design focused on 6 supervision pairs. In this research, the 'supervisee' is someone who also supervises others outside their own supervision (see Figure 1).

Who can participate in the research?

We are looking for 6 supervision pairs who meet the following minimum criteria:

Supervisee

- Must be a social worker
- Attends own supervision sessions every 4-6 wks (as supervisee)*
- Is also a supervisor- provides supervision sessions for at least one practitioner# every 4-6 wks

Supervisor (Supervisor A, in Figure 1)

- May or may not be a social worker
- Provides supervision sessions for this supervisee every 4-6 wks*
- Has been asked by this supervisee to participate in this research

Both can maintain regular supervision sessions together for the duration of the research

** In the agency or in private supervision* *# This supervisee does not have to be a social worker*

Priority will be given to identifying 2 pairs each from government, non-government, and private supervision settings. The supervisee should initiate the pair's interest in participating by approaching the supervisor then contacting the researcher.

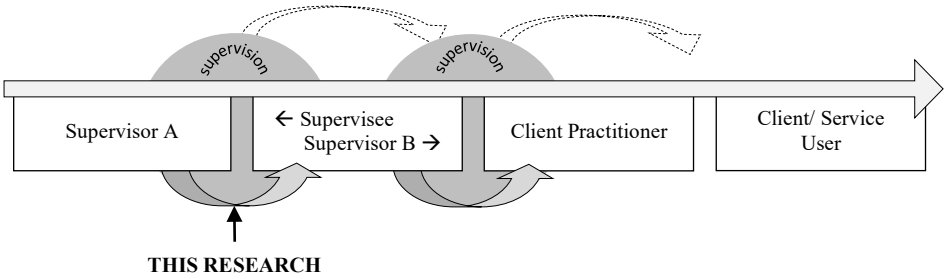

Figure 1: Supervision relationship in-focus in this research

What would you be asked to do?

Both participants (supervisor and supervisee) will be asked to participate in the following three activities. The researcher will conduct the observations and interviews.

Observation: Observed together in 3 supervision sessions (each session approximately 1 hour; 4-6 weeks between sessions; video recorded).

Both participants should participate in sessions as they would ordinarily. There are no requirements or guidelines about what to say or do. The researcher will observe each session either in the room or from an observation room with intercom. The researcher will not participate in the session but will take notes (e.g. topics, words/phrases, questions, communication, and linking sessions).

Individual interview: Participate in one individual interview with the researcher (after 3 supervision sessions are complete; approximately 1 hour; audio recorded and transcribed; researcher will not share recording or transcript with other pair member).

The interview will be unstructured, which means each participant decides what will be discussed. It may relate to one or more sessions, e.g. referring to a single session, topics/themes across multiple sessions, connections between sessions, etc. The researcher may ask prompt questions.

Diary: Complete at least 3 diary entries (1 after each observed session; written, audio, or video format; additional entries optional; submit each as completed, or all at interview).

Entry content and length is entirely each participant's choice, e.g. they may be a reflection on each session, or have a broader focus.

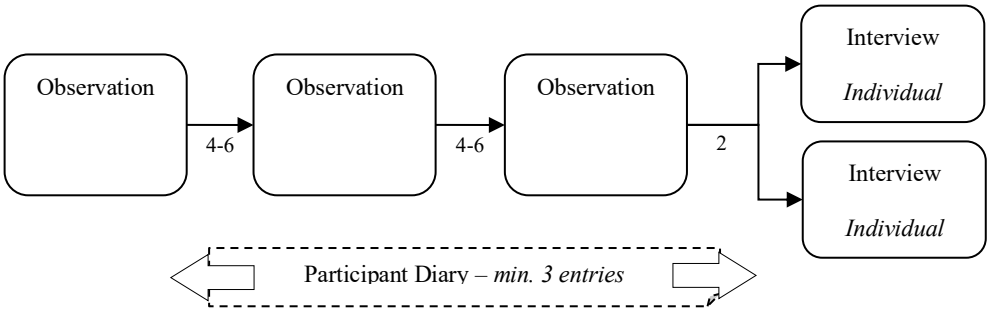

Figure 2: Research activities and time frames

How long will it take?

The minimum time participants may be involved in this project is approximately 4 months (see Figure 2), depending how long it takes to complete 3 supervision sessions (no less than 4 weeks apart) and 1 interview. A schedule for observations and interviews will be negotiated with the researcher when the project starts and can be reviewed. Suggested time allocations for activities are below and consider space between activities and work duties.

- *Observations and diary entries*: 2 hours, i.e. 1-1.5 hours for the supervision session and 15-30 minutes for diary entry (best done immediately afterwards if possible).
- *Interviews*: 1.5-2 hours. The intended time is 1 hour but this may extend slightly.
- *Reviews and edits (optional)*: If you choose to review your video recordings or transcript you will need extra time outside what you allocate for the above activities.
- *Travel (optional)*: If you nominate to do observations and interviews at a location away from your workplace, you need to include travel time.

What choice do you have?

Participation in this research is entirely your choice. To alleviate pressure to participate from a more senior person, the supervisee should initiate interest by approaching the supervisor and the researcher will seek organisational consent. Only people who give their informed consent will be included in this research. It is your choice if you inform your organisation that you are interested or participating in the research. Whether or not you decide to participate, your decision will not disadvantage you. If you do participate, you may withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason and can withdraw any data that identifies you. Other choices include directing/re-directing topics being discussed; not providing particular information in supervision sessions or interviews; asking the researcher to stop the recording or end the observation/interview; or, asking for sections of recordings to be deleted or not included in data analysis. You will have the option to review and edit your interview transcript and observation video recordings. Any requests for edits of the *observation* video recordings need to be made prior to your next observation session because the researcher will be doing preliminary analysis between sessions. You will be provided a transcript of your interview and may request edits or deletions.

What are the risks and benefits of participating?

The observations and interview are likely to involve discussions about your own and others' practice experiences. This may create some discomfort or vulnerability. Choices in the previous section can be used to reduce these risks. You should advise the researcher if you are feeling uncomfortable. A list of support options is attached. You may seek support independently or the researcher can refer you after discussing options.

Potential benefits for individuals, organisations, and the profession include, research findings about supervising supervisors to complement the current dominant focus on practitioners; participants making more links between their supervisee and supervisor experiences to improve supervision practice; learning about practical supervision session approaches and techniques; a shift in supervision cultures in organisations (e.g. research-informed supervision policies); and, a broader supervision knowledge base for the social work profession (e.g. developing supervisors beyond training).

How will your privacy be protected?

Participants may choose to be observed and interviewed outside their workplace (arranged by the researcher). Participants and their organisation will be assigned a pseudonym and code to de-identify them permanently in video, audio and written records. The researcher will not share interview recordings and transcripts with the other person in the pair or the organisation. Audio recordings of interviews will be transcribed by a professional transcription service that will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement. Videos will only be viewed by the research team. Any public presentation of video data will only be in text form – no excerpts of video records will be shown – and participants will not be identified.

During the active phase of the research, electronic and hard copies of video, audio and written records will be held at the University of Newcastle. Electronic records will be password protected and hard copies secured in a locked filing cabinet in the project supervisor's office. Only the research team will have access to these records. Once the research is completed records will be moved to the office of the School of Humanities and Social Science and secured for five years beyond final publication, after which electronic records will be deleted and hard copies shredded by a secure documents removal service.

How will the information collected be used?

Data from observations and interviews will be coded using qualitative data analysis software (e.g. NVivo). You will be sent a document summarising the data analysis and findings. You may be asked to provide comment on some researcher interpretations during the analysis phase. The final report on this research will be provided as a doctoral thesis by the researcher to qualify for a PhD in Social Work. Information from this research may be published or presented in public forums, e.g. academic books, journals, workshops, conferences. Participants will not be identified in any reports, publications or presentations arising from the project. Non-identifiable data may be shared with other parties to encourage scientific scrutiny, contribute to further research and public knowledge, or as required by law.

What do you need to do to participate?

Please read this Information Statement and be sure you understand its contents and expectations. Interested supervisees should discuss participation with their supervisor (the other member of the proposed 'supervision pair' for this research). If you meet the criteria above, and both supervisee and supervisor are interested, contact the researcher via phone or email. The researcher can answer questions and may seek other information to help selection. The researcher will then contact your organisation and seek consent for your participation. You will not be identified to the organisation. Expressing interest in this project does not guarantee participation. There may be more people than is required for the project. The research team will recruit 9 supervision pairs (6 to participate and 3 on standby). You will be advised of the outcome whether selected or not.

For further information: Please contact Lou Johnston in the first instance.

Project supervisor:
Amanda Howard P: 02 4921 6302
Amanda.Howard@newcastle.edu.au

Student researcher:
Lou Johnston M: 0416 013 823
Lou.Johnston@newcastle.edu.au

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Dr Amanda Howard, Project supervisor **Lou Johnston, Student Researcher**

Complaints about this research

This project has been approved by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval No. H-2014-0396. Should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the Human Research Ethics Officer, Research Office, The Chancellery, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan NSW 2308, Australia, telephone (02) 49216333, email Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au

Examples of Support, Counselling and Supervision Services

If you wish to speak to a counsellor or other support person after this research you might like to contact one of the following services. If you feel you need assistance in arranging an appointment please contact the researcher.

If you need to speak to someone immediately, please call Lifeline or Mensline.

LIFELINE	13 11 14	https://www.lifeline.org.au/
MENSLINE	1300 78 99 78	http://www.mensline.org.au/

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS (EAP)

For EAP provider details for your agency contact your supervisor or a manager, or your human resources unit, or your EAP coordinator. Depending on your agency, contacting the EAP may require approval. A list of providers in NSW is available on the website for the Employee Assistance Professional Association of Australasia at

http://www.eapaa.org.au/index.php/providers/providers_nsw/

This does not specify which agency those providers service, so you will need to contact your agency if you do not know the provider.

Example EAP contacts by agency:

HNEH	(02) 4921 2822 or access information via HNE Health intranet
FACS	1300 687 327 or email eap@convergeintl.com.au
	(Converge International) Client portal http://www.convergeinternational.com.au/client-login

COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

Referral and Information Centre: (02) 4924 2590

UNIFAM COUNSELLING and MEDIATION*

Newcastle	49 256000
	http://www.unifamcounselling.org/contact_us/newcastle

RELATIONSHIPS AUSTRALIA *

1300 364 277 http://www.nsw.relationships.com.au/

Relationship Help Online & e-counselling http://www.relationshiphelponline.com.au/

PRIVATE COUNSELLORS, SOCIAL WORKERS and PSYCHOLOGISTS*

A number of private counsellors, social workers and psychologists can be found in the yellow pages under 'Counselling- Marriage, Family, Personal'

PRIVATE SUPERVISION PROVIDERS* – AASW accredited

Find a supervisor via the AASW website http://www.aasw.asn.au/find-a-supervisor

*** The service charges a fee**

Appendix B: Observations and Interviews: Consent Form

Dr Amanda Howard
School of Humanities and Social Science
University of Newcastle
Callaghan NSW 2308
Phone: (02) 4921 6302
Amanda.Howard@newcastle.edu.au

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE AUSTRALIA

Participant Consent Form

Supervising supervisors: Developing social work supervision practice

Document Version 3, 18/05/15

The research team: Amanda Howard, Kylie Agllias, Lou Johnston

- I agree to participate in the above research project and give my consent freely.
- I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Participant Information Statement, a copy of which I have retained.
- I understand I can withdraw from the project at any time and do not have to give any reason.
- I understand my personal information will remain confidential to the researchers.
- I understand this research may have some impact on my usual work duties.
- I understand I can ask at the end of an observation or interview for sections of the recording to be deleted or not included.
- I understand I will have opportunity to review the written transcript of my interview and I can request edits and deletions in the record.
- I understand I will have opportunity to view video recordings of my observation sessions and I can request edits and deletions in the record. I understand that if I want anything deleted from an observation recording I need to tell the researcher before my next observation session.
- I have had the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.
- (For a supervisee participant) I initiated the expression of interest in participating in this research. I was not approached by my supervisor or organisation to participate.

In this research, I will be	☐	The supervisee	☐	The supervisor	
The supervision occurs in	☐	A government agency	☐	A non-govt agency	☐ Private practice

I consent to:

1. Being observed and video recorded in 3 supervision sessions where I am the supervisor or supervisee, by a researcher either in the room or via a viewing window who does not participate in the session. yes / no
   a. Researchers using material from my supervision sessions, without identifying me, for the purpose of the thesis, publications, workshops and conferences yes / no
2. Participating in an individual interview that is audio recorded. yes / no
   a. Researchers using material from my interview, without identifying me, for the purpose of the thesis, publications, workshops and conferences yes / no
3. Making one diary entry after each observed supervision session, either written, audio or video, and consider making optional additional entries. yes / no
   a. Researchers using material from my diary, without identifying me, for the purpose of the thesis, publications, workshops and conferences yes / no
4. Receiving and commenting on copies of summary documents produced by the researchers about data and findings from my contributions in observations, interview, and diary entries yes / no

Print name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** ___/___/___

Contact details: **M:** _____ **P:** _____

E: _____

Appendix C: Observations and Interviews: Organisation Information Statement

Dr Amanda Howard
School of Humanities and Social Science
University of Newcastle
Callaghan NSW 2308
Phone: (02) 4921 6302
Amanda.Howard@newcastle.edu.au

Organisational Information Statement for the Research Project:
Supervising supervisors: Developing social work supervision practice

Document Version 2, 18/05/15

Research team

Project supervisor:	Dr Amanda Howard, Program Convenor & Lecturer, Social Work, UoN
Co-supervisor:	Dr Kylie Agllias, Conjoint Lecturer, Social Work, UoN
Student researcher:	Lou Johnston, PhD Candidate, Social Work, UoN *(Referred to as 'the researcher' in this document)*

You are invited to consider giving permission for an employee of your organisation to participate in the research project identified above which is being conducted by this research team as part of Lou Johnston's PhD studies at UoN.

Why is the research being done?
The purpose of the research is to explore what happens in social work supervisors' own supervision sessions. The research will consider how social work supervisors use their own sessions to discuss, develop, sustain and build on how they supervise others. This includes how supervision practice might be developed outside traditional training methods. This research project will use a case study design focused on 6 supervision pairs. In this research, the 'supervisee' is someone who also supervises others outside their own supervision (see Figure 1).

Who can participate in the research?

We are looking for 6 supervision pairs who meet the following minimum criteria:

Supervisee

- Must be a social worker
- Attends own supervision sessions every 4-6 wks (as supervisee)*
- Is also a supervisor- provides supervision sessions for at least one practitioner# every 4-6 wks

Supervisor (Supervisor A, in Figure 1)

- May or may not be a social worker
- Provides supervision sessions for this supervisee every 4-6 wks*
- Has been asked by this supervisee to participate in this research

Both can maintain regular supervision sessions together for the duration of the research

* *In the agency or in private supervision* # *This supervisee does not have to be a social worker*

Priority will be given to identifying 2 pairs each from government, non-government, and private supervision settings. The supervisee should initiate the pair's interest in participating by approaching the supervisor then contacting the researcher.

It is most likely we are seeking approval for 2 employees from your organisation. In any event, it will be no more than 4 employees because of the setting parameters above.

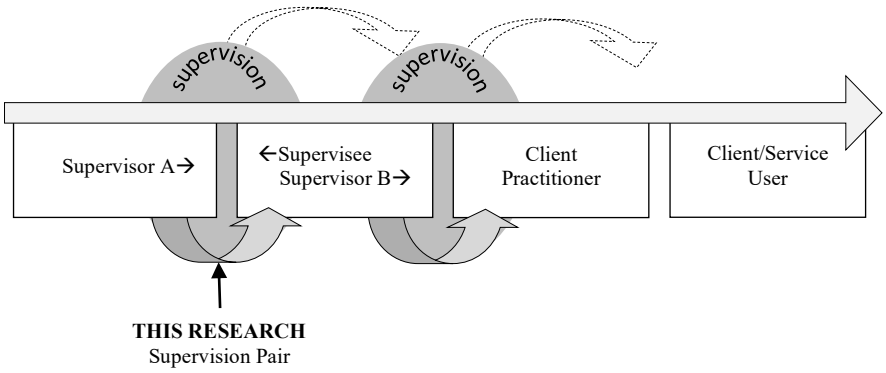

Figure 1: Supervision relationship in-focus in this research

What is the organisation being asked to do?

We are asking you to give permission for the following:

- To recruit selected employees from your organisation as research participants (2-4 employees); and,
- For the researcher to attend your workplace and conduct observations and interviews with the approved research participants, if they choose to be observed and interviewed in their workplace (an alternative location is an option).

This organisation is not the subject of this research. Observations and interviews may include reference to the organisation as the context in which supervision occurs. The identity and specifics of the organisation will be de-identified.

Similar organisational activities: The nature of the researcher's role is similar to other operational or practice activities that may feature in your organisation. For example:

- *Consultancy*: Organisations often employ consultants to complete activities such as reviews, evaluations, programming, and training/practice development activities. These usually involve conversations and interviews with employees, access to organisational documents, reports on results, and are sometimes published. They involve pre-determined agreements that specify the scope of the project, expected deliverables or outcomes, and confidentiality requirements. There are distinct parallels between these arrangements and the proposed research in terms of its focus, its methods, and ethics approval and requirements. The researcher is very experienced in these activities and managing and reporting on sensitive organisational matters.
- *Live supervision and outsider-witness approaches:* These are two examples of observation methods that organisations may use to develop workers' practice. Observing workers in-situ is a helpful way of improving practice and using real-life and in-the-moment events to improve future practice. There are parallels between these methods and the proposed research and, as above, the researcher must abide by UoN ethics requirements in terms of relating to participants and using information from observations and interviews. The researcher is very experienced in using observation for evaluation, reviews and supervision initiatives for organisations.

What would participants be asked to do?

Both participants (supervisor and supervisee) will be asked to participate in the following three activities. The researcher will conduct observations and interviews.

Observation: Observed together in 3 supervision sessions (each session approximately 1 hour; 4-6 weeks between sessions; video recorded).

Both participants should participate in sessions as they would ordinarily. There are no requirements or guidelines about what to say or do. The researcher will observe each session either in the room or from an observation room with intercom. The researcher will not participate in the session but will take notes (e.g. topics, words/phrases, questions, communication, and linking sessions).

Individual interview: Participate in one individual interview with the researcher (after 3 supervision sessions are complete; approximately 1 hour; audio recorded and transcribed; recording or transcript not shared by researcher with other pair member).

The interview will be unstructured, which means each participant decides what will be discussed. It may relate to one or more sessions, e.g. referring to a single session, topics/themes across multiple sessions, connections between sessions, etc. The researcher may ask prompt questions.

Diary: Complete at least 3 diary entries (1 after each observed session; written, audio, or video format; additional entries optional; submit each as completed or all at interview). Entry content and length is entirely each participant's choice, e.g. they may be a reflection on each session or have a broader focus.

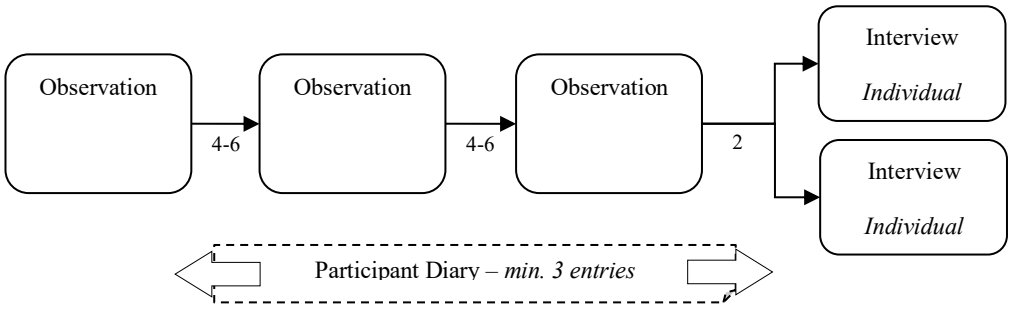

Figure 2: Research activities and time frames

How long will it take?

The minimum time participants may be involved in this project is approximately 4 months (see Figure 2), depending how long it takes to complete 3 supervision sessions (no less than 4 weeks apart) and 1 interview. A schedule for observations and interviews will be negotiated with the researcher when the project starts and can be reviewed. The following suggested time allocations for activities have been provided to employees considering participating and consider space between activities and work duties.

- *Observations and diary entries*: 2 hours, i.e. 1-1.5 hours for the supervision session and 15-30 minutes for diary entry (best done immediately afterwards if possible).
- *Interviews*: 1.5-2 hours. The intended time is 1 hour but this may extend slightly.
- *Reviews and edits (optional)*: If participants choose to review their video recordings or transcript they will need extra time outside what they allocate for the above activities.
- *Travel (optional)*: If participants nominate to do observations and interviews at a location away from the workplace, they need to include travel time.

What choice do you have?

Approving the involvement of an employee in this research is entirely your choice. When thinking about approval consider the information above about similar activities that may already occur in your organisation. Whether or not you decide to approve the employee's participation, your decision will not disadvantage you or your organisation. If their participation is approved, the organisation may withdraw approval and discontinue the employee's involvement at any time without giving a reason and have the option of withdrawing data that identifies the organisation.

What are the risks and benefits of participating?

Some possible risks for the organisation include:

- Confidentiality of work-related content in observations and interviews
- Protection of participant or organisation identities during the research and in reports
- The researcher entering a work area to conduct observations and interviews
- Practical impacts on participants meeting work requirements during the research

Safeguards for these will be in place as outlined in other sections. The researcher is required to conduct a safety review of the location where the research will be conducted which can be done in consultation with you. Because participants are required to be participating in regular supervision sessions the practical impacts of observations on workload will be limited because they would be doing this anyway. Other time implications are noted above.

Potential benefits for individuals, organisations, and the profession include research findings about supervising supervisors to complement the current dominant focus on practitioners; participants may make more links between supervisee and supervisor experiences to improve supervision practice; learning about practical supervision session approaches and techniques; a shift in supervision cultures in organisations (e.g. research-informed supervision policies); and, a broader supervision knowledge base for the social work profession (e.g. developing supervisors beyond training).

How will privacy be protected?

The researcher will not provide the organisation the names of the interested employees. Those approved for participation may choose to be observed and interviewed outside their workplace (arranged by the researcher). Participants and their organisation will be assigned a pseudonym and code to de-identify them permanently in video, audio and written records. The researcher will not share interview recordings and transcripts with the other person in the pair or the organisation. Audio recordings of interviews will be transcribed by a professional transcription service that will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement. Videos will only be viewed by the research team. Any public presentation of video data will be in text form – no excerpts of video records will be shown – and participants will not be identified.

During the active phase of the research, electronic and hard copies of video, audio and written records will be held at the University of Newcastle. Electronic records will be password protected and hard copies secured in a locked filing cabinet in the project supervisor's office. Only the research team will have access to these records. Once the research is completed records will be moved to the office of the School of Humanities and Social Science and secured for five years beyond final publication, after which electronic records will be deleted and hard copies shredded by a secure documents removal service.

How will the information collected be used?

Data from observations and interviews will be coded using qualitative data analysis software (e.g. NVivo). The final report on this research will be provided as a doctoral thesis by the researcher to qualify for a PhD in Social Work. Information from this research may be published or presented in public forums, e.g. academic books, journals, workshops, conferences. Participants or their organisations will not be identified in any reports, publications or presentations arising from the project. Non-identifiable data may be shared with other parties to encourage scientific scrutiny, contribute to further research and public knowledge, or as required by law.

What do you need to do to advise your decision about employee participation?

Please read this Information Statement and be sure you understand its contents and expectations. If you approve the recruitment please complete the Organisational Consent Form and return it to the researcher. If you do not approve or require more information contact the researcher.

The employees who have expressed interest in the research have been advised we need organisational approval for them to participate. The research team will recruit 9 supervision pairs (6 to participate and 3 on standby).

For further information: Please contact Lou Johnston in the first instance.

Project supervisor:
Amanda Howard P: 02 4921 6302
Amanda.Howard@newcastle.edu.au

Student researcher:
Lou Johnston M: 0416 013 823
Lou.Johnston@newcastle.edu.au

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Dr Amanda Howard, Project supervisor

Lou Johnston, Student Researcher

Complaints about this research

This project has been approved by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval No. H-2014-0396.

Should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the Human Research Ethics Officer, Research Office, The Chancellery, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan NSW 2308, Australia, telephone (02) 49216333, email Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au

Appendix D: Observations and Interviews: Organisation Consent Form

Dr Amanda Howard
School of Humanities and Social Science
University of Newcastle
Callaghan NSW 2308
Phone: (02) 4921 6302
Amanda.Howard@newcastle.edu.au

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE AUSTRALIA

Organisational Consent Form

Supervising supervisors: Developing social work supervision practice

Document Version 1, 27/03/15

The research team

Amanda Howard, Kylie Agllias, Lou Johnston

- I understand the project will be conducted as described in the Organisational Information Statement, a copy of which I have retained.
- I understand the organisation or participants can withdraw from the project at any time and do not have to give any reason.
- I understand the identity of the participating employees will remain confidential to the researchers unless those employees choose to identify themselves to the organisation.
- I understand the identity of the organisation will remain confidential to the researchers.
- I understand this research may have some impact on participating employees' work time which depends on the location at which observations and interviews are conducted.
- I understand the organisation will not have access to video, audio or written records of participant observations or interviews.
- I have had the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.
- I have discussed potential health or safety risks with the researcher (where applicable).

I consent to:	*(please circle)*
5. Employees of this organisation who expressed in this project being research participants	yes / no
6. Researchers entering work areas in this organisation to conduct observations and interviews	yes / no
7. Researchers using material obtained during the research, without identifying the organisation, for the purpose of the thesis, publications, workshops and conferences	yes / no

Print name: _____

Position/delegation: _____

Organisation: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** ____ / ____ / ____

Contact details: **M:** _____ **P:** _____

E: _____

Appendix E: Focus Groups: Participant Information Statement

Dr Amanda Howard
School of Humanities and Social Science
University of Newcastle
Callaghan NSW 2308
Phone: (02) 4921 6302
Amanda.Howard@newcastle.edu.au

Participant Information Statement for the Research Project: Supervising supervisors: Developing social work supervision practice

FOCUS GROUP

Document Version 1, 25/03/16

Research team

Project supervisor:	Dr Amanda Howard, Program Convenor & Lecturer, Social Work, UoN
Co-supervisor:	Dr Kylie Agllias, Conjoint Lecturer, Social Work, UoN
Student researcher:	Lou Johnston, PhD Candidate, Social Work, UoN *(Referred to as 'the researcher' in this document)*

You are invited to participate in the research project identified above which is being conducted by this research team as part of Lou Johnston's PhD studies at UoN.

Why is the research being done?

The purpose of the research is to explore what happens in social work supervisors' own supervision sessions. The research will consider how social work supervisors use their own supervision sessions and conversations to discuss, develop, sustain and build on how they supervise others. This includes how supervision practice might be developed outside traditional training methods.

Who can participate in the research?

We are looking for supervisors to participate in a focus group. They may supervise practitioners/workers and/or supervise other supervisors. You do not have to be a social worker to participate in the focus group.

What would you be asked to do?

You would participate in a **focus group** facilitated by the researcher. An inquiry-based workshop format will be used to analyse and discuss one supervisor scenario. The focus will be on issues, opportunities and questions for practice, and what supervision sessions/conversations could look like with the supervisor. There will be large group and pair activities, some of which will be documented by participants or the researcher, such as brainstorm lists, small group ideas and outcomes, etc. Some of the large group discussions will be audio recorded (see below).

You would also have the option to **review and comment** on focus group notes provided afterwards by the researcher – this is entirely optional.

Additional option to express interest in other activities in this research: This is entirely optional and focus group participants are not required to express interest in, or to complete, the other activities. At the end of the focus group we will discuss another part of this research. It is a case study design – involving observations of supervision sessions and individual interviews – with up to 6 supervision pairs, where the 'supervisee' is a social worker who also supervises others. Separate written information about this research element is available on request if you are interested.

How long will it take?

The focus group will run for 3 hours, with a short break. If you choose to review and comment on focus group notes afterwards there may be time impacts on your schedule.

What choice do you have?

Participation in this research is entirely your choice. Only people who give their informed consent will be included in this research. Whether or not you decide to participate, your decision will not disadvantage you. If you do participate, you may withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason and can withdraw any data that identifies you. Other choices include directing/re-directing topics being discussed; not providing particular information in discussions; or, asking for sections of recordings to be deleted or not included in data analysis. You will have the option to review and comment on a focus group summary provided by the researcher.

What are the risks and benefits of participating?

The focus group is likely to involve discussions about your own and others' practice experiences. This may create some discomfort or vulnerability. Choices in the previous section can be used to reduce these risks. You should advise the researcher if you are feeling uncomfortable. A list of support options is attached. You may seek support independently or the researcher can refer you after discussing options.

A potential benefit for you is that you may be able to use some of the content and outcomes in your own practice after the focus group. Other potential benefits for individuals, organisations, and the profession include, research findings about supervising supervisors to complement the current dominant focus on practitioners; participants making more links between their supervisee and supervisor experiences to improve supervision practice; learning about practical supervision session approaches and techniques; a shift in supervision cultures in organisations (e.g. research-informed supervision policies); and, a broader supervision knowledge base for the social work profession (e.g. developing supervisors beyond training).

How will your privacy be protected?

Audio recordings will only be listened to by the research team. All data (including notes and audio-recordings) will be de-identified, core themes will be extracted and then integrated with data from the other focus groups.

During the active phase of the research, electronic and hard copies of audio and written records will be held at the University of Newcastle. Electronic records will be password protected and stored on the university's cloud server. Hard copies will be secured in a locked filing cabinet in the project supervisor's office. Only the research team will have access to these records. Once the research is completed records will be moved to the office of the School of Humanities and Social Science and secured for five years beyond final publication, after which electronic records will be deleted and hard copies shredded by a secure documents removal service.

How will the information collected be used?

Audio recordings of group discussions will not be transcribed in full. The researcher will extract lists of ideas and quotes from the recordings, couple them with notes created in the focus group, and relate the combined data to the research questions and thematic categories. Further analysis may be done using qualitative data analysis software (e.g. NVivo). You will be sent a summary of the focus group and will have an option to comment on content and researcher interpretations. The final report on this research will be provided as a doctoral thesis by the researcher to qualify for a PhD in Social Work. Information from this research may be published or presented in public forums, e.g. academic books, journals, workshops, conferences. Participants will not be identified in any reports, publications or presentations

arising from the project. Non-identifiable data may be shared with other parties to encourage scientific scrutiny, contribute to further research and public knowledge, or as required by law.

What do you need to do to participate?

1. Please read this Information Statement and be sure you understand its contents. If there is anything you do not understand or you have questions, contact the researcher.
2. If you would like to participate, **register** here: http://goo.gl/forms/oxFwNq7rJ89AnBUA3
3. Once your registration is confirmed you will be asked to sign a **Consent Form.** *A copy will be sent with your confirmation*.

   Workplace computers on networks may not allow access to links. Try another computer first, then if needed, contact the student researcher (details below).

We would welcome your participation in the focus group as part of this research.

For further information: Please contact Lou Johnston in the first instance.

Project supervisor:
Amanda Howard P: 02 4921 6302
Amanda.Howard@newcastle.edu.au

Student researcher:
Lou Johnston M: 0416 013 823
Lou.Johnston@newcastle.edu.au

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Dr Amanda Howard, Project supervisor

Lou Johnston, Student Researcher

Complaints about this research

This project has been approved by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval No. H-2014-0396. Should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the Human Research Ethics Officer, Research Office, The Chancellery, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan NSW 2308, Australia, telephone (02) 49216333, email Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au

Examples of Support, Counselling and Supervision Services

If you wish to speak to a counsellor or other support person after this research you might like to contact one of the following services. If you feel you need assistance in arranging an appointment, please contact the researcher.

If you need to speak to someone immediately, please call Lifeline or Mensline.

LIFELINE	13 11 14	https://www.lifeline.org.au/
MENSLINE	1300 78 99 78	http://www.mensline.org.au/

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS (EAP)

For EAP provider details for your agency contact your supervisor or a manager, or your human resources unit, or your EAP coordinator. Depending on your agency, contacting the EAP may require approval. A list of providers in NSW is available on the website for the Employee Assistance Professional Association of Australasia at

http://www.eapaa.org.au/index.php/providers/providers_nsw/

This does not specify which agency those providers service, so you will need to contact your agency if you do not know the provider.

Example EAP contacts by agency:

HNEH	(02) 4921 2822 or access information via HNE Health intranet
FACS	1300 687 327 or email eap@convergeintl.com.au
	(Converge International) Client portal http://www.convergeinternational.com.au/client-login

COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

Referral and Information Centre: (02) 4924 2590

UNIFAM COUNSELLING and MEDIATION*

Newcastle	49 256000
	http://www.unifamcounselling.org/contact_us/newcastle

RELATIONSHIPS AUSTRALIA *

1300 364 277 http://www.nsw.relationships.com.au/

Relationship Help Online & e-counselling http://www.relationshiphelponline.com.au/

PRIVATE COUNSELLORS, SOCIAL WORKERS and PSYCHOLOGISTS*

A number of private counsellors, social workers and psychologists can be found in the yellow pages under 'Counselling- Marriage, Family, Personal'

PRIVATE SUPERVISION PROVIDERS* – AASW accredited

Find a supervisor via the AASW website http://www.aasw.asn.au/find-a-supervisor

*** The service charges a fee**

Appendix F: Focus Groups: Consent Form

Dr Amanda Howard
School of Humanities and Social Science
University of Newcastle
Callaghan NSW 2308
Phone: (02) 4921 6302
Amanda.Howard@newcastle.edu.au

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE AUSTRALIA

Participant Consent Form
Supervising supervisors: Developing social work supervision practice

FOCUS GROUP

Document Version 1, 25/03/16
The research team
Amanda Howard, Kylie Agllias, Lou Johnston

- I agree to participate in the above research project and give my consent freely.
- I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Participant Information Statement, a copy of which I have retained.
- I understand I can withdraw from the project at any time and do not have to give any reason.
- I understand my personal information will remain confidential to the researchers.
- I understand I can ask at the end of the focus group to have sections of the recording to be deleted or not included.
- I understand I will have opportunity to review and make comment on a summary of the focus group.
- I have had the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to:	*Select 'yes' or 'no' for each*	
1. Participating in a focus group which is audio recorded.	Yes	No
2. Receiving copies of summary documents produced by the researchers about data and findings from the focus group and having the option to comment on them.	Yes	No
3. Researchers using material from the focus group, without identifying me, for the purpose of the thesis, publications, workshops and conferences.	Yes	No

Print name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Contact details: **M:** _____ **P:** _____

E: _____

Appendix G: Focus Groups: Recruitment Flyer 1

DEVELOPING SUPERVISION PRACTICE

A research focus group and workshop

This research considers how supervision practice might be developed and improved by looking at what happens in supervisors' own supervision sessions and conversations with their supervisors.

What will happen in the focus group?

- Inquiry-based workshop format with activities.
- Discuss and analyse a supervisor scenario.
- Identify issues, opportunities and questions.
- Consider what supervision sessions and conversations could look like with the supervisor.

Recording: Because this is research, there will be some recording during the focus group, in two forms:

- ***Documents:*** Notes by participants or the facilitator, e.g., brainstorm lists.
- ***Audio recording:*** Some discussions will be audio recorded.

You will be told whenever audio recording starts and finishes.

These focus groups are part of a PhD study in social work
Supervising supervisors: Developing social work supervision practice

Research team:
Dr Amanda Howard,
Dr Kylie Agllias, Lou Johnston

Lou is the student researcher and will be the focus group facilitator

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE AUSTRALIA

Human Research Ethics Committee
Approval No. H-2014-0396.

Chief investigator: Dr Amanda Howard
School of Humanities and Social Science,
University of Newcastle
P: (02) 4921 6302
E: Amanda.Howard@newcastle.edu.au

Participants: **Supervisors who provide supervision sessions**

All supervisors and professions are welcome.

If you are interested:

- ✓ First, read the **Participant Information Statement**
- ✓ **Register** for a session here: http://goo.gl/forms/oxFwNq7rJ89AnBUA3
- ✓ Once your registration is confirmed: Sign a **Consent Form**.
  A copy will be sent with your confirmation.

Workplace computers on networks may not allow access to links. Please try another computer, then contact Lou if problems continue.

Dates & Times: Attend one of these sessions

8th June, 9.30 am - 12.30 pm
Firstchance Inc., 122 Woodstock St, Mayfield North

8th June, 1.30 pm - 4.30 pm
Firstchance Inc. (as above)

14th June, 1.00 pm - 4.00 pm
Firstchance Inc. (as above)

15th June, 10.00 am - 1.00 pm
Upper Hunter Community Services Inc., QEII Community Centre, Cnr Bridge & Market St, Muswellbrook

15th June, 1.45 pm - 4.45 pm
Upper Hunter Community Services Inc. (as above)

Any questions about the research or focus groups?

Read the Participant Information Statement first.

If you still have questions, **contact** Lou Johnston, **E:** lou.johnston@newcastle.edu.au | **M:** 0416 013 823

Appendix H: Focus Groups: Recruitment Flyer 2

DEVELOPING SUPERVISION PRACTICE

A research focus group and workshop

This research considers how supervision practice might be developed and improved by looking at what happens in supervisors' own supervision sessions and conversations with their supervisors.

What will happen in the focus group?

An inquiry-based workshop format will be used to analyse and discuss a supervisor scenario.

- Identify issues, opportunities and questions.
- Consider what supervision sessions and conversations could look like with the supervisor.
- Various activities to support analysis and ideas.

Recording: To provide data for the research, the following recordings will happen in the focus group:

- ***Documents:*** Notes by participants or the researcher, e.g., brainstorm lists, ideas.
- ***Audio recording:*** Some discussions will be audio recorded.

You will be told when recording will happen, and when audio recording starts and finishes.

The focus groups are part of a PhD study in social work

Supervising supervisors: Developing social work supervision practice

Research team:
Dr Amanda Howard,
Dr Kylie Agllias, Lou Johnston

Lou is the student researcher and will be the focus group facilitator

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE AUSTRALIA

Human Research Ethics Committee
Approval No. H-2014-0396.

Chief investigator: Dr Amanda Howard
School of Humanities and Social Science,
University of Newcastle
P: (02) 4921 6302
E: Amanda.Howard@newcastle.edu.au

Participants: Supervisors who provide supervision sessions

All supervisors and professions are welcome.

Dates & Times: Choose one of these options

Focus Group 1: 8th June, 9.30-12.30

Focus Group 2: 8th June, 1.30-4.30

Firstchance, 122 Woodstock St, Mayfield North

Focus Group 3: [insert date and time]

Focus Group 4: [insert date and time]

Venue:

[insert venue]

If you would like to participate:

- ✓ Read the **Participant Information Statement**

  [insert link]
- ✓ **Register** here

  [insert link]
- ✓ Once your registration is confirmed, sign a **Consent Form**. *A copy will be sent with your confirmation.*

Workplace computers on networks may not allow access to links. Try another computer first, then contact Lou.

RSVP: By [insert date]

Any questions about the research or focus groups?

Read the Participant Information Statement first.

If you still have questions, **contact** Lou Johnston, **E**: lou.johnston@newcastle.edu.au | **M**: 0416 013 823

Document version 1: 25/03/16

Appendix I: Recruitment Timeline

This recruitment timeline followed ethics approval.

July 2015	First email to field educators providing placements for undergraduate social work students via the University of Newcastle (UoN) Social Work Field Educator mailing list.
July 2015	First advertisement in the e-news bulletin of the NSW Branch of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW).
August 2015	RECRUITED: Roger and Claire.
September 2015	Second email to UoN field educators.
September 2015	Second advertisement in AASW NSW Branch e-news.
December 2015	Email to senior and executive staff of government and non-government agencies. Asked to forward the email to social work supervisors in their employ. Included a statement to advise staff they would have no further involvement and any enquiries or further contact should be directed to me. No replies were received. Unknown what action was taken.
December 2015	Emails to social workers providing private supervision in the Hunter area; identified via AASW national website list of supervision providers and my knowledge of local private supervision providers.
March 2016	Third email to UoN field educators.
March 2016	*Ethics variation application to include focus groups.*
April 2016	Emails to practitioners in my email contacts from teaching and practice.
April 2016	RECRUITED: Audrey and Valerie.
May 2016	*Ethics approval to add focus groups.*
June 2016	*Focus Groups:* Emails sent to: (a) UoN field educators (b) practitioners on my own email list, and (c) senior staff in organisations that might employ social workers. All recipients were asked to forward the invitation to others who might be interested. Included a flyer (Appendix G) with five set dates and venues; three in Newcastle and two in Muswellbrook (Upper Hunter). Some people replied but could not attend scheduled times. Two said they could attend; each expressed

interest in different sessions times. Groups did not proceed due to inadequate numbers.

August 2016 *Focus Groups:* Second email to UoN field educators, other practitioners, and senior staff in organisations, with a request to forward others.

Included amended flyer (Appendix H) with revised approach to setting-up groups: participants could form their own groups and set a date, time, and venue suitable to them, then contact me to express interest. Groups could comprise social work supervisors from the one agency or from a mix of agencies. Some direct replies received; two could join another group if formed, another initiated forming a group.

Phoned two senior staff (also sent email) to discuss the study, options to recruit from their agency, and suitable times for staff to attend a focus group. Both said they would circulate the invitation and one intended to explore the possibility of a focus group of senior staff who supervised supervisors. No further contact was received from either person.

September 2016 RECRUITED: Focus group 1: A social worker expressed interest and approached colleagues in the same organisation. Five other social workers expressed interest. The group chose a central location in their organisation to meet and provided date options to negotiate. The focus group with 6 participants was conducted in November 2016.

December 2016 RECRUITED: Sarah and Jack.

January 2017 RECRUITED: Susan and Mary.

February 2017 RECRUITED: Focus group 2: In response to a second-round email, a social worker expressed interest and organised three other social workers from the same organisation for the focus group. I provided a venue away from their workplace and we met in the evening. The focus group with 4 participants was conducted in March 2017.

Appendix J: Observations and Interviews: Data Collection Schedule

Also see table below.

The following is an overview of the scheduling of observations with the four pairs and the table below shows the dates and duration of their interviews and observations:

Roger and Claire: Negotiated all three observation session dates at the same time in advance, in a conference phone call with me. All sessions occurred as scheduled.

Audrey and Valerie: The first session was scheduled via an email between the three of us and subsequent sessions were scheduled at the end of each observed session on a date agreeable to all of us. The final observation session was rescheduled through email negotiation because of another commitment of Audrey's.

Sarah and Jack: Had a standing schedule in place, to occur on a day in the second week of each month. The first was rescheduled to one week later, due to Jack's absence on leave. The remaining two sessions occurred as originally scheduled.

Susan and Mary: Had a standing schedule of monthly sessions in place. Three session dates were originally provided via email. The first observation that was to start in late March 2017 was changed to one week earlier due to "operational issues". I was advised two days prior and could not attend and could not make the subsequently revised April session. New dates were sent for May, June, July, and August, all of which I could make. The scheduled May session was changed to a week later because Susan had a personal commitment and I could not make the new date. Observations of Susan and Mary's sessions started in June 2017.

Data collection – observations and interviews – dates and duration

Pair			Observation Session 1	Observation Session 2	Observation Session 3	Interview Supervisee	Interview Supervisor	Duration (app. mths)	Diary entries post-obs.
Supervisee	**Supervisor**								
Roger	Claire	**Date**	30 Sep 2015	11 Nov 2015	9 Dec 2015	21 Dec 2015	13 Jan 2016	3.5	Roger x 3 Claire x 3
		Duration	82 min	62 min	62 min	84 min	61 min		
Audrey	Valerie	**Date**	3 May 2016	31 May 2016	2 Aug 2016	18 Aug 2016	16 Aug 2016	4.5	Audrey x 3 Valerie x 0
		Duration	50 min	59 min	37 min	44 min	47 min		
Sarah	Jack	**Date**	17 Jan 2017	14 Feb 2017	14 Mar 2017	27 Mar 2017	22 Mar 2017	2.5	Sarah x 3 Jack x 1 [38]
		Duration	48 min	43 min	46 min	49 min	62 min		
Susan	Mary	**Date**	8 June 2017	13 Jul 2017	10 Aug 2017	13 Oct 2017	13 Oct 2017	4	Susan x 0 Mary x 0
		Duration	58 min	63 min	64 min	60 min	53 min		

[38] Jack provided a copy of 'supervision notes' after Observation 1 – viewed as a research diary entry – plus a copy of the original supervision plan and notes from one supervision session conducted before this research.

Appendix K: Interviews: Question Schedule

This is an unstructured interview of up to 1 hour duration. The content will be determined by the participant based on the supervision sessions that were observed by the researcher. As such, there are no set questions. After their final supervision session observation, participants will be advised about the purpose of the upcoming interview and asked to think in advance about what they might discuss. Example prompts are included here to guide the researcher and interview only if needed.

Introduction

Reiterate information about confidentiality. Restate the choices the participant has if s/he is uncomfortable in the interview or does not want to discuss particular topics prompted by the researcher; this includes, direct or re-direct topics being discussed, choose not to provide particular information, or ask for sections of recordings to be deleted or not included in data analysis. Remind the participant about the informed written consent previously given and that s/he may withdraw from the study or cease the interview at any time and not give a reason. Ask for oral consent to participate in the interview.

Explain that the interview is unstructured with no set questions. Explain the purpose of the interview is to discuss the participant's reflections on the three supervision sessions that were observed by the researcher. What they focus on is their choice and it may be about all the sessions, one session in particular, a specific topic or focus in one or more of the sessions, or a combination of these.

Opening question: What would you like to discuss about the supervision sessions that were observed?

Example prompts and questions *(for the researcher to select from if needed, to seek more information on a topic or comment by the participant or to create more dialogue)*

Tell me more about that / Can you explain that some more?

What was that like at the time?

What impact has that had?

What do you think that was like for the other person?

How have you used that since the session/s?

What connections have you made, or think you could make?

How have you applied/used/thought about that in supervision you provide?

What similarities/differences have you noticed/experienced?

Example researcher questions *(these are only asked if time permits and the participant has no other topics they want to discuss. The specific focus of these questions will only be known at the time because they will be based on the observed supervision sessions)*.

How have you applied what is discussed in your supervision sessions in the sessions you provide for others?

While observing I noticed/heard [detail of observation]. What do you think was happening there? / What was happening for you at the time?

I noticed when [name] said/did [detail of observation] you responded by [detail of observation]/did not respond. How would you explain that?

Describe some of the most/least helpful features of the sessions in terms of you developing as a supervisor.

Conclusion Do you have any further comments?

Concluding Information: Extracts of this interview with the researcher's initial interpretations may be provided to you for comment and discussion. Remember there is a list of services in the information package you may wish to contact if you would like to speak to someone about the impact of this interview or related issues.

Thank you.

Appendix L: Focus Groups: Scenario 'Anna' (handout)

Anna has been a supervisor for about 5 years. She is a social worker and started working in human services just over eight years ago. She was first approached to be a supervisor because she was an impressive practitioner in individual and group work with clients. Senior staff thought she could make a valuable contribution to the work of others through providing practice supervision sessions. She provided individual and group supervision for other practitioners for about two years while continuing with her own caseload of clients.

Anna was then appointed as manager of the team she had worked with since starting at the agency eight years ago. The team shares the same practice responsibilities and come from different professions. At the same time, the organisation decided managers would provide day-to-day supervision and management as well as practice supervision sessions. Anna was fine with this arrangement because she was used to providing practice supervision. About a year after she started as a manager, Anna did a two-day supervision training course and recently read a couple of journal articles on professional supervision.

Anna has struggled on occasion to achieve a balance in focusing on managerial and practice considerations. This shows most often in some supervision sessions where she thinks she needs to remove her 'manager hat' when listening and responding to supervisees, especially when they are discussing uncertainties and when they ask for specific instructions or answers. This can be difficult and she often feels pressure to discuss performance issues and organisational expectations, to make sure supervisees abide by them, and finds herself defending organisational decisions that practitioners view as barriers to good practice. There are other times when she focuses on supervisees' practice and their work with clients and gets positive feedback. Some of the more common topics discussed in supervisees' sessions are time and workload management, limited organisational resources, emotional reactions to and of clients, and difficulties with other agencies and providers. Anna knows there is some tension with some team members around her change in role and senses a reluctance to engage in supervision sessions and discuss some of their practice with her.

In her own supervision sessions, Anna noticed a change when she moved into a manager position. She previously used supervision conversations to explore feelings and theories about her client practice. When she started as a manager she noticed this changed to matters such as accountability and reporting on tasks and performance indicators, and was less about her and her development. She is looking forward to seeing what her supervision conversations look like with her new supervisor.

Scenario questions will focus on:		**General:**
• Initial reactions • Key information • Issues and opportunities • Other information needed	• Knowledge (professional knowledge, research evidence) • Ideas for supervision conversations	• Reflection on the focus group • What happens next in the research