

Supervision and Culture

Meetings at Thresholds

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Abstract

Counsellors are required to engage in supervision in order to reflect on, reflexively review, and extend their practice. Supervision, then, might be understood as a partnership in which the focus of practitioners and supervisors is on ethical and effective practice with all clients. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, there has recently been interest in the implications for supervision of cultural difference, particularly in terms of the Treaty of Waitangi as a practice metaphor, and when non-Māori practitioners counsel Māori clients. This article offers an account of a qualitative investigation by a group of counsellors/supervisors into their experiences of supervision as cultural partnership. Based on interviews and then using writing-as-research, the article explores the playing out of supervision's contribution to practitioners' effective and ethical practice in the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand, showing a range of possible accounts and strategies and discussing their effects. Employing the metaphor of threshold, the article includes a series of reflections and considerations for supervision practice when attention is drawn to difference.¹

Keywords: supervision, cultural partnership, Treaty of Waitangi, biculturalism

Counsellors shall seek to be informed about the meaning and implications of the Treaty of Waitangi for their work. They shall understand the principles of protection, participation and partnership with Maori. (New Zealand Association of Counsellors, 2002, p 2)

In focusing on the Treaty of Waitangi in the introductory statements of its *Code of Ethics* (2002), the New Zealand Association of Counsellors (NZAC) clearly positions the professional practice of counselling among the political and practical conditions of life in post-colonial Aotearoa/New Zealand. A growing New Zealand literature brings questions of culture to the centre ground of counselling (see, for example, A. Crocket, 2009, 2010, 2012; Drury, 2007; Durie, 1989, 1999, 2007; Hancock, Epston, & McKenzie, 2006; Lang, 2005, 2011; Lang & Katene, 2007; Te Wiata, 2006; Te Wiata & A. Crocket, 2011). This is perhaps evidence of efforts toward Pākehā “bicultural competence” (NZAC, 2002) and of exploring possibilities for Treaty-honouring practice. This article brings supervision into these efforts and explorations, reporting on a research project that asked the following question: *How does professional supervision work as cultural partnership in Aotearoa/New Zealand?*

Culture in the Aotearoa/New Zealand counselling supervision literature

A range of literature is relevant to this research question: international literature on culture and supervision; Aotearoa/New Zealand health, social service, and education literature on culture and supervision; counselling-specific supervision literature; and NZAC policy and practice documents. This review focuses on the last two of these four,² including the following NZAC policy documents: *Code of Ethics* (2002); supervision policy (2008); membership requirements (2011); and supervisor accreditation documents (2005/2008).

The *Code of Ethics* (NZAC, 2002) has a clear position on partnership: members are required to attend to and respond to “the meaning and implications of the Treaty of Waitangi” and to “understand the principles of protection, participation and partnership with Maori” (s.1). Members are encouraged to work toward bicultural competence, taking into account the diverse cultural contexts and practices of clients, working with clients in ways that are meaningful in the context of, and respectful toward, the clients’ cultural communities (s. 5.2). Referring to supervision as a domain of practice, the *Code* states that “Counsellors should seek cultural consultation to support their work with persons who have different cultural backgrounds from their own” (s. 9.1(d)).

The NZAC Membership Committee establishes criteria for member status, including requirements for supervision as part of professional education. Application forms and documents from this committee detail membership criteria. Invoking cultural safety—a concept first developed in nursing by Ramsden (1997, 2002, 2005) and discussed more recently with reference to counselling by A. Crocket (2012)—

this committee makes an explicit statement about supervision and culture: “it is important that there are Bicultural conversations about bi-cultural (*sic*) safety as part of the supervision process to develop an understanding of the (*sic*) Maori world view and implications for practice in NZ not just for those who have Maori clients” (NZAC, 2011).

NZAC’s (2008) supervision policy document contains only one reference to culture, encouraging cultural consultation for members who work “with a person of a different background from their own” (s. 5.5). Perhaps this statement suggests that counsellors might most often meet with persons from a similar background, a suggestion that would appear to be out of step with the working life of many counsellors. The application form for “accreditation as a supervisor” (NZAC, 2005/2008) has no comment or question related to culture.

The differences in the emphasis given to culture in these various documents—the *Code of Ethics*, membership requirements, supervision policy, and supervisor accreditation—suggest that more is being asked of those new to membership in terms of bicultural responsibilities. These documents would suggest that there is work to be done to bring some consistency to NZAC’s references to professional responsiveness to culture and cultural partnership in practice, including in supervision. The national Supervision Committee, established in 2011, will have a contribution to make to this work.

It may be that these policy documents are not a good match with any discussion in the counselling profession about supervision and culture, sometimes spoken about as “cultural supervision.” Contributing to this discussion, K. Crocket (2005) suggested that “[t]hinking and asking about culture is central to the work of supervision” (p. 12). Crocket highlighted a distinction between consultation and supervision, suggesting that practitioners might examine the purpose and regularity of their engagement, in supervision, with matters of culture. Later, Puketapu-Andrews and Crocket (2007) asked NZAC’s membership: “Cultural supervision or consultation: Who’s giving it? Who’s getting it? And how effective is it?” (p. 19). Noting distinctions between supervision, consultation, and education, these authors invited NZAC members to share, through the national newsletter, their practice responses in enacting culturally responsive and respectful supervision: “In opening a space to explore possibilities to talk about cultural consultation or supervision, we also want to emphasise that we believe that supervision is always a cultural event” (p. 19).

Two responses offered practice examples where a senior Māori practitioner had

been invited to be supervisor of a group of practitioners who met six-weekly. One of the groups included colleagues working in an agency (Egan & Team, 2010); the other, members of an NZAC branch (Mickell, 2008). Egan and her team described *group cultural supervision* that included waiata and karakia:

Networking with hapu, iwi and Maori agencies; how to make our groups safe for Maori clients; how to effectively engage with Maori clients; linking up with kaumatua and kuia; working with whanau; some of the practicalities of arranging appointments with Maori clients; physical space; learning the meaning and use of Maori words; the significance of kaitiaki. (p. 39)

In response to a series of discussions among Wellington members, Mickell (2008) wrote about coordinating “a trial cultural supervision group,” *Maori cultural supervision*. The supervisor offered opening karakia and “a closing process” (p. 30), and group members identified “a clinical or cultural issue to offer the group.”

With only a limited New Zealand counselling supervision literature to call on, this current research article is a contribution to discussion about what the profession asks of supervision, particularly in response to Treaty responsibilities and relationships.

(Im)possibilities for post-colonial research?

Treaty and other ethical responsibilities apply also when counsellors engage in research. A growing Aotearoa/New Zealand literature discusses the colonising risks of research (see, for example, Jones & Jenkins, 2008; Smith, 1999).

The desire for shared talk is, at its core, a desire for the dominant/colonizer group to engage in some benevolent action.... It is the colonizer, wishing to hear, who calls for dialogue....

Even good intentions by the dominant group are not always sufficient to enable their ears to hear and therefore for the other to speak. (Jones & Jenkins, 2008, p. 478)

This research study thus enters uncertain territory in two ways: in its content focus on supervision partnership and culture, and through our research process, including cultural differences within the research group. We first offer some theoretical commentary on our responsibilities for the research process,³ and then go on to describe the steps of this process.

The research group: who are “we” when we stand at the threshold of Treaty, difference, and culture? This question has provoked considerable discussion about

what is necessary and sufficient to say: it is another of those matters where our group has come to plural rather than consensus understandings. Two of us are tangata whenua: Huia is Ngai Tahu and Ngāti Wai; Brent is Ngāti Porou. Tricia has both Māori and Pākehā ancestry. Sandie identifies as Pākehā, claiming German, Spanish, and English ancestry; Diana as a New Zealander of Anglo Saxon origins; and Maureen as Irish-born Pākehā. Bernard is an Australian of convict heritage. Many of us—Arthur, Chris, Ian, Janet, Joan, Jodie, Kathie, Naarah, Nigel, Paul, Zoë—identify as Pākehā, signifying relationship with Māori and this land, and commitment to Treaty partnership. We take these identity claims to constitute ethical stances and political acts (see Crocket, 2010; Webber, 2008).

We each enter the practice of supervision, and of this research, shaped by multiple cultural identifications and histories. Our group's purpose is shaped by the presence of what Jones and Jenkins (2008) conceptualise as the *between* of the “indigene-colonizer hyphen” (p. 3). The hyphen, suggested Fine (1994), is a “location in text” that both joins and separates. By attending to the hyphen, we might explore the *between* that it creates, as it both joins and separates. Our investigation focuses on culture/cultural difference and supervision, at the same time as we undertake research in the presence of a cultural difference shaped by the power relations of a colonising history. The hyphen invites pause, and noticing the *between*, the connection and the separation. The ease of access to practices by which researchers ignore the hyphen by “[writing] across it, recolonizing as they go” (Jones & Jenkins, 2008, p. 474) became increasingly visible as we engaged with our research data (the generation of which we will describe shortly). As a research group, we were in the midst of “the inevitable tangle of caution, passion, ignorance, ambivalence, desire, and power that attends the indigene-colonizer hyphen” (p. 483).

Into this tangle and our experiences of and discussions about it, Brent offered the story of Ranginui and Papatuanuku.⁴ With the separating—indeed, wrenching apart—of Rangi and Papa by their son Tane, space opened up for new possibilities to emerge, Brent suggested. The story of the separation of Rangi and Papa refocused our thinking about spaces between, from the metaphor of text—where Fine (1994) suggested the hyphen is located—to expansive images, of geographic space, of movement, of relationship, of light and life: *te ao marama*. On these terms, separation opens space to forge new possibilities.

As researchers, we were at a threshold—“in the middle of things”—in terms of both our research process and our research question. Jackson and Mazzei's (2012)

description of a threshold echoed with this possibility that in the *between*, in the space and light created by separation, more could become possible than we had foreseen:

In architecture, a threshold is in the middle of things. It exists as a passageway... A threshold does not become a passageway until it is attached to other things different from itself... In other terms, thresholds can denote excess, such as in having a low threshold for pain. The excess of a threshold is the space in which something else occurs: a response, an effect. Once you exceed the threshold, something new happens. (p. 6)

To pause at the threshold—of engagement, of offering and asking, of understanding, of learning, of the possibilities and limits of knowledge-making—would require us to put aside certainties, to experience the tensions and anxieties of being in the middle of things, beyond the known and familiar. The research materials produced at the threshold—at the places of separation where something new thus might happen—are the focus of this article.

Our data-generating began with interviews within our research group. The practitioners/students in the group engaged in reciprocal peer/pair interviews at the first group meeting of the year. While we all have experience of supervision as practitioners, we vary in the length of our experience in counselling and as supervisors. What we all have access to, however, are various discursive resources available to conceptualise and practise supervision in culturally responsive and respectful ways: our interviews sought to highlight our current understandings in the light of these discursive resources.

Kathie and Paul offered a semi-structured interview format, at the same time encouraging the use of inquiry skills to follow through into unanticipated exploration. Each researcher transcribed the interview at which they took the part of the interviewer, seeking the approval of the “interviewee” before making the transcript available to the teaching staff. As well, the researcher/interviewer sent a one-page letter to the interviewee. This letter was intended to offer the researcher an opportunity to acknowledge some particular learning she or he had taken from the interview. Material from these letters is being prepared for another publication.

Another step in the analysis was for the teaching team to review all transcripts, using narrative analysis to identify storylines of supervision and culture that were echoing through these transcripts. The researchers/students then placed their data and relevant literature on the class’s online learning site, into the storylines that had been identified. It was then Kathie and Paul’s task to weave these data into stories. Through these steps

we all found ourselves grappling in various ways: with the content, with the process, and with the ethics of the process. Kathie and Paul wrote online:

We have struggled in this process, in ways that we suspect might echo struggles you may have had as you unwove your interview material into the storylines we had suggested. There were so many possible stories and so many ways they could be told. The task of this telling seemed almost beyond us. We got to the point of three draft stories written and began to question our process.

So we have returned to the question of partnership ethics—which is perhaps at the very centre of our interest in this research project in supervision as cultural partnership.

When we next met as a group on campus, we were in this *between* space of working out in the midst of things, in the middle of practice, what partnership ethics might mean for this research project. There were so many stories that might be told from these rich research materials. Our attention was particularly caught by our talk of hyphens and thresholds, and of separation—in the story of Rangi and Papa—rather than holding together. We asked, too, about the threshold at which manuhiri congregate as they signal to the tangata whenua that they are now ready to be called on to a marae: the moments of gathering and moving toward the waharoa to signal readiness offered us another metaphor to grapple with when thinking about the intersections of supervision and cultural differences and connectedness.

With these rich metaphors—of thresholds, separations, and spaces between to guide our conversations—each interview pair returned to their own transcript data. Using a writing-as-research approach (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005), each pair wrote an account of a threshold arising from their data, from which we might learn something about supervision and culture, in the particularity of counselling in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Below we present extracts from these accounts, as a series of stories of thresholds, where something new might happen, where in the light of separation new possibilities emerge. In offering counselling practitioners this series of stories, we suggest, as Sparkes (2007) put it: “in the end, the story simply asks for your consideration” (p. 522).

Accounts from and of the threshold

Brent and Bernard

Discussions about the metaphor of threshold drew our attention to the central place of relationship. We became interested in the layered multiplicity of spoken and

unspoken possibilities that might emerge or remain hidden while standing together at the place of threshold. Within these contexts of relationship, tension, and meeting, we discussed various discourses and knowledges that might impact and shape the relationship—supervision, cultural supervision, or otherwise.

We shared some values, beliefs, and experiences, including histories of oppression. We also recognised the lens of cultural difference that, depending on context, positioned and repositioned each other's view, experience, and understanding of entering and engaging in relationship. Ideas about real and genuine relationship saw us grappling at the threshold with notions of hope, tikanga, and the collaborative work we understood as necessary for relationship foundation and future.

This meant that relationship at the threshold was dynamic and constantly being negotiated, shaped and re-visioned from various contexts, including Māori and Australian, coloniser and colonised, Pākehā supervisor and Māori practitioner or Māori supervisor and Pākehā practitioner. This mutual awareness influenced discursive practice preferences that support each other's future aspirations and intentions as supervisors and practitioners.

Noticing an agricultural aspect of the threshold metaphor highlighted an appreciation for the threshings.⁵ We discussed the practical use and symbolic act of placing threshings over muddy and rough terrain (of relationship), communicating an intention to offer hospitality and a place to stand together. We acknowledged this as a fluid place of tentativeness, caution and tension as well as a place of encounter where commonality and connection were sought—similar to the pōwhiri process of gathering at the waharoa and moving on to the marae atea. In exploring the tension inherent at the ongoing threshold and atea of relationship, we utilised another agricultural metaphor: fencing.

A strong fence is based on the tensioned wire being attached to posts and strainers that are embedded in the whenua, strong and secure in their roles and identity. This place of tension is where oppressive and colonising practice might be mutually acknowledged, challenged, and debated. Like the strength and effectiveness of a tensioned wire fence, each strainer post or each party of the relationship holds a position of agency. When the various parties entering into relationship have confidence and security in their identities, they effectively hold the tension at the ongoing threshold of relationship. The colonising practices of Pākehā have heightened the tension, at a societal level, in the relationship between Māori and Pākehā, as well as having implications for our discussions about cultural supervision. In meeting at thresholds,

Māori invite Pākehā to engage *kanohi ki te kanohi*—face to face—where Māori cultural *tikanga* and processes such as those within *pōwhiri* and *hui* are offered as ways of encouraging respectful relationship.

Huia and Joan

In this piece of collaborative writing, our separate voices speak from the/a threshold related to knowledge. We agree with Jones and Jenkins (2008) about the impossibility of “a homogeneous viewpoint” (p. 473) and the need for a “negotiated flexibility” (p. 473) for conversations as Māori and Pākehā.

Joan: Our conversation about cultural supervision took me to a threshold, a space of tension, of reconsideration of my assumptions and beliefs around “knowledge.” This tension was highlighted when I talked about Pākehā perhaps needing to be “forced” to participate in mandatory requirements to attend cultural supervision in order to gain knowledge to enable respectful and ethical interaction.⁶ Huia’s response to this was one of invitation: “*If you’re wanting to learn about Māori things, possibly you could come over to this space and be with us. . . . [H]ave a piece of my cake while I’m sitting having my tea.*” Huia’s offer and refutation of any ideas of compulsion challenged me, taking me to a different place/threshold, to consideration of how I might participate/be in relationship with the ethics of invitation to knowledge that she offers. Huia’s invitation connected me to experiences of cross-cultural relationships and of other generous invitations. In this place, I further ponder questions of my responsibilities around knowledge, reflecting on Western views that are “premised on the ideal of making visible the entire natural and social world” (Jones, 1999, p. 311) and take for granted rights to know and acquire.

Bell (2007, as cited in Yukich, 2010) offers me a space to further consider this through the idea of “ethical proximity,” “a space in which Māori difference can flourish” since it is “a proximity that allows for distance and difference—in forms of knowledge, in ways of being” (Yukich, 2010, p. 97). The questions that start becoming important to me are: what might I need to know in order to be able to take a not-knowing position that is less about gaining/acquiring knowledge and more about enquiry into how I *use* knowledge, and how do I *be* with knowledge? What certainties and assumptions might I decay/decompose (P. Patston, personal communication, August 29, 2012) to create space for other knowledge to grow?

*Ka hinga te totara i te wao nui a Tāne,
engari, mate atu he t t kura, whakaete mai he t t kura.*

*The totara tree in Tane's great forest has fallen,
however, a leader falls, and another leader thrusts his way to the front.*

Huia: The image of the great totara falling, creating space for new leaders to emerge, connects to the idea of decaying rather than growing knowledge. I think about the decaying of old certainties at the threshold, as a meeting place of different knowledges. The letting go of old certainties makes them available for coming to rest in the whenua; being transformed; becoming the possibility of something else through that decay; nurturer of new growth; becoming part of an ongoing whakapapa of knowledge.

We stand together in this project, and we continue to come from different perspectives. In spite of the differences we are at the same threshold, and because of the differences we have different tensions.

I feel tension around the imparting of knowledges, of being positioned myself to respond to others' "need to know" (see Jones, 1999). Smith (1999) points out that "some knowledge can be gained only by its being given" (as cited in Jones & Jenkins, 2008, p. 481); however, both parties must be willing for this exchange to take place, and this has implications for supervision. Sometimes knowledge has to be earned, and sometimes it's not mine to give, or not mine to make known. Treading tentatively and respectfully involves the decaying of assumptions about rights to particular knowledge. Care needs to be taken to understand what one is being invited into.

When I offered the metaphor of invitation that Joan speaks of, I was thinking of myself being positioned as a Māori cultural supervisor. At the outset of a supervisory relationship I want to consider together how we might negotiate, proceed, relate, and have difference, even disagreement. It's a mutual engagement, from which we move forward to speaking of our experiences in ways that are respectful of the sometimes not-readily-knowable differences at the partnership threshold.

Maureen and Sandie

Our research conversation brought into question the idea of cultural supervision as something unique and separate from supervision in general. This ambivalence toward cultural supervision as a separate practice is not, however, an ambivalence toward the need to attend to culture within supervision. What has emerged is the idea that any supervisory practice needs continually to attend to culture. Our data suggest that one aspect of supervision should be the "*expanding of cultural knowledges.*" This expanding may be achieved, at times, by supervisor and practitioner conducting a collaborative and generative inquiry into the various cultural influences at play. At other times, it

may also extend to directly accessing the “*networks of knowledges*” available in the wider community to support this expansion of cultural knowledge. Such generative inquiry is influenced by a “corridor of voices” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 121), that is, by the wider discursive context and previous conversations and experiences that have shaped the thinking and practice of all parties involved in the conversation. Our contention is that cultural supervision is this: the availability of a multiplicity of knowledges and voices, and the possibilities that can be generated at this threshold of knowledge, as we purposefully pause and give these knowledges and voices attention.

Our conversation questioned the binary of “*having cultural knowledge*” versus “*lacking cultural knowledge*.” Perhaps this binary is implicated in the production of the idea that our (Pākehā) ignorance can be “fixed.” This idea gives the impression of knowledge as something that can be contained and possessed by an individual; we prefer an understanding of knowledge as fluid, on Deleuzian terms as constantly “becoming” (see May, 2005), and also held by a community.

Although it may be said that each person comes with a kete (basket) of cultural knowledge from which to give as well as to receive, this kete is also constantly changing and evolving. Hakiāha (as cited in Bowen & Consedine, 1999) wrote of the concept of akoako (consultation) which occurs through the process of hui (meeting) where each person’s contribution is seen as a taonga (gift) from their kete. Jones and Jenkins (2008), however, would draw attention to the risk that what one person considers dialogic collaboration might be experienced by the other as an “unwitting imperialist demand” (p. 471). They suggest “a more uneasy, unsettled relationship based on learning (about difference) *from* the Other, rather than learning *about* the Other” (p. 471).

Jody and Naarah

“I held an expectation about supervisors having a responsibility to address the cultural requirements of all the therapists they work with and therefore having to have an understanding of all the various cultures of all the clients of all those therapists!”

“Cultural supervision” is a term to which our group ascribed many and various meanings—meanings informed by different personal and professional experiences and different perceptions of the expectations of the counselling profession. Our research highlights the idea that cultural supervision seems to be elusive: in practice, perhaps it is more an ideal than a reality. We noticed a threshold of tension between Pākehā practitioners wanting to bring their cultural knowledge (as New Zealanders) to the cultural supervision context, and yet a tentativeness in doing so. This tentativeness

seems to stem from a sense of not wanting to take up practices that are disrespectful, patronising or recolonising of Maori: “*Who says? It’s like, you know, did Māori say they think it [cultural supervision] is relevant?*”

Such tensions had us both reconsidering the notion of mandated cultural supervision and instead looking toward cultural consultation—far from being a mandated, obligatory practice, but instead freely chosen and key among the many responsibilities of every counselling practitioner.

When we replace *cultural supervision* with *cultural consultation*, the usual responsibilities of a supervisory relationship are lifted. A space can then open that is collaborative and relational. Our vision is that the two parties have an equal interest in participating, each bringing their own cultural knowledge/taonga to “weave” in order to reach new and shared understandings that have the potential to benefit both parties and their respective clients.

As practitioners we want to take responsibility for accessing cultural consultation according to what seems called for in particular circumstances, and what networks might be available to speak to that need. This requires us to step away from tentativeness and toward transparency, to position ourselves to share our cultural knowledge in ways that allow it to be transformed: “*to connect with the community around me in a way that means I’m more accessible to Māori clients.*”

Chris and Diana

As we have struggled to weave our ideas together, we have been struck by the border that we ourselves encounter in our coming together. How to cross that border to a place of respectful knowing is about clambering through the rubble of our different lived experiences. Sometimes we can hold hands and help each other up, other times our individual positions seem very precarious and the borders become quickly defended.

We both acknowledge, however, that the path forward will only be reached by accommodating these moments of uncertainty with tolerance, goodwill, interest, and respect. We have not yet met at the threshold or waharoa: more time, more conversation, more building of trust and confidence must occur.

We are clear that the relational will transcend the cultural (in whatever way cultural is defined): it is only at this level that we will ever be called over the threshold.

The knowledge of our personal struggle informs the relationships that we bring when working with those of a different culture in any of the multiple roles in which we engage: counsellor, supervisor, practitioner, client, or peer. As Behan (2003)

suggests, a position of decentredness, deconstructive listening, a being-there-with-the-story, as well as a clear understanding of our own power and privilege, seems a useful/helpful place to stand.

Diana's position has been informed by voices that say, "Acknowledge my difference and what you have done to me and my people. Only then will I invite you over the threshold." These voices may be hidden but they are there nevertheless, stretching back through whakapapa and cultural collectives.

Chris will not be positioned by voices that say that the colour of her skin determines her supposed guilt. Chris says that there needs to be a constant negotiation/clarification and a willingness to engage in the process; that these conversations will bring us over the border and to threshold after threshold.

We both question the basis of our rights to take the positions that we have.

Zoë and Arthur

We were surprised, when hearing each other's stories of cultural supervision, that neither of us had taken up cultural supervision in the way we had believed it to be mandated by the NZAC and the ACC: on a regular basis, and with one person only. One of us said, "*I've consulted with [Māori] colleagues on an ad hoc basis,*" and the other, "*I did informally consult a kuia in the area.*" That we used the words "consulted" and "consult" speaks of the way we have positioned ourselves and those with whom we engaged. Whereas the word "supervision" implies a contracted relationship with one person (the supervisor) in a context of accountability, the word "consultation" brings forward ideas of conferring, and asking advice. We discovered that we shared disquiet about cultural consultation as *supervision*: in terms of the dyad of the proposed relationship, the underlying assumption that cultural knowledge is a commodity that can be purchased, and that one Māori person should make themselves available (and responsible) for teaching Pākehā counsellors, like us, about Māori tikanga (protocols) and kawa (practices). Such supervision may be a colonising practice since it centres the person asking for consultation (demanding knowledges) and it assumes "that everything can be known" and articulated .

We have learnt, from our relationships with Māori people in the contexts of our small rural communities where over 50% of the population identify themselves as Māori, that to think of "Māori" as a homogeneous term is a colonising practice as it "brush[es] over national or tribal differences" (Jones & Jenkins, 2008, p. 475). However, we recognise that consulting in an ad hoc way may not be considered sufficient to meet

the requirements of the NZAC policy for supervision (2008) in that it may not include the reciprocal accountability that formal supervision provides. There may not be clear agreements about roles, parameters, monitoring, responsibilities, or even confidentiality. Alternatively, to fulfil our obligations under Te Tiriti and to avoid colonising practices, we advocate for safe cultural practice being learnt by non-Māori through whakawhanaungatanga—“the continuous act of developing relationships” (Elder, 2010, p. 4)—in relationship with Māori and within localised iwi (tribal) contexts.

Whakawhanaungatanga speaks of partnership and collaboration, of recognition and engagement that is both mutual and respectful. It sits well alongside Deleuze’s (1983, p. 23) concept of “always becoming,” and stands in contrast to familiar Western ideas of attaining a state of *being* in relation to knowledge, as well as with the idea that a complete knowing is possible. Our preference, as non-Māori practitioners, is for taking the action of continuing the development of relationships with Māori people in the communities in which we live and practise, so that our interactions with Māori people who consult us correspond with the becoming of ourselves within the practices of whakawhanaungatanga.

Tricia and Ian

Our interviews explored compulsory cultural supervision and came to recognise a curious position of tension between being frustrated with many of the experiences of compulsion, alongside a need for a level of requirement to ensure our ongoing development as safe and competent professional practitioners: “...*how dare you impose it on me, because I believe it’s actually very important and I’m doing my best to do it anyway. But to somehow try and have it reduced to ticking a box and having it completed because you go off and have a session of cultural supervision...*”

We found the traditional supervisor–supervisee dyad was inadequate in continuing to develop a greater understanding and appreciation of our respective worlds. This dyadic approach also invites a more prescriptive notion of expertise and promotion of knowledge. “*Maybe my advice would be that we don’t make assumptions about what it [cultural supervision] means, that we don’t try and prescribe it for each other or for other people.*”

Our preferred approach is to appreciate that we each have a responsibility to build reciprocal relationships with our Tiriti partners, colleagues, and clients. A key feature of this reciprocity is movement away from the positioning of one teacher and one learner toward more consultative peer engagement, offering opportunity to begin

to notice what we don't know. To help build a deeper appreciation of this task, the concept of the threshold offers a construct that could guide our practice.

This concept is useful in signifying a place to meet, share, and be privileged to gain insight into each other's worlds, rather than a boundary that delineates knowing and understanding, exclusion or inaccessibility. Upholding this tension allows for both joining and separating, and keeps us mindful of non-colonising approaches. Jones and Jenkins (2008) say of Fine (1994): “[S]he understands the hyphen as marking a difficult but always necessary *relationship*. This is not only a relationship between collaborating people but also their respective relationship to *difference*” (p. 475).

Janet and Nigel

Cultural supervision as a practice: we found ourselves grappling with multiple position calls arising from the idea of “cultural supervision.” The metaphor of “threshold” offered some sense of relief and possibility. Through this metaphor we were more able to make our experience of these position calls and their effects overt.

We recognised the position calls that are issued not only to practitioners but also to cultural supervisors that create a threshold where supervision and culture meet. One of us spoke of an experience of cultural supervision where the practitioner felt constrained by cultural and power differences between practitioner and supervisor: there was no crossing of the threshold into new territory, into “*the field of reciprocity*.” Trying to understand this experience of not crossing into new territory, they said: “*What I wasn't clear about was whether this [constraint] was ‘cultural difference’ or ‘working model’ difference [between the supervisor and me]. But I think the model had a lot to do with it.*” At this threshold the practitioner encountered discomfort, as a member of the privileged, dominant culture, about wanting to query the experience of difference/constraint: “*I feel I don't have speaking rights or the place to be able to bring that to their attention.*” While the practitioner's hope of reaching a new place was not overt, there was a sense of not having reached something and a wondering about what this process had been like for the supervisor.

We grappled with the context that cultural supervision would provide as a space to learn about culture, and questioned whether it could possibly “*ensure and standardise safe cultural practice*,” an assumption that seems to be at the base of this concept. Is this intention best met in a dedicated cultural supervision context, or within existing supervision relationships? Or is it our responsibility as practitioners “*to be students of culture*” and to seek collaborative and consultative opportunities to extend our cultural

experiences and understandings? Our experience at the threshold suggests a blend of supervision that deconstructs our own cultural influences, “*not so we can remove [them], because that’s not possible, but so we can account for them,*” with seeking collaborative and consultative opportunities for cultural knowledge, while holding that “*everybody has their own unique experience of whatever culture they identify with.*” With such a stance, there is the possibility for mutual respect, equality, and valuing of our differences and similarities.

Discussion

The threshold metaphor took us directly to our struggles for and hopes of cultural partnership and supervision. This article is not a consensus document: we are together in this writing but not speaking with one voice. In the to and fro of invitation, acceptance, inquiry, listening, speaking, and knowledge-making, we have learned within and from difference. Each of us has exceeded the thresholds that were before us at the beginning of this study. We will supervise others differently, and approach our own supervision shaped by this study. We understand that supervision becomes a central site and relationship in which counsellors might grapple with experiences of becoming, in the middle of things: in the midst of care, passion, frustration, hopes, and fears, in the midst of the responsibilities encountered at the thresholds where clients invite counsellors into their lives.

We return to Sparkes’s (2007) suggestion that stories are offered for the consideration of readers. Again following Sparkes, we invite:

an aesthetic reading whereby readers interpret the text from their own unique vantage points, contributing their own questions—answers—experiences to the story as they read it, as co-participants in the creation of meaning. My hope is that the reader might think with the story and see where it takes them... [S]hould the story I have offered resonate with readers, then I hope they will look after the story and, when it is needed, share it with others. (p. 540)

Glossary⁷

Kanohi ki te kanohi	In person, face-to-face
Marae atea	The open area in front of the whare nui
Pōwhiri	Welcome ceremony

Waharoa	Gateway (at entrance to marae)
Whakawhanaungatanga	Process of establishing relationship

Endnotes

1. The authors acknowledge Titihuia Rewita, Whakatohea, for her role as a consultant to staff on this project. Titihuia's response to this article follows the main text.
2. A further article arising from this study, providing a wider review of cultural practices in supervision within the health and social services literature, is currently in preparation.
3. This research was undertaken in the course of a postgraduate paper, one of two in a post-graduate supervision qualification. The research project was conceptualised, and ethical approval gained, by the paper teachers, the first two authors. The other 16 authors bring a range of counselling practice, supervision, and research experience to the project.
4. We later learned that Professor Ranginui Walker (2005) had suggested that "[t]he charter for research in Maori culture is laid down in the creation myth of Ranginui and Papatuanuku," with Tane "the progenitor of research activity" (p. 151).
5. During the class discussion, Bernard had related an account of threshings, the materials left from harvest, being laid over mud in a doorway to provide a dry, hospitable entrance.
6. Italicised quotes indicate passages from the peer/pair interviews, the first step in our data-generating processes.
7. Reference: www.maoridictionary.co.nz/

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