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A Humanistic, Culturally Sensitive Approach to Telesupervision: A Case Study

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In this case study, the unique features of providing telesupervision in a humanistic, systematic approach that takes in cultural issues are discussed. With the COVID-19 pandemic, therapists who supervise students have not only moved to various online platforms to supervise students, but also had to adjust to the uniqueness of telesupervision and to issues brought into supervision such as culture. In this case study a strong working alliance start to develop with this student prior to starting telesupervision. It allowed trust to develop by getting to know the student, looking at what the student wanted in during supervision and the requirements of the student's school. All of this was done to by using a client-centered/collaborative approach while finalizing a supervision contract. As this trust started to build and supervision moved to telesupervision, the writer helped the student explore self with genograms and cultural issues. As this was occurring, as the supervisor, it was important to keep account of myself and how that affected the supervisory relationship.

KEYWORDS: telesupervision, client-centered, collaborative therapy, genograms.

Using a Humanistic, Systemic Approach to Developing Culturally Sensitive Therapist in Telesupervision: A Case Study

The counseling profession has recently seen two significant changes: the move to online services and the increase in clients and students from various ethical backgrounds (Békés & Doorn, 2020; Holyoake et al., 2020). With the COVID-19 pandemic, therapists who saw their clients in person moved to various online platforms to conduct therapy (Békés & Doorn, 2020). Like therapy, supervision also moved toward telesupervision (Amanvermez et al., 2020; Békés & Doorn, 2021; Burgoyne & Cohn, 2020; Mo, 2020; Nadan et al., 2020). Telesupervision, initially introduced into the counseling field in the early 1960s, is being used more these days to provide supervision (Rousmaiere et al., 2014). With the COVID-19 global pandemic, outpatient clinics have moved to telesupervision for students to ensure safety for clients and staff (Sahebi, 2020) and to safeguard clients while providing support to the student so that they can become competent therapists (Enlow et al., 2019; Woo et al., 2020).

Along with the move to telesupervision, more clients are coming from diverse backgrounds. As a result, there has been an emphasis on developing culturally sensitive therapists (D'Aniello et al., 2016; Holyoak et al., 2019). For this to happen, Fickling et al. (2019) stress that students need to become self-aware, especially around their culture. The student is encouraged to become aware their own cultural identity and how that is activated in session. In turn, supervisors must attend to their own identity and increase their self-awareness regarding cultural dynamics at play during supervision (Fickling et al., 2019).

Even though telesupervision does not differ significantly from face-to-face supervision (Álvarez et al., 2019; Borcsa & Pomini, 2017; Twist et al., 2016; Woo et al., 2020), few resources exist about using telesupervision (Springer et al., 2021). Like face-to-face supervision, the

supervisor must still obtain the trust of the student. Trust is essential because it allows many issues to be discussed, including multicultural issues (Fickling et al., 2019). Furthermore, the supervisor helps the student provide therapy to their clients and helps them deal with relationship issues in the counselling dyad. Supervisors are also aware of their own issues and their impact on the supervisor-student relationship (Fickling et al., 2019). It is essential for the supervisor to be aware of their own family of origin issues to manage the interactions in the supervisory relationship appropriately (White & Russell, 1997). The purpose of this descriptive case study is to look at how to deliver telesupervision in a client-centered, culturally sensitive way, where trust between the student and supervisor is of great importance (Arczynski & Morrow, 2017; Holyoak et al., 2020).

A Client Center/Collaborative Approach

Enlow et al. (2020) and Nadan et al. (2020) stated that trust in a supervisory relationship develops similar to a therapeutic relationship. The therapeutic alliance develops using a client-centered/ collaborative approach. Carl Rogers, as cited by Port (2019), points to working with clients in a manner that shows unreserved positive affection in an authentic manner. For Rogers, a humanist, empathic approach means listening to the clients' perspective while resisting the lure to place meaning too quickly. These elements are also used throughout the supervisory relationship to build a strong working alliance (Port, 2019). Therefore, a client-centered approach can be used in supervision to start building the working alliance.

Collaborative therapy is used in conjunction with client-centered therapy. McNamee (2007) mentioned that a collaborative approach involves both connection and collaboration. Lau et al. (2019) stress the importance of language, self, and stories. In fact, Anderson (2007) emphasizes the importance of making sure that the client is welcomed, engaging with them by showing interest, and learning about their strengths. Although a therapist has knowledge and experience, Anderson (2007) emphasizes a not-knowing approach. All of this can be used with students. For example, McNamee (2007) describes students are often looking for guidelines to follow when providing therapy. Lau et al. (2019) emphasizes having the student identify struggles and growth areas in their clinical skills. Lau et al. (2019) also explained that it speaks to the supervisor learning more about what the student in supervision. Thus, a client-centered and collaborative approach helps provide a strong foundation for a positive supervisory experience.

Trust

Although a client-centered/collaborative approach is essential in building trust, it can start at different points accompanied with different techniques. Building a positive supervisory foundation may start before telesupervision by meeting with the student in person. However, others suggest a trusting relationship can develop concurrently with a mixture of telesupervision and face-to-face supervision (Stinson et al., 2013). If either are not possible, relationships can be established and maintained through telesupervision (Brandoff, & Lombardi, 2012). Regardless of how this is done, an alliance is essential as a stable relationship creates a positive outcome (Tangen & DiAnne, 2015). According to Mo (2021), trust in the supervisor relationship consists of honest communication and understanding the needs of the student. Mo (2021) and Port (2019) also mentioned that it is vital to understand students' needs throughout their struggles in becoming a therapist. Other techniques that can help start a working alliance either prior to telesupervision or at the beginning of telesupervision include coming up with a supervision contract, talking about

goals, and how to get there in a collaborative manner (Enlow et al., 2020). Also crucial in building a work alliance according to Amanvermez et al. (2020) is providing positive feedback. Thus, existing research shows that by using telesupervision, a strong working alliance is built, where there is mutual understanding of goals and the mastering of counseling skills, and if differences occur, the supervisor's power is used to maintain balance in the supervisor-supervisee relationship (Stinson et al., 2013).

Trust between the supervisor and their student fosters a culturally focused conversation. Yang et al. (2018) suggest that it is essential to talk about culture-related topics. For cultural issues to be discussed there must be a strong emotional bond between supervisor and student with agreements on supervision tasks and goals (Hutman & Ellis, 2020). More to this point, Hutman and Ellis (2020) indicate that students are open to discussing multicultural issues if there is a strong bond and belief that their supervisor understands multicultural issues. With knowledge, Hutman and Ellis (2020) report that one understands the clients' experiences within their culture, whereas these skills refer to being culturally sensitive. According to Hutman and Ellis (2020), a supervisor's multiculturalism competence comes from his or her own self-reflecting and skills. It is thus essential for the supervisor to be consistently examining cultural biases and assumptions (Hutman & Ellis, 2020). Thus, not only does trust need to happen in the supervisor-student relationship, but the supervisor needs to be aware of how they work or are working with cultural issues.

Even though Yang et al. (2018) found that face-to-face supervision brought out much more multicultural understanding regarding their case than those who participated in telesupervision, telesupervision can still be beneficial. According to Yang et al. (2018), there needs to be an openness to discuss culture to foster the therapeutic relationship. While viewing student recordings of their sessions, the supervisor can integrate the cultural interactions in supervision with the student and the triadic process (Gutierrez, 2018). Collaborative supervision can promote the supervisee's self-actualization and facilitate mutual trust. In turn, it demonstrates to the supervisee how to conduct a professional relationship with a client (Lau et al., 2019). According to Yang et al. (2018), culturally based supervision has helped supervisee explore cultural issues, positively affecting the supervision relationship and therapy.

When culture is not discussed, it may cause the student to self-doubt, become more stressed, and not disclose to their supervisor. All of this can diminish the value of supervision (Yang et al., 2018). The supervisor needs to respond effectively and respectfully to the student's cultural background to create effective practice. A good example is in Eastern culture, where the differences are signs of respect (Mo, 2021). According to Mo (2021), a student not having respect for the supervisor would struggle within the supervisor-student relationship. Cultural conflict is reduced if the supervisor and student respect each other's values, gather information about a particular cultural group, and develop flexible strategies that fit the client's cultural group (Yang et al., 2018).

Understanding Self

Another essential factor is self (Stinson et al., 2013). The self includes the student's family of origin, emotional maturity, and difficulty bonding with others (Stinson et al., 2013). These factors are essential to give the supervisor key information about the student's framework and its relation to their clinical cases. A genogram can be used to examine a family of origin patterns as they relate to self and supervision (Aten et al., 2008). When completing the genogram, Getz &

Protinsky (1994) stress the critical role of differentiation and maintain emotional autonomy in the therapeutic relationship. If the student maintains their emotional autonomy, then differentiation is high; if not, it is lower. Getz and Protinsky (1994) also explain that this differentiation level can be seen in patterns of over-functioning and under-functioning, pursuit and distance, and triangulation. Getz & Protinsky (1994) state that these patterns develop because anxiety is not maintained when students conduct their sessions. When anxiety is triggered in supervision, the supervisee reacts with either triangulation, pursuit, distance, or over-functioning and under-functioning. Thus, students need to develop their therapeutic self (Larson, 1993). To do this, Getz & Protinsky (1994) and Larson (1993) suggest family-of-origin-based supervision to gain a better sense of self.

In telesupervision, the supervisor encourages the student to acknowledge how their experiences and biases influence their clients' interactions (Chamberlain & Smith, 2018). To help with this, the supervisor helps the student reflect on their family of origin patterns. Thus, the student hopes to see these patterns early in the counseling process and make changes (Getz & Protinsky, 1994). Family-of-origin work also helps understand the difficulties in the therapeutic and supervisory relationships that impact both processes (Getz & Protinsky, 1994). Getz and Protinsky (1994) suggest the supervisor slows the student down to deal with their anxiety. Once this is done, the student can be encouraged to allow their clients to problem-solve independently (Getz & Protinsky, 1994). As the supervisor is doing this, the supervisors must also focus on themselves and be aware of their family of origin issues that may come out in their reactions, values, and judgment in supervision (Knight, 2012). It may cause what Deveaux & Lubell (1994) call isomorphism. It is, therefore, critical that the supervisors look at their own family of origin:

...as a way of clarifying supervisory difficulties, expanding the boundaries within which the supervisor-therapist relationship is approached, and ultimately bringing under cognitive control those areas of the supervisor's family of origin life, which may be exerting an unproductive influence (Deveaux & Lubell, 1994, p. 293).

Thus, the student helps develop the use of self when the supervisor acts as a role model.

Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is critical in human relationships and, thus, in a supervisor-student relationship. When supervision is face-to-face, it is easier to convey emotions. It allows communication to occur in a synchronous manner, with verbal and nonverbal social cues to increase understanding (Venter, 2019). Chamberlain and Smith (2018); Mo (2021); Twist et al. (2016) discuss using nonverbal cues by conveying emotions through words and symbols. The supervisor also stays focused, asks fewer questions, and explores things in depth (Nadan et al., 2020). Nadan et al. (2020) suggested in their study that supervisors recognized the advantages of using written messages. Written messages enabled students to express their thoughts and suggestions in a more accessible manner. Although a minority of supervisors stated that telesupervision is slower when compared to in-person supervision given their inexperience, telesupervision does allow one to deal with nonverbal communication (Nadan et al., 2020).

Case Study

This case study looks at relationship building, multicultural sensitivity, and understanding of self with a student the writer supervised. This student is Asian-European, living in Canada for several years. The student, who was completing a master's degree in counseling, approached the writer to supervise their practicum. At that time, the student and the writer worked at the same organization, often interacting. It allowed the writer to look at what the student needed in supervision, goals, and ways of achieving them. It was also crucial for the writer to establish a contract with the student. All of this allowed for trust to build and the student to feel less anxious. The student moved to a different city to start the practicum. At the same time, the pandemic hit, and educational institutions began permitting telesupervision. Thus, before her leaving and starting the practicum, a relationship was already established.

One of the things that we did as we started our online zoom meetings was to establish a schedule. We organized time to meet, frequency of meetings and agreed to use email for non-clinical matters, as it was not encrypted. When a situation occurred that required immediate attention, it was agreed that the student could turn to the onsite supervisor. A further discussion with the onsite supervisor was conducted to introduce myself, and clarify my role. The student obtained consent from the clients for video/audio to be shared with an outside supervision.

In our first session, the student presented their genogram using the shared screen on zoom. The student presented their genogram with the supervisor highlighting complex patterns to promote self-awareness. For example, the student discussed coming from a big family with several family members who have passed away. The student also stated that the family was Catholic and explained what it meant to grow in a traditional mixed Asian-Spanish Catholic family. We explored how the student dealt with hurts, kept the cultural norms and values that were part of them, and challenged those that did not fit. In other words, we explored differentiation from the family of origin. It was done to develop the student's awareness of values and beliefs without entering into a therapeutic relationship.

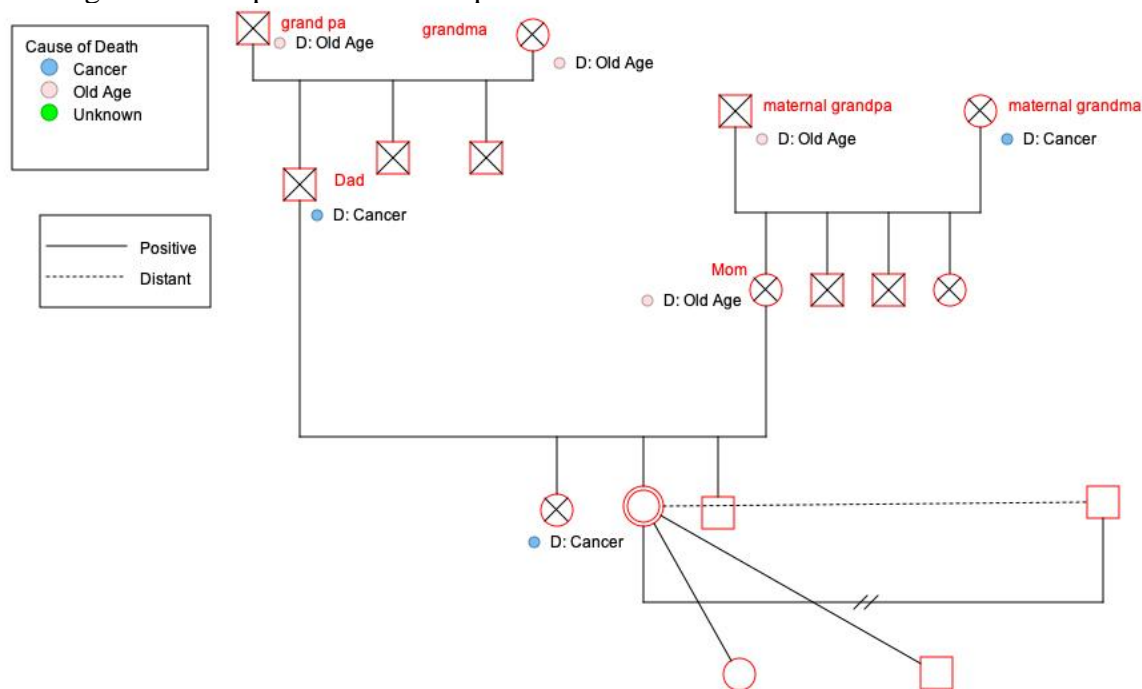


Figure 1. Partial Genogram of Student

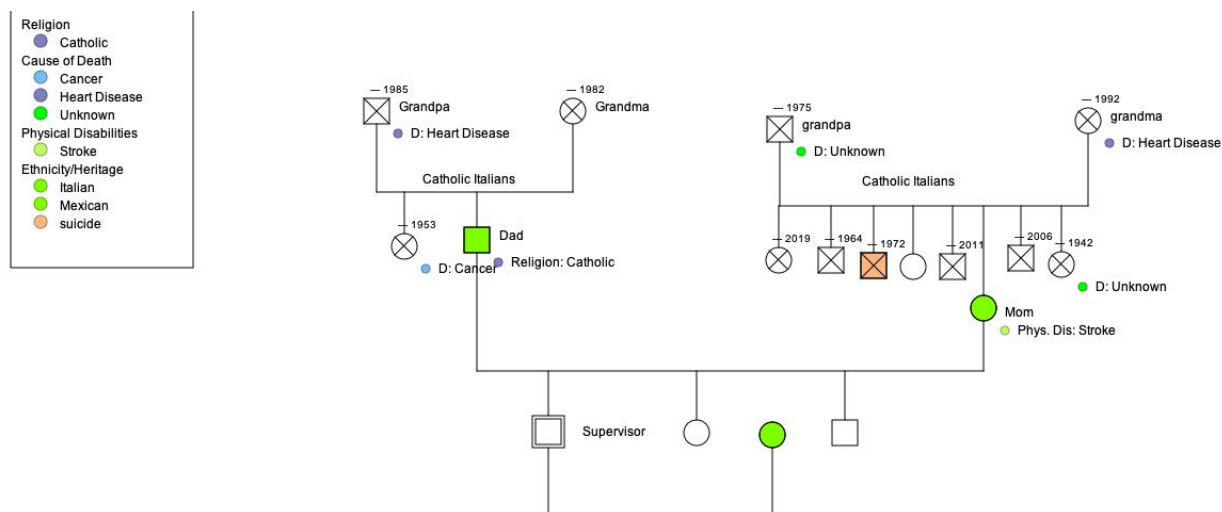


Figure 2. Partial supervisor's genogram

We explored what disagreements in the family of origin looked like and how they were resolved. Whom the student felt close to in the family was also explored. In other words, using a collaborative approach, we acknowledged experiences and perspectives of the student's world. With a client struggling with grief and loss, we explored how this affected the student and how to share, such as "I can understand the pain of experiencing loss as I have experienced loss. "Tell me more about your pain?". It helped to have a collaborative discussion when the self was being challenged and used in therapy. It also opens the door to discuss the cultures of various clients. Given that she had trouble opening up, I shared my first year in counseling and how I self-disclosed. It helped the student become comfortable with self-disclosure.

As the supervisor, the student's genogram is also a way to reflect on my own culture and learn more about her culture. There are many similarities between the two genograms. For example, I grew up in an Italian Catholic community with traditional roles were seen as important. A good example, was that women simply look after kids and keep the home. Males were authority figures and breadwinners. I have moved on from these values as the student has done. I reflected on how this was a normal process. The student's experiences were explored in order for me to understand the world while keeping my beliefs and values separate.

Although following the Catholic tradition was also crucial to this writer in childhood, unlike this student, I started to let go of some of these traditional views in my late teens and early twenties. However, when I self-reflect, I sometimes see myself falling back to old ways. Nevertheless, throughout our supervision, I have kept in mind the power difference between being a supervisor, being a male, and the values of being Catholic. It is essential not to take an elevated worldview but a stance fostering learning about a different culture by always being self-reflective.

As far as non-verbal cues, this student is very expressive. They stated that it is because of their cultural background. It was easy to read facial language because, for the most part, it matched what the student said. In providing telesupervision, it is hard for the writer to notice the whole body, so it was vital for me to check in with the student to make sure I had the right social cues. It was especially true when the student said something and facial expressions did not match. I did

check in to make sure that I was correct. I said, for example, that your voice sounds you are frustrated with the clients' lack of progress when you talk about this client, but your facial cues show concerns. Can you help me with that difference?

Discussion

Telesupervision allows for delivering client-centered, collaborative supervision. It allows the student to develop culturally sensitive skills and relationship dynamics to be managed. Getting to know the student before starting their practicum allowed the working alliance to build and reduce nervousness (Mehr et al., 2015). It also allowed us to continue to talk about goals for supervision. As trust continues to develop in supervision, it allows nervousness to ease and the supervisor and student to identify growth areas (Lau 2019; Maher et al., 2015).

Moreover, a collaborative approach reinforces a relationship grounded in mutual respect and trust and reinforces self-actualization (Lau, 2019). When the student brought different meanings into our discussions, the collaborative approach was helpful in co-construction meanings, mainly when the student talked about their family of origin and their worldview that was created from their family (Lau, 2019). Thus, this collaborative approach lends itself nicely to the client disclosing and two worldviews coming together.

A genogram was utilized to help the students understand their self. Using platforms such as Zoom allows for the sharing of the student's genogram. Having a visual representation of one's family structure and relational patterns gives the student and supervisor an understanding of how these patterns have been transmitted within generations. It also allows the supervisor to reinterpret things such as traditional roles around work. Traditional roles were what they knew but not something that was meant to be hurtful. It can also illustrate when anxiety escalated what to see the communication patterns (Larson, 1993). Although this student was older than the typical students that the writer has worked with in the past, as Larson (1993) mentions, developing self is a life-long process.

As a supervisor, having this knowledge also assists in isomorphism. Isomorphism happens in both the therapy and the supervisory relationships. Its importance helps the student develop their self as a therapist (Blasini-Mendez, 2019). When the supervisee in the case example had a client, who had similar interaction patterns, which were identified. The patterns were explored further, and dealt with it within the therapeutic relationship. In addition, the supervisors must be aware of their processes. When the supervisor discusses self, it adheres to guidelines similar to those used in therapy, facilitating the supervisory alliance. It promotes the supervisee's trust in the supervisor (Knight, 2012). Therefore, self-disclosure promotes a good supervisory alliance.

A strong working alliance allowed the student to talk about their family of origin, deal with isomorphism, and discuss multicultural issues (Yang, 2018; Mo). Because of the trust and the student's awareness of the supervisor's culture and the similarity and differences between the two cultures, students are at ease at discussing multicultural issues (Yang, 2018; Mo, 2021). Given all of this, Hutman and Ellis, (2020) suggest that students will talk about the culture from their worldview.

Conclusion

As supervision is moving to telesupervision, it is starting to address the challenges of distance and lack of telesupervision resources (Mo, 2021); more research needs to be done in this

area. In particular, more needs to be done to ensure that a supervisor relationship is strong (Twist, 2016). Although the internet's availability and quality may pose some issues, difficulties also exist regarding reading each other's non-verbal cues (Twist, 2016). It is essential to deal appropriately with non-verbal cues, especially when talking to supervisees from a different culture (Mo, 2021). However, given the move to telesupervision and the continuing advances in technology, measuring the working relationship formed during supervision is essential. Measuring tools such as the Supervision Working Alliance Inventory—Trainee Version and the Supervisor Multicultural Competence Inventory (Hutman & Ellis, 2020) are available. Future research may develop measurement tools to look at working alliance, power, attention to cultural issues, and appropriate disclosure (Pearce et al., 2013).

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