

Introduction

Compared with the now-voluminous literature on feminist psychotherapy, relatively little has been written about supervision and consultation from a specifically feminist standpoint. Although literature on feminist therapy practice began to be published in the early 1970s, the first scholarly work on the topic of supervision in feminist therapy was not published until well into feminist therapy's second decade (Porter, 1985). In the intervening 30 years, there has been only a small amount of formal scholarship or research on feminist supervision.

There has been slightly more research on the related topic of gender in supervision, with a tendency to focus on women as supervisors and supervisees (Worell & Remer, 2003), and on modalities for incorporating feminist and multicultural perspectives into the supervision process (Miville, 2013). Much of the work done since Porter's original publication has expanded upon and echoed the themes she initially identified. More recent work

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/14878-001>

Supervision Essentials for the Feminist Psychotherapy Model of Supervision, by L. S. Brown
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includes discussions of multicultural issues and of men as feminist therapists, reflecting the transformations in feminist therapy theory in the intervening three decades. But the literature on all related topics is sparse, and the construct of feminist supervision has not been fleshed out in great detail.

This paucity of literature does not reflect the realities of feminist practice. According to anecdotal evidence from decades of interaction with colleagues, many feminist therapists practice supervision, both in formal training settings, such as practicum and internship sites, and informally in private supervision and consultation practices. This book is long overdue.

This book attempts to bring together the wisdom of the extant literature on feminist perspectives in psychotherapy supervision, placing it in the context of the more extensive scholarship on feminist therapy theory, and exploring the supervisory practices most likely to emerge from the application of feminist therapy theory to the supervisory context. This book aims to assist supervisors who are feminist practitioners and feminist practitioners who are interested in the practice of supervision to have a more clearly delineated framework for the translation of feminist therapy constructs into the supervision setting. In addition, this volume attempts to demonstrate ways in which feminist therapy supervisory norms complement, contrast with, and challenge norms of other supervisory models. Finally, this volume invites psychotherapy supervisors who do not have a feminist perspective to consider how they might integrate some of the insights and methodologies of feminist supervision into their work.

FEMINIST ANALYSIS AND SUPERVISION

A hallmark of all good psychotherapy supervision is that all parties in the triad—therapist/trainee, client, and supervisor—are transformed in a positive manner by the supervisory experience. This volume advances the argument that the feminist emphases on analysis of power, the disruption of oppressive narratives that emerge in the psychotherapy process via an integrated analysis of experiences of oppression and dominance (Kanuha, 1990), and development of systemic methodologies for generating egalitarian relationships in therapy and supervision all function to increase the probability of positive psychotherapy outcomes. Feminist

psychology's attention to understanding and interrogating the experience of living a gendered life is an additional dimension differentiating feminist supervision from other approaches. Although gender may be addressed by other supervisors, it holds a central place in feminist analysis.

Feminist supervisory models are among those, including multicultural and critical psychology supervisory models (Miville, 2013), that explicitly identify the toxic effects of pervasive bias on the supervisory and psychotherapy processes. By its nature, feminist supervision embodies a commitment to the interrogation and disruption of manifest and non-conscious biased modes of relating, with an emphasis on the manner in which bias about gender and other aspects of identity affect relationship and psychotherapeutic dynamics. Feminist supervision has a sharpened focus on those dynamics in the therapist–supervisor–client relationship, particularly in the many instances in which any member of the supervision triad is devalued or disempowered by systemic aspects of social hierarchy. Feminist practices engage with and challenge assumptions about pathology or incompetence of the persons with lesser role power in those relationships. Feminist analysis is particularly attentive to the assumptions about normalcy and pathology that arise from biases and stereotypes about gender. Feminist supervision thus situates itself within the larger framework of feminist pedagogy in psychology (Enns & Forrest, 2005; Enns & Sinacore, 2005) as a liberatory project in which supervisor and supervisee join together to think critically about dominant cultural norms in the practice of psychotherapy.

The task of the feminist supervisor is not simply to train students in the practice of psychotherapy or the application of particular evidence-based interventions. Instead, the goal of a feminist supervision practice is to invite trainees to see how that practice upholds or subverts oppressive gendered norms in psychotherapy practice and in the larger social context. Similar to the goals of feminist psychotherapy, the feminist supervision model locates pathologies and failures of competence not in vulnerable individuals but in the rigidities and biases of the larger systems in which they struggle to exist.

Feminist therapy supervision is inherently developmental and strength based. It consequently attends to where both supervisor and supervisee

are in their professional and personal identity developments and is tailored to meet the specific needs of the individual supervisee while assuming that she or he will progress developmentally in the course of the supervisory relationship. (This process of professional development is exemplified by the supervision session depicted in this volume's companion DVD, *Feminist Therapy Supervision*, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 3. The session represents the 13th year of a supervisory relationship between the two parties.) Feminist supervision practice acknowledges strengths and skills brought to the experience by both parties, not simply those of the supervisor. The concept of *covision* (Porter & Vasquez, 1997), to be discussed in detail later, assumes a reciprocity and forms of mutuality occurring between feminist supervisors and supervisees. The power dynamics that are inherent in supervision relationships in formal training settings are not ignored, but the feminist supervisor is directly curious about how power can become more equalized as supervision progresses.

SUPERVISION OR CONSULTATION?

In this book I refer to supervision and consultation practices as supervision because both involve in vivo education in psychotherapy practice through various combinations of didactic information about treatment, exploration of the person of the therapist, and learning through modeling and discussion about applications of theories and models of intervention. However, these two functions occur within two different legal frameworks, which in turn affect the power dynamics in the relationship. Clarification of which kind of relationship is occurring is a first step in feminist supervision/consultation. Throughout this book, supervision and consultation are addressed as one, except for instances in which the dynamics created by evaluation, gatekeeping, and screening for impairment differentiate the applications of feminist principles to the specific sort of practice.

Supervision is defined as occurring in an educative context in which the supervisor has legal and ethical responsibility for the practice of the person being supervised; in this context, issues of evaluation and gatekeeping are omnipresent. Participation in supervision is required for the trainee to achieve educational or licensure goals, and successful completion

of supervised work is mandatory, not optional. In supervision, the supervisor's power is accentuated by these contextual and systemic variables.

Consultation is defined as occurring when a practitioner who is already fully licensed for practice voluntarily seeks supervisory support from a colleague who is neither ethically nor legally responsible for the consultee's practice. Participation in consultation is optional and voluntary, and there are no formal penalties for withdrawing from the consultative relationship. In a consultation relationship, issues of evaluation and gatekeeping are less salient, and a more clearly egalitarian model of interaction is possible. However, even in the context of consultation practice, concerns regarding practitioner impairment may arise, particularly in a jurisdiction in which mandatory report of impairment in health care practitioners is present. In addition, there are subtle factors having to do with reputation and client referral that can add to the power of the consultant even though she or he does not have the same power as a supervisor. The case example discussed in Chapter 3, deriving from this volume's companion DVD, is a consultation session with a junior colleague in which the relationship initially was one of formal supervision.

Each of these situations creates hierarchies of power that are distinctive and to some degree required by the legal frameworks surrounding the relationship. These hierarchies generate challenges for the effective application of feminist models of empowering and egalitarian relationships. For feminist practitioners, this amount of role power and control with clear consequences for noncompliance by the recipient of services generally is not a component of psychotherapy practice outside of work in prisons (Cole, Sarlund-Heinrich, & Brown, 2007; Quina & Brown, 2007). The feminist therapist considering offering supervision services must adapt her or his strategies for empowerment and the development of egalitarian relationship to those legal and ethical requirements.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS BOOK?

The intended audience for this book is diverse and includes practicing supervisors of any theoretical orientation who are interested in deepening their capacities to understand the dynamics of gender and power as

they influence the psychotherapy process. Because many psychotherapy supervisors today trained in a time when they were offered little or no exposure to feminist therapy theory and practice, they may be unaware of the degree to which feminist principles integrate well into most other models of psychotherapy or the many ways in which feminist constructs have become accepted as standards for good practice with their feminist roots often obscured. Having a clear notion of the paradigm informing an empowerment, egalitarian, collaborative model of practice can improve one's applications of that model. Feminist therapy theory is inherently integrative because it is concept driven, not intervention focused; thus, a feminist model of supervision lends itself well to integration into other supervisory models.

A second intended audience for this book is feminist therapists who have been practicing supervision without a clear model for how to implement feminist therapy principles into supervisory work. Because the literature on feminist therapy supervision is sparse and scattered across many different volumes and professional journals, it can be difficult for feminist therapists to familiarize themselves as completely as they would wish with the depth and breadth of what exists. It can also be daunting to uncover the pathways by which thinking about supervision has evolved in the field of feminist therapy during the past three decades. This book offers a convenient synthesis of the literature and encapsulates where the field stands in the early 21st century.

Finally, and perhaps most important, this book is for trainees in psychology and other psychotherapy professions. This book is for you for two reasons. First, I hope to give you an idea of what is reasonable to expect from a feminist therapy supervisor; I want to help you raise the bar for yourself and your supervisors so that the quality of your supervisory experiences can become more empowering and positive. Second, you are the supervisors of the future. Some of the best work and almost all of the research in the field of feminist therapy supervision is being written by graduate students and early career professionals whose grounding in feminist, multicultural, and liberatory models of psychotherapy has occurred from the beginning of their careers.

OVERVIEW OF THIS BOOK

In Chapter 1, I review the basic principles of feminist therapy theory. Research on feminist supervision has demonstrated that adherence to feminist values coupled with familiarity with the norms of feminist therapy is the best predictor of whether a supervisor is able to practice feminist supervision. Much of Chapter 1 reprises my earlier volume on feminist therapy (Brown, 2010), which is suggested reading for readers who are less familiar with the specifics of this orientation to practice.

Chapter 2 explores what I consider to be the essential dimensions and methodologies of feminist supervision practice. The chapter analyzes and synthesizes the work of many other theorists in feminist supervision, chiefly that of Natalie Porter and her colleagues. It explores specific issues that a feminist supervisor should strive to address in work with trainees.

Chapter 3 builds on this book's companion DVD, *Feminist Therapy Supervision*, using the work done on camera by Dr. Samantha Slaughter and me in a supervision session. The chapter introduces themes of common processes in feminist therapy supervision, illustrating it with specific examples from the companion DVD. The DVD and chapter address how a feminist supervisor actively practices the constructs of feminist supervision.

Chapter 4 explores some of the common challenges inherent in applying feminist principles to supervision and consultation. Using case examples drawn from my experiences as well as those of other experienced feminist supervisors, I illustrate how the feminist model of empowerment and egalitarian relationships with trainees lend themselves well, and are challenged by, supervisees who are struggling in a variety of ways with the learning process. The chapter also offers some ideas about how remediation for trainees who are struggling with skill and personal development can be generated within the feminist framework.

Chapter 5 reviews the still-sparse literature on feminist supervision. It draws on the findings of that literature to develop suggestions for research and discusses possible future directions for feminist supervision practice.

The book concludes with a brief list of suggested readings on the topic of feminist therapy supervision. The readings attempt to capture the conceptual roots of the field and current thinking.

Finally, in Appendixes A through C, the book includes several administrative forms that may be of practical use for supervisors. The Feminist Therapy Institute's Code of Ethics is also available for reference in Appendix D. These documents can also be downloaded from the American Psychological Association website (<http://pubs.apa.org/books/supp/brown>).

CONCLUSION

Feminist therapy supervision strongly reflects practices in feminist, multicultural, queer, and other critical psychologies. As such, it challenges all participants to attend to assumptions about the presence or absence of bias and the ways in which power distributes itself, both formally and informally, in the processes of education, training, and psychotherapy. Throughout this book readers are encouraged to engage critically with what I say, rather than simply accept it as authority; feminist practice cannot succeed unless the voices of all, including those officially defined as not-yet-authorities, are made authoritative. As I say to my supervisee in the companion DVD, "Yes, argue with me!" My hope is that your reading of this work will empower your own authority as you consider how to practice the feminist model of supervision.