A Journey Toward Feminist Supervision: A Dual Autoethnographic Inquiry

Melissa J. Fickling
University of Memphis, mfickling@niu.edu

Jodi L. Tangen
North Dakota State University, jodi.tangen@ndsu.edu

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore our development as new supervisors learning to apply feminist supervision principles. Autoethnography was used to analyze author histories and learning processes over the course of one academic semester. Using personal narratives and critical reflections, we investigated our work of supervising beginning-level supervisees from a feminist perspective, and embodying our developing feminist supervisor skills and identities. Our inquiry was informed by our encounters with supervisees, supervisors, and each other. Basic definitions of supervision and feminist supervision frame the study, and results are shared in light of current research and theory.

Keywords

feminist supervision, clinical supervision, autoethnography

For both novice and expert counselors, the words *clinical supervisor* may evoke images of knower and known. To supervise the work of another suggests we know something – or at least, are able to see something – that supervisees do not. Assuming this epistemological stance of knower – in therapy, supervision, or research – requires choice and invites self-awareness and reflexivity. To supervise from a feminist stance invites critical reflection on this knower-known dichotomy and requires even greater attention to context, subjectivity, difference, power, and mutuality.

Although researchers have explored various tenets of feminist supervision (Gentile, Ballous, Roffman, & Ritchie, 2009; Mangione, Mears, Vincent, & Hawes, 2011; Nelson, Gizara, Hope, Phelps, Steward, & Weitzman, 2006; Szymanski, 2003), there exists a lack of research exploring doctoral student supervisors' experiences of feminist supervision with beginning-level supervisees. Furthermore, this has yet to be completed using authoethnographic methodology, a self-critical, emotional, and relational writing process (de Preez, 2008; Meekums, 2008). We believe that such an endeavor will enrich and extend our knowledge of the scope and context of feminist supervision across supervisor and supervisee developmental levels. To that end, the questions we sought to explore in this autoethnographic project were the following: How do we undertake this process of becoming a supervisor who is feminist? What does it mean to be a feminist supervisor with beginning-level supervisees, and what does it look like for us? How can we embody and claim this identity as a supervisor who is feminist? To explore these, we first turn to the basic definitions of supervision and feminist supervision.

Supervision

Clinical Supervision

Clinical supervision has been defined as "a process whereby consistent observation and evaluation of the counseling process is provided by a trained and experienced professional who recognizes and is competent in the unique body of knowledge and skill required for professional development" (Haynes, Corey, & Moulton, 2003, p. 3). In this manuscript, we focus exclusively on supervision conducted by doctoral students (ourselves at the time of the study). Doctoral students face unique challenges as beginning-level supervisors. Because they have yet to establish a strong supervisor identity, they may struggle with a certain sense of role shock (Watkins, 1990, 1993, 1994). Furthermore, it may be difficult for them to manage multiple roles, establish a supervisory stance, navigate their own self-doubt, and manage dynamics with other supervisors (Gazzola, De Stefano, Thériault, & Audet, 2013). Although researchers (e.g., Gazzola et al., 2013; Watkins, 1990, 1993, 1994) have clearly identified the struggles of student supervisors, they have yet to explore these from a feminist theoretical framework, which adds an additional lens through which to view the supervision enterprise. Although both the feminist and non-feminist supervision literature address many of the same areas (e.g., relationship, power, diversity), feminist supervision scholarship and practice tends to do so in a more deliberate way with particular sensitivity to social context.

Feminist Supervision

Feminist supervision has been defined as "a collaborative relationship that is characterized by mutual respect, genuine dialogue, attention to social contextual factors, and responsible action" (Szymanski, 2003, p. 221). However, defining a feminist approach to clinical supervision is complex, in part because feminist discourse extends beyond gender to include race, culture, class,

sexuality, and other intersecting facets of identity (Falender, 2009; Gentile et al., 2010; Nelson et al., 2006). The most commonly cited themes of feminist supervision include a focus on relationship; an attempt to balance power despite the evaluative nature of supervision; an effort to model social activism; and attention to various forms of diversity, oppression, and privilege (Falender, 2009; Gentile et al., 2009; Green & Dekkers, 2010; Mangione et al., 2011; Murphy & Wright, 2005; Nelson et al., 2006; Prouty, 2001; Szymanski, 2003, 2005).

The discrepancies between the traditional definition of supervision and the feminist definition of supervision illuminate the tension existing for supervisors, especially student supervisors seeking to establish their identities. Furthermore, our initial review of the literature left us with the awareness of a disconnect between theory and practice. For example, there is disagreement between supervisors and supervisees on the extent to which supervisors utilize feminist supervision practices (Green & Dekkers, 2010). Mangione et al. (2011) found that despite the presence of feminist values among many participants, discussions of power and the relationship in supervision were uncommon, and supervisees desired more of these discussions from their supervisors. Thus, with conflicting epistemological definitions of supervision and a lack of guidance on how feminist supervision interventions are practiced, student supervisors may be lost as to how to approach concretely feminist supervision or whether a feminist approach can even be adequately operationalized.

Supervision can be a paradoxical endeavor (e.g., empowerment and evaluation), yet we are encouraged not to shy away from the resulting tension. Richardson (2000) pointed out that "one's subjectivity is shifting and contradictory, not stable, fixed, and rigid" (p. 9). In reality, there is no consensus on what feminist practice in supervision should look like. In fact, some argue that it is imperative that supervisors first "embrace the tensions, uncertainty, and discomfort inherent to a

discussion of the potentially conflictual issues of race, culture, feminism, and privilege" (Nelson et al., 2006, p. 107) before attempting to delineate one model of feminist multicultural supervision. Thus, although student supervisors may feel lost trying to navigate and practice supervision from a feminist stance, it is important that they lean into and embrace the emerging tensions. As doctoral students and new supervisors, we found ourselves struggling to navigate the multifaceted tensions associated with supervision and feminism. To be with the tension and discomfort with integrity and curiosity, we decided to conduct an autoethnographic study where we could nurture our voices, explore subjective ways of being and knowing, practice and hone our skills, and navigate the complexities of supervising from a feminist perspective. Our research questions were as follows: (a) What is the process of developing as feminist supervisors for two doctoral students?; (b) In what ways do we achieve or fall short of the tenets of feminist supervision?; and (c) How do we come to think of ourselves as both supervisors and feminists in this context? It is important to note that while at times we desired to uncover concrete behaviors we could point to and say, "This is feminist supervision" we began this investigation expecting more shades of gray and questioning ourselves, "Is this feminist supervision?" Thus, our goal in this study was to highlight processes rather than attempt to define a set of best practices.

Methodology

In autoethnography, the researcher analyzes personal stories and experiences to understand herself as part of a culture (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011) – in this case the culture of counseling and counselor education in the United States. McIlveen (2007) said "autoethnography offers practitioners a means of contributing to theory and practice while remaining genuine to their individual self and practice contexts" (p. 308). In autoethnography, the practice of writing as a method of inquiry and discovery is empowering and rigorous (Richardson, 2000; Wright, 2009;

Wright & Cunningham, 2013). The researcher's subjectivity is seen as a legitimate source of knowledge and yet there always remains more to be known (Meekums, 2008; Richardson, 2000). In the current study, we took a personal narrative approach to autoethnography (Ellis et al., 2011) and disseminate our results alongside current literature on related feminist supervision concepts.

The question of where to begin is one that both novice and seasoned researchers often face with varying degrees of anxiety. Through the use of autoethnography, the researcher can use her experience as an entry point by connecting theory and practice (McIlveen, 2007), a prominent practice in both feminist theory and autoethnography. With this theory-practice awareness, we stepped into a supervisory role for the first time and wanted to try to do more than claim a feminist stance; we wanted to ensure we were practicing from one. We are all always in a state of becoming, but our particular place as soon-to-be counselor educators was thick with potential and tension and struggle. The weight of knowing our voices would soon have access to more spaces through teaching, supervising, and writing seemed to require that we critically reflect on what we were saying and whether we were bearing the responsibility of these new roles sensitively and ethically.

Participants

At the time of the study, we were both doctoral student supervisors, responsible for supervising an average of five master's-level supervisees in a mid-sized, southeastern university in the United States. MJF identified as a 30-year-old White woman and JLT identified as a 32-year-old White woman. Although this study developed over about one year, the data collection and analysis was concentrated in one semester, approximately 15 weeks in duration. Although they were not direct participants in this autoethnographic inquiry, our supervisor and our supervisees were in relationship with us – our supervisor a White woman and our supervisees Black, White, and Latina women and men.

Data Collection

There were both deliberate and organic processes at work since our initial inquiry into feminist supervisor development began. Our exposure to foundational writing in feminist theory and therapy began in our core and cognate coursework in our doctoral program, highlighting our beginner developmental positions as both feminist scholars and supervisors. Although the results from this study extend the entirety of our lives, we relied on two primary data points throughout our authoethnographic journey: (a) focused conversations with each other and (b) reflections in our individual journals. First, through our frequent conversations (at coffee shops, walking trails, classrooms, therapy rooms), we sought mentorship from each other about how ethically to mold this interest into an inquiry project. We also respectfully discussed and examined our relationships and experiences with others: families of origin, supervisors-supervisees, teachers-students, mentors-mentees, counselors-clients, and friendships (Kassan, Fellner, Jones, Palandra, & Wilson, 2015). We sought refuge in each other through mutual empathy even when we could not save one another from the self-doubt we encountered as we stumbled in our supervisory development. We could and heartily did celebrate with one another when we felt empowered and felt our supervisees becoming empowered as well. We soothed each other with validation and laughter when the barrage of inner questions became too loud. We listened to one another and verbalized our mutual admiration, and we challenged each other to more fully embody the values we cherished.

Second, we used journals to document and reflect upon on our lives and past developmental experiences related to feminist supervisor development. We referred back to our coffee-shop notes when reflecting individually. In our individual journals, we established early learning goals aligned with feminist supervisor behaviors (Szymanski, 2003), and reflected upon our progress. We posted questions to ourselves which we first posed in our documented conversations. Some of these

questions included the following: How do we balance the collaborative nature of feminism with the gatekeeping role of a supervisor? How do we provide structure, safety, and guidance, and, at the same time, allow space for supervisees to exercise their own voice and power? How do we work from a feminist perspective in a hierarchical structure? How do we work within our professional identity/role, while at the same time, remain critical of it? How do we teach beginning-level supervisees, while at the same time, be open to their knowledge and their experiences? We were mindful to document only major themes of our discussions and not individual details in order to protect the privacy of those close people in our lives who most influenced our identity development and areas for growth.

Procedures

Before beginning the study, we discussed and acknowledged our training and socialization that we were encouraged to carry as truths. Our inherited assumptions were (a) beginning-level supervisees need more structure in the form of direct instruction; (b) we, as supervisors, have a duty to be gatekeepers of the profession and ensure only capable and psychologically healthy individuals graduate from our program; and (c) supervisors need to assume – and be comfortable with – a level of power. Throughout our process, we continually pondered these assumptions, attempting to raise our own levels of critical consciousness and personal integrity. After we had analyzed our narratives, we asked a former supervisor who worked with us during the data collection phase of the study to review this manuscript to verify and validate the authenticity of the accounts. She agreed to review the manuscript and her feedback helped to clarify parts of the study and affirmed the veracity of the personal experiences shared below.

Data Analysis

Several months after the conclusion of our supervisor roles as doctoral students, we revisited our collected data. We separately reviewed our notes and individual journals and each selected our most relevant or poignant narratives. Next, we contrasted our narratives to the themes which emerged from our literature review and decided to organize our results around four major themes of feminist supervision: (a) the supervisory relationship, (b) power, (c) multiculturalism, activism, and social justice, and (d) evaluation. We wrote final reflections after reading the narratives to provide closure to the analysis. By presenting our autobiographical results alongside the literature review, we represent our positions as doctoral students immersed in the dominant discourses of the field while excavating our own subjectivity within them. Before transitioning to the results, we provide background information on ourselves as individuals to contextualize and illuminate our results. (Throughout the remainder of the manuscript, we include italics to describe our experiences. Quotations marks and indentations denote direct citations from our journal entries.)

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Results

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Background Information

As previously stated, an important component of authoethnography is the ability to contextually situate theory within the framework on one's life. Similarly, the practice of feminism relies heavily on contextual variables (Szymanski, 2003). Thus, we begin our results with descriptions of our life entrances into this realm.

MJF: I am 21 years old, sitting in the orientation session of the counseling graduate program I have entered at considerable risk and expense. The decision to move from my small southern town to attend graduate school in a large, urban, Midwestern city was difficult and full

of familial tension. One of my professors informs me that from here on out, I will be continually assessed by my professors and supervisors who will meet at the end of each semester to discuss my suitability to be a counselor. This process is called gatekeeping. By choosing to remain in the program I am providing my informed consent to undergo such scrutiny for the protection of future clients. I move through graduate school feeling watched and judged.

Later, I am 23 years old and I am starting to define my clinical interests. I am fascinated by people's experience with work but few training sites integrate mental health and career counseling in a way that fits with my professional identity. Mostly it seems that people want to tell job seekers what they're doing wrong, how to find work the "right way," and how to move up a corporate ladder. I don't know it yet, but my working-middle class background will marginalize me at times in this counseling specialty which embraces an upper-middle class mentality. During practicum, I paid out of pocket for the supervision I required. Paying to bring in a qualified supervisor was the only way to work in this specialty and also maintain my credentials and identity as a counselor.

Toward the end of my Master's program, I accepted a position at my top choice internship site. Not only am I doing counseling, I am also receiving clinical supervision at no extra cost to me – a notable improvement. By landing this training opportunity I feel I've proven to some naysaying faculty that career counseling requires real clinical skill and good supervision. However, supervision quickly comes to feel like a nightmare of accusation, judgment, correction, and scrutiny. The kind of counselor (and person) I was and wanted to be seemed to be unacceptable. My supervisor used the metaphor of flipping real estate to describe clinical supervision. "Just when you get them the way you want them, all fixed up, it's time to let them go."

This offhand comment during a coffee break validated exactly how I'd felt as a supervisee: I was an object to be fixed, flipped, bought, and sold.

JLT: It is impossible to write about my earlier experiences as a supervisee without nesting them within the context of my overall identity and life history. I am a white, educated woman who grew up in a small town in the northern United States. Looking back, I am 5, 9, 13, 19… I earnestly desire to be a "good girl," and therefore, accepted by others. I quietly introject the broad societal expectations of females (modest, polite, self-sacrificing) without questioning them or even being aware of their implicit and insipid influences. When forced to stand in some conviction, I realize that "I don't really know what my voice is."

Venturing into my doctoral training, I am in my early 30s, and I still carry this "good girl" façade with me, remaining rather conflict avoidant and eager to please. One very influential faculty supervisor challenges my notions of what it means to be a strong woman, to stand in paradox and ambiguity, and to act with the interesting blend of confidence and humility. I watch her closely, puzzled by the way she seems to embrace feminist ideals without even mentioning them. At 31, she challenges me to speak and does not rescue me when I falter. At 32, she explores existential crises with me, acknowledging the vulnerability in our shared humanity. At 33, she holds the space while I directly confront her with my anger. For one of the first times, I notice myself becoming more comfortable questioning authority (including her) and associated hierarchical systems. I feel different somehow, stronger. Throughout this process, I also am learning what it means to become *the authority figure – the supervisor.*

The Supervisory Relationship

A safe and supportive relationship is a foundational component of feminist supervision (Mangione et al., 2011; Prouty, 2001). Intentional focus on collaboration and mutuality through

directly addressing and examining hierarchical factors in the supervisory relationship distinguishes this from less collaborative approaches (Falender, 2009). This mutuality can begin with informed consent and collaborative goal development. Mangione et al. (2011) found that although reflexivity about the supervisory relationship characterizes a relational supervision, none of the dyads in their study discussed the relationship explicitly during observed sessions. Through individual interview data they found, "While there was reflexivity about the supervision, there was almost none about the relationship, and many supervisees clearly yearned for more of that" (p. 152).

  MJF: Moving into the supervisory role was not something I took on lightly. I knew that, at the very least, I did not want to replicate the objectifying experience I had during my counseling internship. I began my supervision work as conscious of feminist practice as one could be. I could recite the empirical literature and constructs to anyone who cared to hear it. I created an agenda for my initial sessions: sign the consent to record, sign the professional disclosure statement, build rapport, explore thoughts/feelings about supervision, describe supervisor's approach to and goals for supervision, discuss supervisee's learning goals for supervision, discuss evaluation, review expectations for clinic logistics and procedures. All of this is discussed in the first hour. Asking the supervisee about learning goals in the first session of their first supervision experience seems important to do, but it turned out my supervisees weren't sure what goals they were supposed to have. I think they have an excellent point as this is their very first encounter as supervisee. Seeing such a task-oriented list intended to structure the building of an egalitarian relationship seems almost comical to me, but at the same time, leads me to wonder how my authenticity is perceived by the supervisee. One asks me directly about my reference to feminist supervision in my professional disclosure statement and I share some textbook definitions which I am beginning to

internalize. My intuition tells me she knows I am genuine in my intentions for this relationship to be mutually empowering and supportive of her growth, but this remains my only evidence.

JLT: I struggle to reconcile the hierarchical nature of supervision and the relational nature of feminism and somehow bridge the gap toward feminist supervision. Reflected in my journal,

In my mind, feminist supervision is centered on an egalitarian relationship… but I feel as though supervision is fundamentally non-egalitarian. The very premise that supervisors evaluate supervisees and – essentially – hold their careers in their hands is non-egalitarian… Thus, my relationships with my supervisee aren't egalitarian.

My dissonance grows and predominates my sessions. At the same time, I am studying relational depth for my dissertation, and researchers (e.g., Lambers, 2006, 2013) have highlighted the poignant and transformative impact of relational depth in the supervisory relationship. I aspire to create meaningful relationships with my supervisees by respecting who they are as individuals, supporting them through the ups and downs of counseling, and encouraging their emerging counseling styles. However, I cannot deny the hierarchical nature of supervision and I struggle with the tension therein. Supervisors of other non-feminist models of supervision might capitalize upon the expert role within a hierarchical supervisor-supervisee dynamic, essentially telling supervisees what to do. Developmentally, I realize that this may be important for supervisees at times, and yet, I also strive to practice humility, honor supervisees' experiences, and foster an atmosphere of open dialogue. In practice, then tension between all of these strivings leaves me continually questioning and reflecting upon my intentions at any given point in time.

Power

The literature on feminist supervision highlights power analysis in the relationship as a crucial component of feminist supervision (Mangione et al., 2011; Murphy & Wright, 2005;

Szymanski, 2003, 2005). Since the personal is political, it follows that addressing power in the supervisory context may begin to affect the acknowledgement of unequal power outside of supervision, leading to social change - a foundational goal of feminist practice. This is in contrast to a non-feminist acknowledgement of power differences which may be more limited in impact.

Empirical evidence reveals that power analysis may not play out as explicitly in feminist supervision as feminist theory would indicate it should. Murphy and Wright (2005) acknowledged that both supervisors and supervisees have power in the supervisory relationship and sought to directly examine supervisees' experience of power in supervision. Supervisees acknowledged awareness of their own positive use of power, reported that supervisors' positive use of power promoted supervisee growth (e.g., empowering supervisee, promoting an atmosphere of safety), and reported few experiences with negative uses of power by themselves or their supervisors (Murphy & Wright, 2005). Mangione et al. (2011) found that supervisors tended to downplay the importance of power, and that power was not discussed in the sessions they observed. In regard to a truly collaborative, relational supervisory relationship, Mangione et al. (2011) said, "Actually naming the issue of power and the unequal power status is essential" (p. 163). Hoover and Morrow (2016) found that supervisees at a feminist-multicultural training site questioned whether true shared power was possible in the supervisory context, even though they felt their supervisors generally aspired to the ideal.

MJF: I found that my self-efficacy, or empowerment, as a supervisor went up and down depending on both my perception of my supervisees' growth or stagnation and my perception of my peers' assessments of my supervisees. My work as a supervisor was being assessed by people who I was convinced were far more competent than I. There was no shortage of parallel process in the various roles and relationships I held as a supervisor-in-training. Like my supervisees, I

was struggling to learn and apply new skills (awkwardly, in most cases). My supervisees and I were like novice dancers learning to work together. I felt I was given the role "to lead" – in my perhaps overblown sense of responsibility I tried too hard, not always listening to my partner, focused too much on myself. I was, at times, rigid, controlling, in my head, and not in my body. At other times, there were moments of connection and rhythm between myself and supervisees that I hoped would positively shape our development as individuals and as a supervisory dyad. Even so, I felt my attention to the feminist behaviors as outlined in my learning goals was paying off as well as could be expected. These goals were taken directly from the Feminist Supervision Scale (FSS; Szymanski, 2003) and were helpful in guiding my intentions and behaviors early in the semester. Two referred specifically to power: (a) Model accountability in the use of power and (b) Attend to power relations in the supervisory context. These behaviors were at times made explicit by me (e.g., asking supervisees directly about their sense of empowerment as counselors and supervisees) and at other times were implicit (e.g., asking women supervisees to voice their thoughts and impressions in group supervision when men were unknowingly dominating the discourse). The conscious effort I once placed on "doing feminism" began to become internalized, to the point that I felt able to just be *a feminist supervisor. Contemplating the doing-being dialectic is nearly always useful when I'm feeling the need to shift my perspective or approach. As someone who defaults to doing, reminders to* just be *are empowering.*

JLT: My early experiences of becoming a supervisor are wrought with questions about power. I exist in the relational-cultural theoretical tension between power over *and* power with *(Miller, 2008). I continually try to navigate the tension between confidently owning what feels like a powerful supervisory role and ensuring that my supervisees have a voice and the space to develop their own authentic counselor identities. My pre-semester assumptions reflect this tension.*

Supervisors shouldn't capitalize upon this (abuse power) and yet at the same time, they shouldn't work to eradicate it too early either (abdicate power). Rather, they need to be sensitive to supervisees' needs at any given point in time, responding promptly when supervisees need them, and yet at the same time, encouraging appropriate independence.

I wane back and forth between feeling powerless (not firmly guiding supervisees when needed) and too powerful (directing supervisees too much). At some point in the semester, I begin to reconcile and stand in the tension amongst supervision, feminism, and power.

I am realizing more and more that power doesn't have to be scary or manipulative or 'bad' by any means. I think that assuming my own sense of power means that I can be more relational and understanding. I can send the message that 'I am very invested in your process and will hold you to a high – yet fair – standard based on what you tell me you need. I value you and want to help you become your best self.' I think there's a lot of power in that.

Multiculturalism, Activism, and Social Justice

Feminist supervision is focused on more than issues related to gender; all forms of cultural difference are acknowledged. Falender (2009) noted, "Although most traditional definitions of supervision allude to the power differential, they typically omit attention to oppression, privilege, and social context, which are central to feminist models" (p. 27). Diversity and social context (DSC) is a core dimension in Szymanski's (2003) definition of feminist supervision and is relevant to theory, case conceptualization, and both the therapeutic and supervisory relationships. Nelson et al. (2006) described several personal experiences discussed by supervisors around the intersection of feminism and cultural diversity. They acknowledged a great deal of what they called "feminist silence/white privilege" which results from fear of oppressing others and a desire to

remain safe from conflict. Historically, feminism relied on assumptions of a universal experience of being a woman which created barriers to addressing issues of race (Nelson et al., 2006).

MJF: Despite my best intentions, I have participated in the violence of feminist silence/white privilege. In preparing this manuscript, JLT and I wrote our narratives separately from the literature review. We struggled with how to approach an autoethnography but decided to write in an organic, reflective, and unstructured way in our journals. Our training as writers favors linear, "logical," and detached analyses. Upon reading our reflections, we noticed our narratives fell nicely into sections like The Supervisory Relationship, Power, *and* Evaluation. *But Multiculturalism? Silence. We are complex cultural people who openly acknowledged and broached our and our supervisees' identities, so why and how did we have nothing to say on this topic? We are two cis, straight, White women. Perhaps multiculturalism, a core facet of feminist supervision practice, was an afterthought for us. Perhaps it was so interwoven into our conversations about power that we failed to see it as its own important and distinct issue. As someone who is always wanting to think and act my way through things, perhaps being more explicit and mindful of multiculturalism seemed to be something that I couldn't* do *much about. As long as I broached the* fact *of multiculturalism – for client, counselor, and supervisor – I was doing a "good enough" job. If this was, indeed, the unconscious process happening in my development, it falls too short of fulfilling the multicultural intent of feminist practice and I like to think that I wouldn't accept "good enough" from a supervisee who I knew was capable of greater depth and complexity. The absence of this facet in my narrative speaks loudly and challenges me to seek greater accountability in this domain.*

JLT: I re-read my journal again. Surely I reflected on multiculturalism, right? I am humbled by my lack of reflection in this area. I realize, once again, the extent of my privilege and

the importance of continuing to reflect upon how I am incorporating – or failing to incorporate – tenets of multiculturalism in my supervision practice. I feel somewhat defeated by this insight, and yet at the same time, it motivates me to be much more attentive and aware in the future. My shortcoming in this area is noted in the limited scope of my reflection here as well.

Activism and social justice are defining characteristics of feminist supervision (Falender, 2009; Gentile et al., 2009; Green & Dekkers, 2010; Szymanski, 2003, 2005). Szymanski's (2005) conceptualization includes the feminist advocacy and activism dimension, "which refers to educating supervisees about feminist issues and feminist therapy and to encouraging active involvement in social change aimed at eliminating oppression and improving women's lives" (p. 731). Green and Dekkers (2010) suggested that if supervisors are not explicit about their social activism, supervisees may be unaware of this critical component of a true feminist practice. Gentile et al. (2009) focused much of their attention on the importance of supervisors' modeling and mentoring outside of the supervision session, stating that supervision must be expanded to "include those activities that can promote social change through inquiry and action" (p. 140). They suggested supervisors can take an educator role on social justice issues, mentor students in social justice research, and be involved in the training and continuing education of other supervisors. Falender (2009) agreed, stating that "through modeling social activism, by engaging in social policy and public service, supervisors model for supervisees future roles through addressing oppression and privilege" (p. 35).

MJF: Like Multiculturalism, none of our narratives or past experiences fit clearly into the domains of activism and social justice. How can this be? We are women who consider ourselves feminist clinical supervisors and here we are skimming over a core principle. We may try to tell ourselves that focusing on activism and social justice with novice counselors-in-training is not

developmentally appropriate. Perhaps we can justify a hyper focus on basic clinical skills training. Claiming something is not developmentally appropriate can be a cop-out. It is like the Get Out of Jail Free *card of clinical supervision when not applied thoughtfully. It is clear that modeling my activism and bringing it into supervision was and still is my biggest area for growth. As someone who wishes to study advocacy as a primary role of therapists, the relative weakness of my practice in this area humbles and challenges me. The clinical tone of my reflections in these areas show how far I've yet to grow. I have clearly not embodied these ideals – they exist only in my imagination – this process is showing me the many ways I am still enacting my socialization and failing to question my privilege.*

JLT: I continue to grapple with the premises of social justice and activism – from the lenses of both supervision and feminism. I find myself quietly observant, closely watching others who seem to intuitively embrace social justice practices and live them in their everyday encounters. I realize that this is yet another journey for me: learning to embody my own social justice inclinations and practice them with personal integrity.

Evaluation

Falender (2009) pointed out the competing roles of the feminist supervisor as someone who must provide both challenge and support, and protect clients while focusing on the supervisee. She addressed issues of evaluation, particularly when supervisees are not meeting performance standards. In order to avoid potential disempowerment when supervisee performance is deemed unacceptable, formal, written procedures about evaluation should be provided to supervisees at the beginning of the supervised experience, similar to an informed consent process between counselor and client. This gives supervisees as much information up front as possible, and provides some assurance of due process if performance standards are not met (Falender, 2009; Mangione et al.,

2011). Interestingly, none of the supervisees in Murphy and Wright's (2005) study described evaluation in negative terms, perhaps indicating that instances of negative use of supervisor power around evaluation did not occur for these participants. The supervisees in Hoover and Morrow's (2016) study remained always aware of the evaluative nature of supervision in their social justice oriented practicum which at times led them not to disclose certain thoughts or defer to their supervisors even when feeling overextended.

MJF: Even though evaluation is an ongoing process from the moment students begin a counseling program, the intimacy and intense attention that happens in individual supervision, as well as the summative evaluation that results in a passing or failing grade, is a unique and often disorienting experience (for both parties as I am beginning to learn). I was intentional about acknowledging my evaluative role with my supervisees in our first sessions. I noted the paradox in claiming to work toward an egalitarian relationship at the same time holding the supervisees to meet certain levels of competencies based on an evaluation form neither of us created. I couldn't help but remember my own experiences of being evaluated "lower" than some of my peers in my early counselor development, despite feeling like I was fighting for the right to be an authentic counselor. No doubt this informs my desire to give counselors as much room as I can give them while still upholding standards. I find myself wanting to apologize for these narrow, Eurocentric standards but know that this would undermine a system. I have faith in the system because it produced me and assures me that it exists for the protection of clients – hard to argue with. How much of my faith in this system is due to my White privilege? Questioning such a system is questioning some of the most sacred and established tenets of our profession.

JLT: Gatekeeping is difficult for me. My musings at the beginning of the semester highlight this difficulty.

When I do evaluations with students, I encourage them to tell me what they think, and based on their perceptions, I will change their scores on various components of the evaluation. At the same time, though, I would imagine that at some point I am going to need to wield my power if I need to step into the gatekeeping role. How is feminist supervision applied in those types of cases? Can it be applied? I'm having trouble holding these tensions together.

Conclusions

Student supervisor voices have been missing from the literature and need to be represented if we truly want to understand supervisor development (Kassan et al., 2015). Through this autoethnographic project, we have made progress in bridging a theory-practice gap, at least within ourselves, but also found glaring holes in our awareness and in our practice which highlight ways in which we can reenact the very oppressive structures which feminist practice aims to disrupt. We failed to translate our knowledge of intersectionality to practice – adhering to siloes of race and gender. This project highlights some first steps of expanding our awareness and shines a light on where we need to focus moving forward. We hope that our honesty and intentionality will prove useful to readers who are just starting their trajectories as feminist supervisors. Our introspective intentionality took effort and risk as we confronted our resistance to some feminist supervisor behaviors and learned to embrace others. We can accept and acknowledge our power as supervisors while also critiquing the knower-known dichotomy, which can be easily exaggerated in a supervisory context. We have not found a way to be supervisors without power, but believe we can use it positively without the diminishing the power of the supervisee who also brings her subjectivity to the relationship.

Both supervisors and supervisees desire authentic, egalitarian supervisory relationships. Mangione et al. (2011) "saw a sense of connectedness, energy, and zest in the more collaborative, authentic, reflexive relationships" (p. 159) they studied. By striving toward the ideals of feminist practice in supervision, supervisors and supervisees may be able to achieve more meaningful and transformative supervisory relationships, which could have implications for the therapeutic relationship as well (Mangione et al., 2011). Supervisors, however, are ultimately responsible for starting conversations with supervisees about power and cultural differences, which can open the door to authenticity and mutuality (Falender, 2009; Mangione et al., 2011; Nelson et al., 2006). As students ourselves, we felt both powerless and powerful in terms of hierarchy – somewhere between rank of faculty and student. As we move forward in our careers, our rank will be less ambiguous and we will need to be even more vocal about questioning and shirking "power over" so that we can create "power with" our supervisees (Miller, 2008). Examining and confronting the structures and norms of clinical supervision is a worthy and risky practice and in doing so we potentially open up to deeper levels of authenticity. We hope that our contributions through these autoethnographies shed light on important processes that may be useful to other developing feminist supervisors.

MJF: I can say that this project has generated both internal and external knowledge. The process of reflecting, writing, and sharing is productive and important for supervisors. The transformations that occurred as I utilized autoethnography feel foundational, like I cannot unlearn what I have learned here. The relational connection and mutual experience of undertaking this self-analysis with a friend and colleague deepened the experience even further. My long-standing preferences for hyper-independence, privacy, and solitude are not changed but writing about the struggle to embrace vulnerability and connection is proving to be a valuable one. Seeing

my strivings and intentions on paper makes me slightly more accountable to myself and the people with whom I work. In some ways, I feel further away from my ideal image of a feminist supervisor, but at least I am beginning to see my shortcomings. I am starting with myself and asking myself the questions I intend to ask supervisees (Bauman, Acker-Hocevar, & Talbot, 2012). I am "locating the researcher in the research" (du Preez, 2008, p. 509).

JLT: Deciding to step forward with this autoethnography in a more public manner has been a bit of a painstaking decision for me. As I perused my written reflections, I heavily contemplated the implications of such self-disclosure. However, in the midst of such weighty consideration, I identified the core fear: vulnerability. Interestingly (and not surprisingly), my own struggle parallels the heart of the feminist striving, as individuals across sexes and genders, across races and ethnicities, across socioeconomic divides and religious differences, find the courage somewhere within to stand in greater authenticity and speak their voices. I am reminded of feminist Audre Lorde's (2007) words, "I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood" (p. 40).

Moving Forward

The research questions and corresponding methods used in this study allow for limited generalizability, but carry the potential for a meaningful impact to some readers. One notable limitation is that the current study is focused solely on supervisors' experiences. By claiming a feminist stance and sharing our process with our colleagues, we risk misrepresenting feminist supervision altogether, particularly due to the ways in which our White privilege permitted us to perpetuate silence around key feminist practices. We invite more feminist supervisors to share their developmental process so that we can better understand the ways in which oppressive,

dominant practices can be transformed. Future researchers may consider investigating the experiences of entry-level supervisees who work with feminist supervisors, as well as look at co-constructed narratives between supervisor and supervisee working within feminist frameworks (Pack, 2013). The FSS (Szymanski, 2003) offers a quantitative measure that can be used in a number of creative ways to structure future research on feminist supervision practice.

MJF: My history has placed me near the center of dominant culture and my choices have led me to explore the margins, but I have yet to take up residence in one place. My horizons of exploration continue to broaden and I am becoming comfortable existing in multiple locations. Holding this tension is part of the work as a critical feminist scholar. I will do this through ongoing self-examination and honesty and through questioning assumptions around the training of new counselors. Perhaps this project is my attempt to seek accountability and connect emotionally with an anonymous reader (Wright, 2009). There is both safety and risk in that (Pack, 2013). I know, though, that I alone carry the responsibility as the one with more power in the supervisory dyad to acknowledge my own and my colleague's subjectivity with care. This effort has thus far been fruitful in supervision. By naming and claiming a feminist supervisor identity I have experienced deeper and more honest work with supervisees. I have learned more than I imagined I would, and been humbled in more ways than I can express.

JLT: Toward the end of the semester, I realize that this, my journey into feminist supervision, has just begun. However, I come to a pseudo-conclusion.

At this point, the best way I have found to navigate the tensions amongst feminist supervision, developmental supervision, egalitarian and hierarchical relationships, etc. is to step into my power and my voice, and yet at the same time, continually acknowledge and

reflect upon (oftentimes with supervisees) this power as it manifests in my direction at any

given point in time.

In this manner, I stand in the tensions of feminist supervision and endeavor to continually raise my own level of critical consciousness by respectfully questioning the pre-established structures around me; examining and monitoring my own supervision intentions; acknowledging my limitations in knowledge and practice; and continually striving to supervise with greater humility, empathy, and transparency.

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