
Entering the Conversations: Introduction to the Special Issue Pour entamer les conversations: Une introduction

David Paré
Anne Thériault
University of Ottawa

ABSTRACT

The introduction to the special issue on counsellor supervision lays out the context that gave rise to this project: a two-day funded workshop that gathered researchers and practitioners of supervision from across Canada as well as two prominent academics from the United States. Highlights of the conference are discussed as well as implications for supervision in Canada.

RÉSUMÉ

Les circonstances qui ont donné lieu à ce numéro sur la supervision sont discutées. Un groupe de superviseurs et chercheurs pancanadiens, ainsi que deux experts américains, se réunissaient pour participer à un atelier-conférence de deux jours sur le sujet de la supervision. Les faits saillants de cette occasion sont étalés et on spéculé sur les implications et sur l'avenir de la supervision au Canada.

While research into counsellor supervision has been gathering considerable momentum in recent years, as Janine Bernard's opening piece in this special issue attests, the field of counsellor supervision is still in its relative infancy in Canada. Our own interest in this critical and yet somewhat neglected domain of practice led us to invite academics and practitioners from across Canada to share their work on supervision. Along with counselling colleagues in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa, we secured funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and put out a call for proposals for an Ottawa-based workshop called *Conversations about Conversations: A Workshop on Counsellor Supervision*.

The workshop consisted of two highly stimulating days of discussion and presentations attended by scholars from across Canada, along with two distinguished guests/discussants: Janine Bernard, author of a definitive set of works on supervision—most notably *Fundamentals of Clinical Supervision* (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009)—and Harold Hackney, whose texts on counselling skills have been mainstays of the counselling literature for many years. The articles assembled here, along with Janine Bernard's overview, emerged from that gathering. In addition, two of the conference participants adopted the role of commentator for two of the articles and their reflections are offered. We have left the overview of these

pieces to Professor Bernard, one of counselling supervision's longstanding mentors; however, we have a few observations of our own as we come to the conclusion of this fascinating project.

What strikes us in particular is the diversity of the writings here and of the other workshop presentations that did not make it into this issue. The workshop experience was a rich one for all of those involved because of our thirst for supervision-related knowledge that created a synergy among us and promoted openness to a wide range of topics. The themes addressed included the ethics of supervision, social justice and advocacy, multidisciplinary work, professional issues, supervisees' experience of supervision, supervisor and supervisee self-care, as well as supervision theory, process, and techniques. This diversity reminds us that supervision covers no less complex a territory than counselling practice itself.

The curious thing is that despite increasing research into supervision, the specific and distinct skill sets required for the practice have only barely been acknowledged to this point by the counselling profession. For instance, the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association (CCPA, 2010) recently released new guidelines for supervision directed toward CCPA certification that take effect on January 1, 2011. The guidelines have increased the number of required years of counselling experience for supervisors from two to four. This is a welcome acknowledgment of the significance and complexity of the supervisor's role, and also a reminder, however, that to this point supervision competence is gauged by accumulated time in the counselling field, rather than by specific training or practical experience in supervision *per se*.

Most of all, we think the CCPA's move to increase the minimal hours required for supervision toward certification reflects an evolutionary trend in the counselling field. In Canada, the movements in several provinces toward regulation of counselling as well as the CCPA's recent adoption of a new name are two other examples of the self-organizing initiatives that disciplines engage in as they adapt to contextual changes. Supervision is increasingly seen as a practice related to but distinct from counselling. No doubt educational requirements and guidelines for supervision practice will continue to evolve to acknowledge this; indeed, our recently created doctoral program devoted to counselling and psychotherapy in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa has a specific course set aside for supervision theory as well as a supervision internship requirement to help prepare practitioners for a role they will almost inevitably assume in their careers post-graduation.

And so we invite you to explore some of the diverse facets of supervision through articles in this issue's special section devoted to supervision practice and theory. We look forward to joining our Canadian colleagues in advancing thinking and practice related to this crucial area, and we relish the prospect of other opportunities to meet and exchange our questions, our dilemmas, and our discoveries.

Acknowledgements

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References

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About the Authors

Dr. David A. Paré is a professor of counselling and psychotherapy in the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa, and a registered psychologist in Ontario. His main interests are collaborative approaches to counselling and psychotherapy practice as well as supervision, narrative practice, reflecting processes, and mindfulness application in therapy.

Anne Thériault is a professor of counselling and psychotherapy at the University of Ottawa in Ottawa, Ontario. Dr. Thériault is a registered psychologist in the province of Québec and has 18 years of clinical experience in private practice. Her teaching specialties include micro-counselling skills, counselling theory, counsellor development, and supervision. She supervises the francophone counselling internships, supporting inexperienced counsellors through their entry into counselling practice. Her research program includes studies of therapist self-care, development, and meaningful supervision encounters.

Address correspondence to David Paré, Faculty of Education, Room 231, Lamoureux Hall, University of Ottawa, 145 Jean Jacques Lussier, Ottawa, ON, K1N 6N5, e-mail dpare@uottawa.ca