Creating the Container for Reflective Practice in Virtual Small Group Supervision

A thesis submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Professional Studies (Coaching Supervision)

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ABSTRACT

Creating the Container for Reflective Practice in Virtual Small Group Coaching Supervision

I am a coaching supervisor based in North America. My primary practice is supervising virtual small groups of executive coaches. Coaching supervision is a developing practice; there is little research in the field of individual coach supervision, and almost none in the context of small group supervision. My overall purposes were to influence the adoption of coaching supervision within North American, where supervision is only beginning to be utilized; to make contributions to the practice of small group coaching supervision by elucidating what actually happened in the groups; and to contribute to addressing the gap in research-based literature. Over the 18 months of research with the North American based supervision groups, the aims of this project were addressed through two inquiries: What are the qualities and conditions that create enough safety in the supervision relationships within a group to enable self-disclosure, reflection and learning? How are these qualities and conditions designed and brought forth?

This thesis opens the doors and windows to the virtual rooms in which small supervision groups convened, adding to the collective knowledge about the artful craft and challenges of supervising; the development of the supervisory relationships; the groups' processes and learning over a year; and the complexities that were present in virtual small group work. Five supervision groups, consisting of 21 coaches and 4 supervisors, participated over 18 months. I was the practitioner-researcher and supervisor for two groups, and for the first time in coaching supervision research[1], a full year of recordings of the actual supervision sessions were collected as field texts. The study was further enriched by the collection of the coaches' monthly journal entries and three action learning meetings that addressed the overall process of the supervision engagement and three groups, supervised by colleagues, which participated in monthly journaling and focus groups about their supervision processes.

The research makes two contributions to the knowledge of practice. The first is the effectiveness of virtual small group supervision—when a supervisor and coaches come together virtually in a small group, they learn and develop in their own unique ways, personally and professionally, through integration of inquiry, reflection and action. The second is a number of practitioner accounts which enables practitioners to contrast and compare with how they engage in their work. These stories are instrumental in inviting coaches with little or no supervision experience to consider how they might utilize supervision in small groups to deepen their reflective practices. This is the invitation to North American coaches. More experienced practitioners are able to engage in multi-dimensional conversations to explore and enrich the practice of small group supervision.

The contributions to theory are to the understanding of the dimensions of the supervisory relationship within the small group context, as the primacy of the supervisory relationships in the group setting were identified. The supervisory relationships included the individual relationships among the group members and the supervisor: the supervisor with each individual coach, the supervisor with the group as a whole, and the coaches with each other. This research contributes to the knowledge of the qualities required for the creation and stewardship of a safe and trusted container with a small group engaged in reflective practice. Key findings include the articulation of the process for the supervision engagement, a model of the elements the supervisor is holding, a model of reflective practice and learning opportunities, and a model of the overall supervision session.

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[1] I have been unable to locate any coaching supervision research that utilized the recordings of the actual supervision sessions over an extended time period.

Dedication

To my stepsons and daughters-in-law, my grandchildren, nieces and nephews, their spouses and significant others, and my great grandchildren. Thank you for enthusiastically embracing my going back to school. Your continuing delight that I was a student steadied me on this journey. With gold stars to Joy Duggan, Sarah Smith, and Shannon Flake for many late-night sessions studying together virtually.

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I am delighted to have Dr. David Adams as my academic advisor—we were matched randomly, and it was a serendipitously brilliant pairing from my perspective. Dave's warmth, positive affirmations, strong challenges and good humor were just what I needed.

It was rewarding to work with Pat Marum, who ably served as my substantive content advisor. Her directness, challenge wrapped in encouragement, and her willing sharing of stories and experiences as the first certified coaching supervisor living and working in North America enriched me.

I am grateful to my coaching supervisors, Dr. Pamela McLean, Edna Murdoch and Dr. Alison Hodge; they have inspired and nurtured my ongoing personal and professional development.

I have been enriched by all of my coaching and supervision colleagues with whom I have engaged in a variety of learning communities, from formal to ad hoc. They have inspired me, challenged me, served as role models, pointed out strengths, challenged blind spots, and served as beacons of light along the way.

I am indebted to Hudson Institute of Coaching (the "Sponsor") for sponsoring this research. I have been inspired by Dr. Pamela McLean's commitment to research about executive coaching and coaching supervision. Working with the leaders at Hudson was a collaborative and collegial endeavor that was graced by the presence, thoughtfulness and determination of Toni McLean. I am blessed and grateful to have had her energies and persistence on behalf of our agreement.

I appreciate and am grateful for my coaching and supervision clients, who trusted me to work with them, and taught me richly about my professional endeavors in the context of the fullness of our lives.

Thank you to the research participants who volunteered and wholeheartedly engaged in service to our profession.

I am especially thankful to my closest friends: the late Dr. Patricia Adson, Tricia Backelin, Jo Birch, Martha Goldstein, Caroline Hansen, Dr. Bonnie Hill, Cindy Levine, Dr. Carol Pearson, Jennifer Reitz, Dr. Ana Pliopas, Kathleen Stinnett, and Carol Tisson.

To Dr. Joanne Moran, in acknowledgment of the path we have travelled together:

"Oh, the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person, having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but pouring them all out, just as they are, chaff and grain together, certain that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping, and with a breath of kindness blow the rest away".

(Craik, 1859, pp. 270-271)

Three notes of special thanks and appreciation: to Kelly Hudson, my writing coach extraordinaire and capable illustrator; to Amina Fahmy, for her consistency and wizardry with this document; and to Shannon Flake for her insightful proofreading.

Glossary

Coach
An individual trained and certified by the Sponsor, often also certified by the ICF (International Coaching Federation), who works primarily with executives and leaders within organizations in a coaching relationship. The coaching fees are often paid by the client's organization. A few of the coaches were not yet in coaching roles; they were in transition from other careers. A few of the coaches had retired or moved to other endeavors; in both situations they were no longer coaching.

Group size
The size of the group is stated in terms of the number of coaches in the group. If there are six coaches in a group with the supervisor, the total group is seven, and the group is described as a "group of six".

Presenting coach
The coach who is presenting the case/issue/theme at that moment in the group.

Supervisor
The person who is being paid to supervise the group. This person has multiple roles including being in relationship with the individuals and the group, manager of the group dynamics and reflective practice guardian.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

"The first duty of love is to listen".

(Paul Tillich, quoted in Nepo, 2012, p.179)

"It took courage to allow myself to pursue something that I loved. I had to allow myself the luxury of learning".

(Cameron, 2007, p.502)

The Beginning

In this Chapter, I will introduce you to who I am, what brought me to a place of doctoral level inquiry, what I set out to learn and what contributions I am making to the practice and theory of coaching supervision, particularly in virtual small groups.

I am a coaching supervisor, an executive coach, a member of the faculty for a coach supervisor training organization, and a member of the faculty for an executive coach training organization based in North America. My primary practice is supervising virtual small groups of executive coaches. I worked primarily in the virtual space before the global pandemic; now my work is exclusively virtually.

In all of my endeavors I have embraced life as a learner, engaging in a variety of personal and professional development opportunities fueled by my core belief that I am on a journey towards mastery in my profession, in my engagement in life, and in my humanity. I do not imagine I will arrive one day and say, "I know enough". I am filled with gratitude for the opportunities to awake each morning and engage with others in learning, laughter and love.

I am passionate about my work. I find meaning, purpose, and satisfaction in service to the learning and development of others (Whitehead, 2015). In my approach to supervision, I seek to create sacred space. Not sacred in the formal religious sense, but rather a space that holds the mind, heart, body, and spiritual dimensions of the group. O'Donohue's (2008) *Blessing for Work* starts with "May the light of your soul bless your work with love and warmth of heart" (p.146). At the heart of coaching and supervision is presence with the client, and a focus on the client's agenda. This is "love" as Brach defines it— "the offering of our attention is the deepest form of love" (Kornfield and Brach, 2004).

My interest in coaching supervision began at the completion of my coach certification training in 2009. I sought out the leader of the certification program for her advice about how I might continue to develop and learn in the community. She introduced me to a new concept, in the U.S., of coaching supervision, which was designed as reflective practice space. I began as a supervisee in a virtual small group. Reflective practice had been a personal practice since I was in my mid-20s, done alone on Friday afternoons, as I reviewed the week. Now a coaching supervisee in my mid-50s, as we shared our cases and issues, I experienced the different perspectives, approaches, and underlying assumptions of members in my group. As my colleagues inquired about their practice, I was able to notice and learn more about my own practice. I found the learning and comradery nourishing, stimulating, and challenging. I was intrigued. It was mysterious, and I was hooked.

I decided to become a supervisor, and I was certified as a supervisor through a diploma program based in the U.K. in 2014-2015. In the assigned reading there were many references to the lack of an evidence base for executive coaching, and even less for coaching supervision. I felt a tickle of curiosity and it would not go away. My coaching supervisor, Alison Hodge, inspired me as she had recently completed the fourth thesis on coaching supervision (Hodge, 2014). I wanted to learn and engage as a practitioner-researcher and focus on the potential of improving practice in virtual

small group supervision in my executive coaching community in North America. This brought me to Middlesex University in 2016 to the Doctor of Professional Studies programme.

My earlier years

I was born and raised in Portland, Oregon, one of five children. My father had a graduate degree in electrical engineering; and my mother, born in a one room house with a dirt floor, had an eighth-grade education. It was a tumultuous and challenging childhood. I emerged into adulthood with these core beliefs and values: education was my path to a professional career; I was motivated to be in service to others; and hard work and humility, hand in hand, were essential.

I added core values and beliefs in my 20s. I graduated with a degree in Economics just as I was turning 20 and was excited to be embarking on my career. I was deterred as institution after institution turned me away with the explicit statement that they would not hire me, and invest in me, as I would undoubtably get married, have children and leave the workforce. These experiences inspired me to return to education for a law degree; I was following in my favorite Aunt's footsteps. She had been one of the first women to graduate from her law school; she established a successful practice that provided for her family. From these early adult years, I learned that it was going to be a fight to achieve in the world. The training and capabilities needed for the "fight" were more education, an incessant drive for results, and bold decision making—which meant taking risks, and resilience coupled with perseverance.

Then I came face to face with the issue of working with others. I had completed law school, discovered it was not a career I wanted, and joined a professional publishing firm serving lawyers. After succeeding in a field office, I had been promoted to headquarters to lead a small team in new product development. I then attended a leadership development course at the Center for Creative Leadership. The feedback from my team, and colleagues was difficult—I was an excellent individual contributor; I had not yet

learned how to manage, influence, or lead. My advisor in the program suggested I had three choices: 1. to return, ignore the feedback, and continue just as I was, which would likely lead to termination; 2. to return temporarily, while seeking a position at a different company that would value my current capabilities; or 3. to return, acknowledge and welcome the feedback, and enlist others to help me grow, develop, and learn. I swallowed hard and chose the third option, leaning into humility.

Commitment to learning and development

That experience led me to a new value—the value of candid, rigorous feedback, coupled with developmental and learning opportunities. Within four years I was hired to lead the startup of a new publishing endeavor; and having achieved remarkable success within three years, the startup was merged with the largest legal publisher within the parent corporation, and I was appointed as Chief Executive Officer. During those seven years I returned to Center for Creative Leadership four additional times, continuing to work on my developmental edges. I also implemented rigorous feedback and leadership development programs within my organizations for all mid-level and above managers and executives. I continued the focus on professional growth and development as I moved into other Chief Executive Officer roles, and ultimately to the Los Angeles Times as Publisher, Chief Executive Officer, and President. I lived this commitment further by teaching and facilitating programs at the corporate umbrella Leadership Training Institutes in each of my roles.

Becoming a coach and focus on self

I left Corporate America in 2000 and engaged in a variety of opportunities. In 2008 I was hiking in the woods of North Carolina with a friend who had been head of Human Resources for me at the Los Angeles Times. She was reminiscing about our leadership development endeavors and wondered out loud why I had not become an executive coach. Her question flooded me with resonance and ignited my journey to learn and become a certified coach. The biggest surprise to me in the coaching training program was the focus on one's "self as coach" (McLean, 2009). Throughout the eight-month

training program, there was a focus on us as the instrument of our work as well as the theoretical underpinnings and practice requirements. We were offered many opportunities to develop reflective practice capabilities.

I began the exploration of who I was and how it impacted my coaching. I was cracked open by the multitude of possibilities from learning about my habits, beliefs, and actions. I was the consummate problem solver, advice giver, expert with the answer. Those were strengths in my corporate roles; they were not useful in my development as a coach. I had to unlearn them, after decades of acknowledgement and reward for deploying them. I had to learn to be present with the client, in relationship and exploration, in curiosity, to believe that the client was fully resourceful, to begin to learn that my answers were not in service to their development.

The most impactful experiences in the training were the recording reviews, conducted by external mentor coaches who would review a coaching session and provide rich and candid feedback. I relished those reviews—here was the opportunity to live into my value of receiving real feedback—and amazingly it was right there on the recording. I began to record my sessions frequently and review them on my own. It was a mining expedition to see more of myself, to begin to learn how to observe myself in the sessions, not only afterwards. I made a personal commitment to continue recording and reviewing my work going forward.

The three required reviews, in the certification training program, tapped into my prior corporate experience of training and facilitating; I wanted to do recording reviews for other coaches in training. About two years later, as my development as a coach had progressed, the certification program invited me to become an external mentor coach and conduct reviews. In working with coaches in training, I experienced the differences in their responses to the feedback based on a number of variables. Namely, their relationship with feedback, their inner critics, their ability to observe themselves, their defensiveness, the language I used, the stance I came to the session with, the tone and tenor of my observations, and the strength with which I made or reiterated a point.

These observations cultivated a curiosity about becoming a supervisor—how much more effective could I be with these coaches in training if I was trained as a supervisor?

My experiences with the recording reviews as a student, and subsequently as a mentor coach, bring to the foreground how I learn. Until I put a theory, practice, or idea into action, experimenting with it (often awkwardly at first), testing how I bring it into my sessions, exploring it with clients or colleagues, reflecting, and experimenting again, I do not get it. I can say the words, but I do not embody what it means, I cannot dance with it. This is consistent with my activist/pragmatist learning styles (Honey and Mumford, n.d.). I need the experience, the application in practice, to know that I have acquired the knowledge. Reading about theory, models, and how to practice is insufficient.

Cultural Context – North America is at the Beginning of Embracing Supervision

When I enrolled at Middlesex, the U.S. was about 10 years behind the UK and Europe in the adoption of coaching supervision (Turner and Hawkins, 2015, p.4). This survey confirmed my personal experience that many coaches in the US do not see the value of coaching supervision, view it suspiciously and debate it (Mallett, 2015, p.1; Passmore, 2011, pp.3-9; Turner & Hawkins 2015, p.4; Watts and Morgan, 2015, p.1). This lag continues. In the most recent global research (McAnally et al., 2019), coaches based in the US are "still in the early adoption phase of coaching supervision with only 19% working with a Coach Supervisor" (p.11).

This is important context. This is research about North American coaches and supervisors who are early adopters of coaching supervision. It is situated in our phase of early adoption of coaching supervision. It provides part of my motivation for embarking on this journey in order to be able to share the results of the research towards influencing the adoption of supervision within North America.

The utilization of the supervision remains very low, and when this research was undertaken in 2017, it was barely on the horizon (Turner and Hawkins, 2015). The relationship with the organization that sponsored my work ensured I had access to coaches who were engaging in supervision. If I had gone to an organization such as the ICF (International Coaching Federation), it would have been a much more difficult recruitment process to find the proverbial needle in the haystack. Up until 2020, the ICF's position was not to embrace supervision, and in fact it continues to limit to 10 hours over three years the amount of supervision that can be counted as continuing education for recertification of individual coaches (International Coaching Federation, 2021; International Coach Federation, 2014). The first North American coach certified as a supervisor was in 2009 (Marum, 2016). Contrast this with the EMCC (European Mentoring and Coaching Council which required supervision as early as 2004 (EMCC, 2004).   This research is about the emergence of supervision practice in North America; it is capturing the innovative work within the Sponsoring Organization's supervision center, the first, and still only, Institute training and certifying coaches that provides supervision for alumni. It is important to read this thesis in this context. One cannot read it from the perspective of the European and U.K. experiences of long-term recognition and utilization of coaching supervision.

Full circle to beginning this research

This brings us back to where I started this Chapter, with my engaging in supervision following my training, the emerging desire to become a supervisor, and my experiences in the supervisor certification program which led me to Middlesex and this project. My own experiences with recordings initially fueled the project design. An express assumption I had was that this way of learning worked for me; it could work for others.

My need to articulate what I know and continue my learning journey toward mastery by looking at my practice is what brought me to conduct qualitative research within the context of a professional doctorate. Through living and exploring what was happening in the groups I would learn about my own practice, and the practice of small group

supervision. Meeting the requirements of the program to shape the field texts into research texts that share both the practice implications and the desires to contribute to the theoretical knowledge of coaching supervision in small groups, conducted virtually, would provide a context for my development as researcher. It would unlock the ability to live an inquiring life in a radically different way (Marshall, 2016).

My Theory of Supervision

My philosophy and fundamental principles about supervision framed how I approached this research and continued to influence my stance as researcher-supervisor at key points. It started with my love of learning which is at the core of who I am. My key beliefs within that context were embodied in this philosophy:

1. The approach is holistic as a coach and as a supervisor we are the instruments of our work.

2. The journey to coaching mastery requires rigorous and courageous reflection, experimentation, and practice. There is a reason it is called a coaching practice.

3. Supervision is reflective space about one's body of work.

4. There is magic in emergence!!

5. Unconditional positive regard is a foundational principle in coaching and coaching supervision.

6. Coaches initiate supervision and determine the content they bring.

7. Adult learning principles (Knowles, Holton, and Swanson, 2015) must be honored.

8. The creation and co-creation of the container for reflective practice is a joint endeavor, led by the supervisor.

9. There are energetic connections between and among us that exist in the virtual space as well as the in-person space.

The fundamental principles that flow from the philosophy were:

1. Considering one's whole self is essential in considering one's professional self.

2. I will invite the group to join me in collaboratively designing a process that allows for emergence, stillness, silence and wondering. I will encourage those I work with to join me in tuning the process as we work together.

3. While a basic structure for process and for the container is essential; most useful is moving into the unknown, using stillness and silence, using affirmation and challenge, and trusting that whatever emerges is what is needed in that moment.

4. The processes and container are fluid.

5. I will invite the group to join me in wondering about the energetic connections between coach and client, within the client's system and among us as a group.

6. I will invite the group to join me in holding curious and inquiring minds, sharing intuition, compassion, stirrings, feelings and knowledge.

7. One must learn to observe one's self, in order to notice who and how one is and build self-awareness.

8. Feedback is essential to personal and professional growth.

9. For coaches who work independently in one-on-one relationships with their clients, the opportunities for candid and open feedback are limited, and perhaps rare. Supervision, in a small group setting, can provide opportunities for learning about one's self that would more typically come from feedback.

10. One must be bold and rigorous in challenging one's assumptions and beliefs and consistently seek to identify blind and unknown spots.

11. I will strive for holding unconditional positive regard at all times and invite the coaches to practice the same way of being.

12. Coaches lead the content; they establish their learning objectives, what cases/issues/themes/other items they bring for reflection and learning.

13. I encourage the coaches to experiment to learn about how they learn with preparation, participation and follow through.

14. My intention is for experiences that are joyful, fun, contemplative, challenging, nurturing, stimulating, awakening, explorative, reflective and sometimes without immediate answers.

15. My work will be consistent with and reference the appropriate ethical codes.

Purpose: My Motivations

My personal motivations were to engage in a high level of challenge in my personal and professional development; and to articulate my theory of practice through intentional exploration, in a formal research setting, of who I was, how I was and what I did as a supervisor.

My overall purpose was to favorably influence the adoption of coaching supervision within North America by sharing the opportunities and possibilities for growth and development through small group reflective practice with a certified supervisor. I wanted to make contributions to the practice of virtual small group coaching supervision by elucidating what actually happened in the groups; and to contribute to addressing the gap in research-based literature.

Aims

My aims were:

- enhance my capacities as a supervisor
- to become an inquiring practitioner, to embody the interplay of academia and knowledge areas with my practice experiences
- to influence how supervision is conducted in my community
- to share with the global supervisor communities what was learned
- as a platform to invite North American coaches to consider supervision as part of their development

Over the year of research with the supervision groups, the aims of this project were addressed in the evolution to these two inquiries: What are the qualities and conditions that create enough safety in the supervision relationships within a group to enable self-disclosure, reflection and learning? How are these qualities and conditions designed and brought forth?

My initial aims were expressed, more narrowly, as an inquiry about experimenting with using observational experiences in the small group supervision experience: what were the qualities and conditions that allowed the coaches to self-disclose by bringing their actual work into the session?

I set out to explore this question by asking coaches to experiment by bringing their actual coaching to the supervision sessions through recordings, transcripts, or coaching in the session itself. My particular focus was on reflective practice as the primary function of supervision with a provocative ask of self-disclosure—to have a coach share with the group their actual work, rather than share through storytelling.

As I will share later in this thesis, the initial inquiry broadened over the first several months of the groups engaging in supervision to the two questions set forth above.

Emergent and Iterative Approach

> *"Qualitative Research design, then, should be seen less as a linear, sequential pathway, but rather as a series of iterations involving design, data collection, preliminary analysis and re-design"* (Gray, 2018, p.169).

My approved project proposal was for qualitative research using phenomenological case studies of supervision groups within my community. Originally, I conceived of this project with two research groups each supervised by one of my colleagues. Very quickly, I revised my approach and decided to also be a supervisor. I would be one of the participants; not solely an observer researching about them. I received approval to amend the project proposal. This was the beginning of an emergent and iterative approach.

In a more typical doctoral journey, the researcher identifies their inquiry, engages in a rigorous literature search to inform themselves of the opportunities for making a contribution to knowledge in their field, refines their inquiry, selects an appropriate methodology and methods, collects data, analyzes the data, and articulates outcomes and conclusions (Gray, 2018). The typical flow of the resulting thesis is a linear description

of the process, with identification of bumps and obstacles along the way. Nonetheless the road was followed.

This thesis is not that.

My journey to a Doctor of Professional Studies was influenced by three factors. First, I approached it as a research-practitioner with an inquiry that shifted and changed through the interactions with the research-participants. As a practitioner, I welcomed the immersive and emergent qualities of supervision. I listened, engaged in dialogue, questioned my assumptions and narratives, listened more, and shaped and reshaped the inquiry. Second, I was juggling three roles: researcher (embarking on my degree), insider (as staff of the Sponsor organization as faculty and supervisor within the supervision center), and practitioner (supervising two of the groups engaged in the research). This influence meant taking care to ensure ethical research in the context of participants who were participating in the research while they were paying for the supervision experience (the coaches) and were paid for the supervision experience (supervisors), which took intentional awareness and attention to elevating their concerns ahead of the research concerns. There were two benefits to this approach – the first is researching *with* (as opposed to *on*) the participants (Bradbury, 2015). Second, the field texts represent what really happened in the commercial real-life context, rather than in a purely observational research context.

The voice through the thesis is primarily that of me as the researcher-practitioner. It is consistently intertwined with an awareness of my responsibilities in all of my roles. The researcher voice emerges louder in considering inquiry, process, literature, and other similar elements. My practitioner voice comes to the forefront in Chapters 5 and 6 and in the final two chapters as I share what happened in each of the groups and describe the learnings that occurred.

If that isn't challenging enough to navigate, the richness of narrative inquiry includes even more voices: the voices of the participants, the voices of the supervisors, the voice

of the sponsoring organization, and the collective-group voices within the multiple experiences, perspectives, and interactions (Connelly and Clandinin, 2000). It requires both relationships between the supervisor and the participants with the researcher, and for my two groups, the researcher as supervisor. The participants' views and perspectives are in the foreground in chapters 5, 6, and 7. It is essential and respectful.

This is not intended as a rule book for group supervision; nor is it intended to provide findings or conclusions that are generalizable (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Rather it's a multi-voiced account of what happened in five groups and what was learned from these experiences.

I have made a deliberate decision to share with the reader the emergence of this process for two reasons. One, it's true to what happened and provides context for the evolution of this work. Two, while it complicates the readers' task, it provides insights for future researchers on the myriad, nuanced elements of being an insider-researcher-practitioner; and it is Intended to capture the joyful process of engaging in the world as it is and working with what arises. This decision is expressed as Pivot #4 in Figure 1 below.

In-service to you, the reader, there are several signposts throughout this writing to help you understand where I started, the key pivots and how they came to be, and which voice is most prevalent in the various chapters. The pivots are summarized in Figure 1 below. Still, it is quite likely this remains a challenging read as it is conveying the messiness of small group coaching supervision. It is not a conventional thesis, yet I am certain that for the readers who engage with the text wholly, as one might engage with supervision itself, they will find themselves leaving with a deep appreciation for the complexity of the supervision experience, and a burning curiosity to experiment, reflect, and learn through that complexity.

PLANNING

INITIAL INQUIRY
What are the qualities and conditions necessary to create a safe and trusted space for bringing observational experiences?

INITIAL METHODOLOGY
Qualitative research of phenomenological case studies from groups supervised by colleagues

Research *with* rather than *on*

PIVOT #1:
I will be a supervisor, in addition to recruiting my colleagues

FIELD TEXTS COLLECTION

PIVOT #2
Broaden inquiry to the qualities and conditions necessary for safe and trusted space

Decisions of group members not to bring recordings

MY GROUPS

DARING GROUP

CREATING COMMUNITY GROUP

3 COLLEAGUE GROUPS

RECRUITMENT
More challenging than expected, affirm decision with own groups

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

THEMATIC CODING
Tracing issues and themes in group members over time

Relationship & interaction nuance lost

PIVOT #3:
Shift in methodology to narrative inquiry and analysis

Write thesis from JOURNEY orientation

Write thesis from RESULTS orientation

PIVOT #4:
Thesis mirrors emergence & complexity of the full research journey

Figure 1: Key Pivots and Pivot #4

Contribution to practice and to theory

Two significant contributions are made to the knowledge of practice in the North American context. The first affirms the effectiveness of virtual small group supervision and the second reveals the multiplicity of practitioner accounts through the explicit revelation of our processes, approaches and interactions. These vignettes are the invitation to North American coaches to consider supervision by illuminating what was possible and how supervision could be experienced. The contributions to theory are to the understanding of the dimensions of the supervisory relationships in group supervision and the qualities and conditions that contribute to safe and trusted space.

The experiences of coaching supervision within two virtual small groups are elucidated; this is the first study, that I know of, on virtual small groups; the first study on small groups including external coaches; and just the third qualitative study on supervised small groups overall (Armstrong and Geddes, 2009; Butwell, 2006). Supervisor and coaches came together virtually, in small groups, and learned and developed, in their own unique ways, personally and professionally through integration of inquiry, reflection, and action. The findings and conclusions contribute to the understanding of coaching supervision and reflective practice.

The contributions to theory are the understanding of the dimensions of the supervisory relationship in the virtual small group context and the qualities required for the creation and stewardship of a safe and trusted container. I propose a process for the supervision engagement, a model for the elements the supervisor is holding, a model for reflective practice and learning opportunities and a model of the overall movements and views of the supervisor within the session. These demonstrate processes and methods to respond to the challenge to supervisors by Michael Carroll (2009, p.50) to work with their supervisees to learn how to be reflective practitioners.

I am writing this primarily for supervisors who are curious about their own work, who want to consider additional perspectives, open possibilities, identify more of their own habitual actions, and inquire about their journey on the road toward mastery. Supervisors who are awake to, and in wonder about their practices. I share the experiences of myself as supervisor, my two groups, and how we developed the sacred space for rigorous inquiry into our work so that others may contrast, compare, and reflect on how they supervise and work with their groups. Additionally, I offer the experiences as shared by the three additional groups supervised by colleagues to further explore through comparison of different approaches to supervision. I believe there is fertile ground for new discoveries. My ultimate goal, which encompasses my original reasons for coming to Middlesex, is to provoke multi- dimensional conversations that inspire supervisors and coaches to explore and enrich the practice of small group supervision.

Three additional sets of readers may benefit from this illumination of practice. Supervisees, and coaches considering supervision for the first time, could learn from how we worked together, reflecting on how they engage in reflective practice, and how they prepare and participate in supervision. Certification programs for supervisors may find useful information and ideas to inform and enrich their curriculum. This will be useful to anyone who gathers virtually, in small groups, and wants to learn more about how to facilitate or participate. In this time of COVID-19, the utilization of virtual small groups has expanded dramatically. The benefit of this research is greater than I could have imagined before the global pandemic changed everything in our world.

Organization of the chapters

I have just introduced you to my journey to Middlesex, my purposes to contribute to the coaching supervision practice and theory, and the primary reader that I have had in mind as I wrote. The Chapters are arranged in the following manner

Chapter 2—I set forth the literature that I drew on during this project. I engaged in the literature as the research progressed, seeking out theories and perspectives to inform how I considered what I was learning through practice.

Chapter 3—I discuss the project plan, including sponsorship, methodologies and methods.

Chapter 4—I describe the recruitment process which had the unusual component of having participants pay commercial rates for the supervision they undertook while participants in this project.

Chapter 5 and Chapter 6—In the prologue to these chapters I share the move to narrative inquiry. In the Chapters I share vignettes from each of my own supervision groups as supervisor and capture the voices and experiences of the group members with quotes from the recordings, journal entries and other communications. I share the richness and complexity of the stories of the experiences of two groups.

Chapter 7— I write primarily as researcher about the experiences of the three groups supervised by colleagues based on the major themes that emerged in the prior two chapters.

Chapter 8—The findings on the co-creation and stewardship of the container that enabled self-disclosure, reflection and learning.

Chapter 9—The findings on the reflection and learning that was experienced, as well as consideration of ethical issues.

Chapter 10—The conclusions that contribute to the theory and practice of coaching supervision in virtual small groups and the evolution in my theory of practice.

Chapter 11—I share my reflections and learning as I look back on this journey.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

"Practice is personal and holistic and cannot be divided by discipline".

(Jarvis, 1999, p.81)

"There is no one explanatory link between phenomena and theories that explain (interprets) them…it is the construction of the worldview that will influence both my descriptions of interesting phenomena and my choice of relevant theories".

(Czarniawska-Joerges, 1997, p.71)

Overview – how I engaged with the literature

In a more traditional doctoral project, the methodology and literature review would have been written and explored as part of the project proposal. I started with my inquiries in my practice setting and then engaged in the literature as the research progressed, seeking out theories and perspectives to consider. My experiences in a developing supervision practice, my experience as a supervisee, my coaching practice, my coaching supervision training, and my leadership and management responsibilities within Corporate America all contributed to my own theory of practice. This project gave me the opportunity to articulate that theory, and the literature provided additional perspectives and questions to consider.

I started with coaching supervision literature, which included a small and growing number of practice-focused books, and fewer than ten doctoral theses. I found the practice-focused books to be quite useful in my development as a supervisor, providing a number of approaches and models to consider. However, given the nascent nature of group coaching supervision research, I turned to other fields.

Coaching supervision is based on supervision in the helping professions, which recognizes the historical roots of coaching in psychology (Gray, 2017, p.662). Group supervision "has its roots in psychotherapeutic practice and counselling, and the literature which supports its use depends heavily on that from those disciplines" (Pinder, 2011, p.196).

The supervisory relationship was front and center for me—the groups had each articulated it as determinative of their experiences overall. I drew on clinical supervision research. The contribution from this field in particular, was about the supervisory relationship and its importance to the supervision experience. There were also contributions about group supervision, although in this field, research on group supervision is significantly underrepresented (Ögren, Boethius and Sundin, 2014).

I turned to my previous experience to find more thinking on groups. In my corporate roles I had led, facilitated, and trained numerous teams, peer groups, and cohorts of managers; these skills were serving me as a supervisor. They led me to different literature on highly effective teams and groups, as well as communities of practice. These readings brought in theories of how small groups and teams come together, particularly in settings that encompass dialogue, reflection, inquiry, and learning. They offered perspectives on leadership of the team as well as facilitation.

My literature reviews were intentionally plural, as I was not homing in on a handful of areas but rather following curiosities about knowledge areas that could be relevant. There was interplay between my learning, reflecting on and applying ideas in my practice while holding the research process.

Supervision happens in the context of dialogue, reflective practice, in an adult learning setting—I returned to the thought leaders in those knowledge areas.

MY THEORY OF PRACTICE

DIALOGUE

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

COACHING & COACHING SUPERVISION

GROUP SUPERVISION GROUP FACILITATION

COUNSELING, PSYCHOLOGY, & PSYCHOTHERAPY SUPERVISION

ADULT LEARNING

HIGH PERFORMING TEAMS

SAFE CONTAINER

A Bouquet of Academic Fields
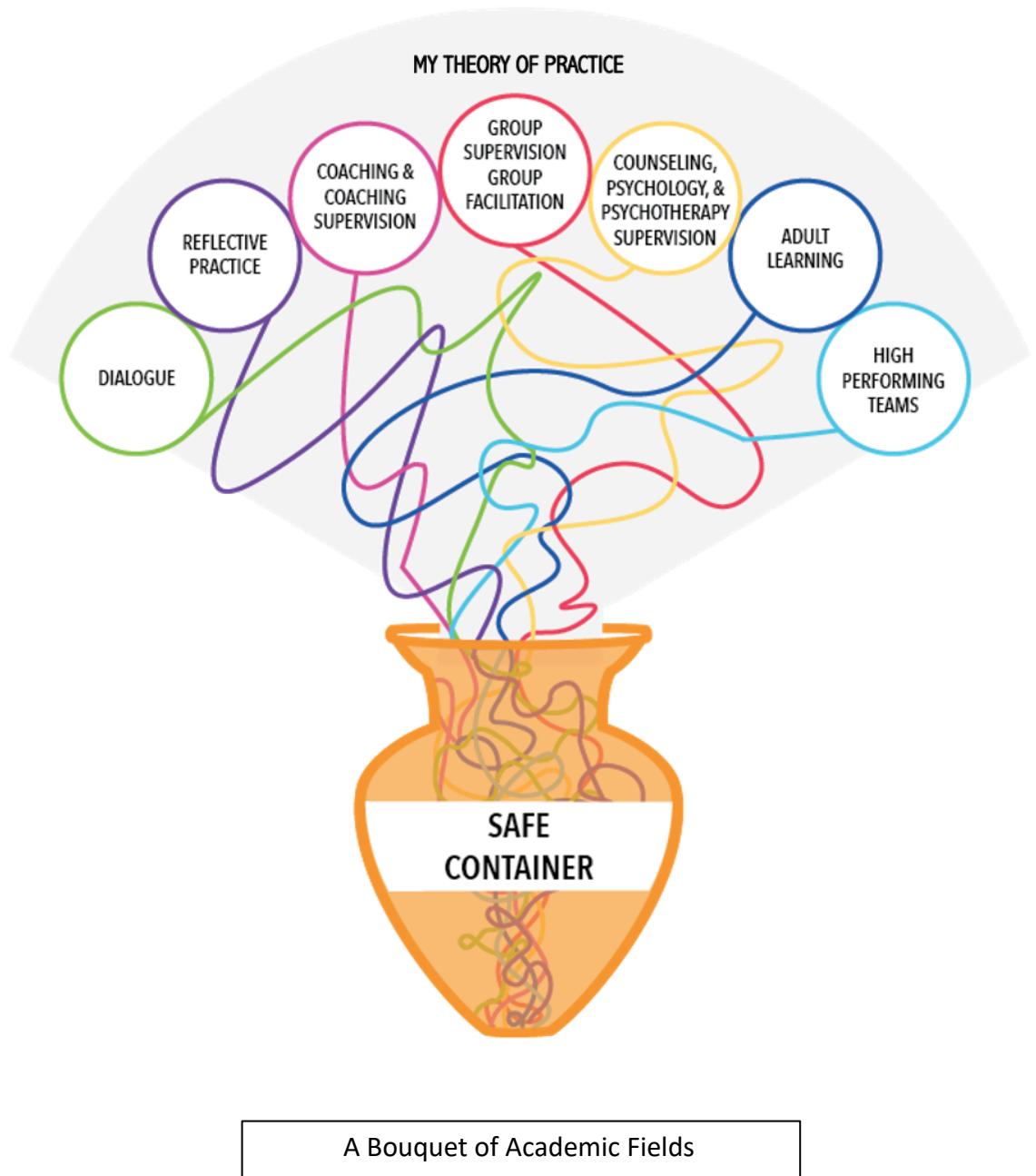
Figure 2: A Bouquet of Academic Fields

What is the container needed for reflective practice in small groups?

To explore the elements that contribute to the container that allows for self-disclosure, active inquiry, challenge to our stories, and learning in groups and highly effective teams, I considered three settings: communities of practice (E. Wenger-Trayner and B. Wegner-Trayner, 2015; Wenger, 1998); highly effective teams (Coyle, 2018); and invitational groups within communities (Block, 2009). All four of these authors built on the works of Bohm (2004) and Isaacs (1999). There were parts of these theories and frameworks that informed my thinking: and there were distinctions that needed to be considered in each.

Reflective Practice

> *"We resort to reflection only when we require guidance in negotiating a step in a series of actions or run into difficulty in understanding a new experience".*
>
> *(Mezirow 1991, pp.116-117)*

Schön (1983) articulates the notion of practitioners engaging in reflection in order to learn more about their actions—to bring their tacit awareness into view. He distinguishes reflection-in-action from reflection-on-action, noting that the practitioner in the day-to-day moments of one's practice would encounter a surprise—a sudden small circumstance that they were not prepared for—and would use their experience to improvise. This improvisation brought to light what they knew tacitly; knowledge arose in the reaction to an unexpected interaction or circumstance. This is reflection-in-action. In contrast, reflection-on-action is taking time to pause and consider one's past actions as a way of understanding what happened, what worked well, and what did not; and articulating what they knew.

His focus is on actions within the context of the facts, procedures, rules and theories of the practitioner's profession. "Reflection is much more than a cognitive or abstract process—it involves emotions, intuitions, sensations, and

bodily experiences that resonate with the heart as well as the head" (Carroll, 2009, p.40). Bohm (1996) defined tacit as "that which is unspoken, which cannot be described…it is the actual knowledge, and it may be coherent or not" (p.16).

Scharmer (2009) refines Bohm (1996) and Schön (1983) by describing "two kinds of tacit knowledge: tacit embodied knowledge and self-transcending knowledge" (Scharmer, 2009, p.70). In his view, tacit knowledge is that which is described as we reflect on our actions, whereas self-transcending knowledge is that which emerges in the moments of our practice during reflection-in-action.

For example, a coach is in session with a client and experiences surprise in the moment to how the client responds or reacts. The coach, in her surprise, does not have a known response, so she improvises and discovers her tacit knowledge. In the same setting, if the client had paused, moved into "presencing" as defined by Scharmer (2009) as "connecting to the deepest source", put aside looking to the past for guidance, and instead felt into her "highest future potential" and let that "source" guide her, she would be discovering self-transcending knowledge, which he includes as reflection-in-action (pp.39, 51-52). The ability to engage in presencing, to reach moments of self-transcending knowledge, results in more generativity and authentic presence (ibid.). I could imagine the possibilities for a coaching client; I could see how this might be possible for coaches in a supervision setting.

Reflective Practice is a full body experience

My experience was that reflective practice included the excavation of feelings, internal stories, and projections, and to discern possible interpretations. I wove Schön's definitional threads of reflection with the ability to observe one's self, both in the moment and in the past, and as I continued to weave, added the threads of feelings evidenced by what was happening in the body—noticing inner dialogues and noticing our actions and interactions. The inquiries in

supervision needed to include not just the actions of the coach, but of their inner stories, what was pulling at their heart and what they were experiencing in their bodies.

Jordi (2011) reconceptualized reflective practice beyond the cognitive to include human consciousness, the sensations and arousals within the body, and the move toward integration of one's experience as the dance with learning. He draws heavily on Gendlin's (1978) development of focusing. Combining Bohm (1985) and Schön (1983)—reflection leads to articulation of what we know about our practice and serves as a way of defining supervision as a space for discovering more of our capacities, capabilities, and skills as a person and as a coach.

I go back to Bohm (1985) and Isaacs (1999), and how they described dialogue in small groups, and the necessary container, as well as Scharmer's (2009) more recent text on Theory U.

Bohm (1985, 2004) defined dialogue within a setting of "a stream of meaning flowing among and through us and between us. This will make possible a flow of meaning in the whole group, out of which may emerge some new understanding" (p.7). His description of dialogue includes a small group co-creating a trusting container where all voices are heard—sitting in a circle, engaged in inquiry together, listening for what is said and what is underneath the words.

Isaacs described the container for dialogue

Isaacs (1999) describes a "container" for the dialogue as "a setting" where we collectively hold "the intensities of [our] lives," (p.243) going on to articulate the four essential practices that create this as, "the active experience of people listening, respecting one another, suspending their judgments, and speaking

their own voice" (ibid., p.242). He identifies the potential shift from conversation to reflective dialogue through the welcoming of curiosity, a willingness to explore what is going on for each of us and noticing more possibility to share our own stories and perspectives (ibid., pp.272-273).

Intentional attention: deep listening

The level of listening that Isaacs (1999) refers to as necessary for dialogue- the participative engagement in listening to ourselves and others requires that we "attend both to the words and the silence between the words" (p.86). "Listening from silence means listening for and receiving the meanings that well up from deep within us…" (ibid., p.102). This welling up is what Gendlin (1978) has named "felt sense" (p.38)—feeling it in one's body, without the words to describe what it is that we are feeling. It is "an unfamiliar, deep down level of awareness" in the body (ibid.). The steps of listening in exploring another person's felt sense are: "absolute" listening—listening only and indicating you are following the person; saying back to the person their main points; encouraging and being comfortable with silence; and respecting the names they use for their feelings (ibid., pp.135- 156). Ferrucci states "in empathy one may not only use the mind but the entire organism" (Ferrucci, 1990, p.30).

Theory U: Requisite elements of the container for transformative learning

Theory U (Scharmer, 2009) extends the concept of reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983) beyond the discovery of tacit knowledge, to the discovery of self-transforming knowledge. A place of stillness, generativity, and one's more authentic self. In the development of the theory there was an extension of explicit knowledge, to tacit, embodied knowledge which is both emergent and situated in context to "primary knowing" that is not yet embodied (ibid. pp.106-108). The differentiation of self from authentic self is described as "the clash between one's old self, the person one has always been, and one's emerging

higher self, the self that embodies one's highest future possibility" (p.100). How does one move toward presencing and the opportunity for self-transforming knowledge? By moving down the U.

The move down the U (Scharmer, 2009) is described linearly, see the image below[2], although in real life it does not necessarily happen in the order it is presented.
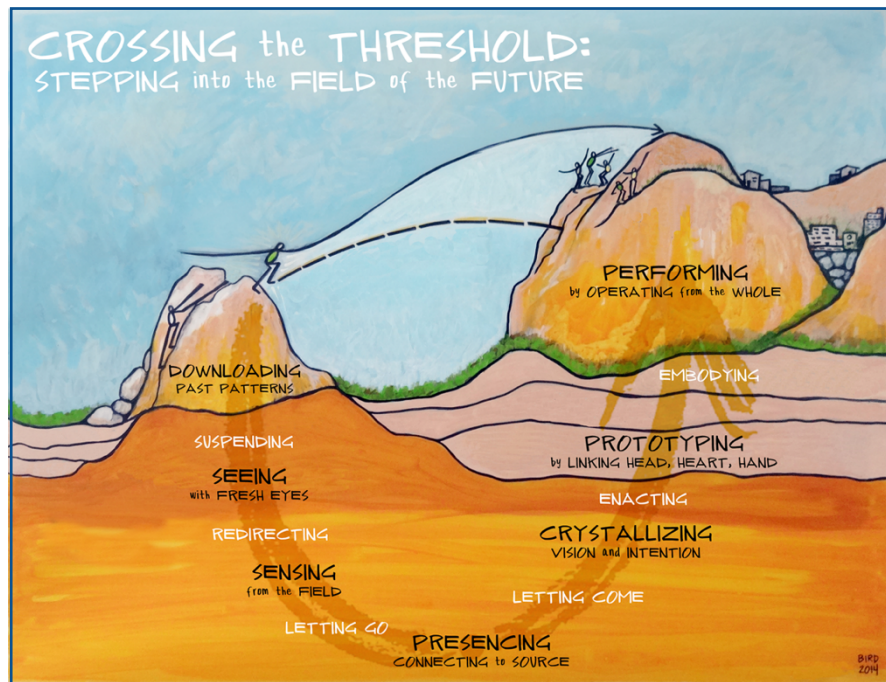
Figure 3: Theory U

There were many sessions within the groups where the move to sensing happened. Sensing is described as people engaged at a deeper level of presence and connection—more inquiry with "genuine questions", "thinking together", each one seeing one's self as part of the larger system (ibid., pp.146-147). Genuine curiosity and care provided the coaches the opportunities to see their

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[2] This work is licensed by the Presencing Institute - Otto Scharmer, Source of the image: https://www.presencing.org/assets/images/theory-u/TU_1_Threshold_850h.png [accessed: May 27, 2019] and license at: https://www.presencing.org/resource/permission [accessed: May 27, 2019]

own parts in the system of their coaching practices, where there was a heart-to-heart connection within the group. Intuition, imagery, and metaphor were often present. This was a special place to be: the results were useful, opening up ideas and ways of working differently in the future, incorporating the learning from this experience of deep connection, and creating the fertile ground for experiential learning and potentially transformative learning.

Scharmer (2009) describes the container as a sacred space that is dependent on four principles (pp.184-190) that incorporate the three capacities:

1. The first principle of "letting go and surrendering" is letting go of what you have come to know, to believe, how you construct your world, and surrender into what may emerge.

2. A felt shift in the group to a deeper level of connection with "an emerging field", a conscious step to let go of who you are (e.g., "a masterful coach") and move into a quiet space with the group.

3. Being in a "higher authentic presence", listening beyond empathy to what may emerge. "What happens is that you leave the conversation as a different being-a different person-from the one who entered the conversation…You are a (tiny bit) more who you really are".

4. A container for deep listening – has "three conditions in this space: unconditional witnessing or no judgment, impersonal love, and seeing the essential self".

These four principles suggest key elements for the supervision container are: commitment to inquiry beyond what is known; quiet reflective space that provides possibilities; inquiry together that has the potential to open the group to new learning; and the essential nature of unconditional positive regard (Rogers, C.R., 1980).

Reflective practice in teams

In studying eight highly successful groups, Coyle (2018) identified three core skills that each group developed that created identification, shared vulnerability,

and purpose (p.xix). I applied his three skills as elements of creating the safe space.

Focusing on the skill of building safety, Coyle's case studies required a leader with characteristics and interactive styles, including the combination of "dialing in to small subtle moments and delivering targeted signals at key points" (ibid., p.75). Examples of these signals included listening with more attentiveness, acknowledging and responding to what is said, ensuring all voices are heard, close proximity for face-to-face interactions, naming "threshold moments," intentional processes for feedback, selection and deselection of members, and having fun (Coyle, 2018, pp.74-88). His particular focus on group dynamics and the roles and responsibilities of leaders is relevant to the supervisor's role. The face-to-face setting and the selection and deselection of members were not directly applicable to my research but raised interesting questions of how face-to-face translated in the virtual setting and how selection and deselection of members was not part of our group process.

He identified the necessity of creating shared purpose; his views on group dynamics were toward teams driving for results; his lens was focused on what makes productive teams. While there is no drive for results within the supervision space, there is a shared purpose in the commitment to professional and personal development and learning.

Coyle's (2018) third quality was shared vulnerability—the mutual sharing of challenges, difficulties, and failings. This is descriptive of the small group setting where the coaches are asked to bring the messiness of their practices to the group. Brené Brown defines ordinary courage, as distinct from heroic courage, as "the inner strength and level of commitment required for us to actually speak honestly and openly about who we are and about our experiences—good and bad" (Brown, B., 2007, p.xxiv). This is about our ability to be vulnerable in a small

group, and a reminder that vulnerability is a key element in creating the safe container (Brown, B.C., 2012; Isaacs, 1999).

Emotional Intelligence

The four components of emotional intelligence (EQ) are self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 2004); these are required for the levels of interpersonal interactions described by Isaacs (1999), Coyle (2018), Block (2009), and Scharmer (2009). "Self-awareness means having a deep understanding of one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, needs and drives" (Goleman, 2013, location 96 of 2106). Self-regulation is one's ability to act on their awareness of what they are feeling and moderating their responses as appropriate to the setting (Goleman, 2013, location 141 of 2106). Empathy is the ability to hear what another person is feeling, not move to judgment, put yourself in their shoes, and acknowledge how they are feeling, while not losing your own feelings (Brown, B.C., 2012). Social skill is an array of ways of being in relationship with others that create productive relationships and is based on one's facility with the other three components (Goleman, 2013, location 244-245 of 2106).

Communities of Practice

> *"This dynamic interplay of experience and competence is why active engagement in a community of practice is so important for someone to become and remain current as a practitioner in a domain".*

> *(E. Wenger- Trayner and B. Wegner-Trayner, 2015, p.14)*

Communities of practice are framed with a focus on professional learning, practitioners' claim to competence in their community, which includes academic learning, their own practice, and the "social negotiation of what constitutes competence in communities of practice" (E. Wenger-Trayner and B. Wegner-Trayner, 2015, pp.13-14). They provide a path to bring one's experience and

practice to a community of other practitioners who inquire together in service to one's professional development. Conceptually, this represents a path from apprentice to journeyman to mastery. The emphasis is on "the learning potential inherent in practice"—learning becomes the organizing principle, not teaching (Wenger, 1998, p.250).

Applying this to coaching supervision, one can frame the small groups as communities of practice, focused on the development of executive coaches' professional competence and the transfer of best practices and professional skills (Carroll, 2009).

Coaching Supervision

Research on coaching supervision

"Although qualitative research in supervision is increasing, the disciplines continue to valorize empirically robust evidence as defined by a positivist paradigm which tends to use quantitative methods. This means that many reviews exclude qualitative design studies or studies that do not meet a certain rigor. While case examples cannot be used to generalize findings to a population, the data can be used to describe the experience from the supervisor's or supervisee's perspective helping the field to better understand the practice and providing scholars with conceptualizations to empirically test"

(Hullinger and DiGirolamo, 2019, p.2)

Individuals come to supervision to explore what supervision is, a desire for community, and a commitment to learning in service of personal or professional development (Bachkirova, Clutterbuck, and Cox, 2014; Bachkirova, Jackson and Clutterbuck, 2011; Carroll and Gilbert, 2011; Passmore, 2011). The three primary goals of supervision, building on the work of Kadushin (1967, cited in Hawkins

and Smith, 2006) and Proctor (1988, cited in Hawkins and Smith, 2006) and applying them in the coaching context, are: "developmental"—developing the key skills, competencies, capacities, and capabilities required of an executive coach; "qualitative"—exploring ethical issues with the supervisor toward inquiring about ethical practice; and "resourcing"—developing the coach's resourcefulness and resilience (Hawkins and Smith, 2006, pp.173-174; Hodge, 2014; Sheppard, 2017).

Reflection is an inherent part of the supervision process; one cannot engage in supervision without reflection (Campone, 2011; Carroll, 2007). Reflective practice is the heart of supervision (Hewson and Carroll, 2016; Hay, 2007; Hawkins and Shohet, 2012). My focus was on this significant element of the supervision process—how did reflective practice happen within small groups, what processes and elements contributed to the co-creation of a safe space for opportunities for reflection, and what were the learning outcomes?

There are numerous models of how supervision is conducted (Bachkirova, Jackson and Clutterbuck, 2011), including the 7-eyed model (Hawkins and Smith, 2006), the Full Spectrum Model (Murdoch and Arnold, 2013); the three worlds and four territories model (Munro Turner, 2011), and the Three Pillars model (Hodge, 2014). Different approaches were used in the research groups without adherence to any one model. The theoretical underpinnings of the coaching methodology developed by McLean and Hudson (McLean, 2012) informed our work. It is "a holistic model in coaching that encompasses and accounts for the context in which we live while simultaneously acknowledging our individual life journey" (McLean, 2012, p.xvii). One primary focus in the methodology is on the individual as the instrument of the work (McLean 2019); the coaches come to supervision with an attentiveness to their narrative stories and internal dialogues. My practice as a supervisor has been greatly influenced and shaped by both the Full Spectrum Model (Murdoch, and Arnold, 2013), which places the relationship with the supervisor and coach at the center, and the Three Pillars

Model (Hodge, 2014) which has as the three pillars of supervision: the supervisory relationship, reflective practice, and adult learning.

The supervisory relationship is significant

In my own experiences of individual and group supervision, as a supervisee, what mattered most to me was my relationship with my supervisor, and secondarily the other group members. I started my inquiry in the coaching supervision research on this topic.

In the practice books on coaching supervision, there is some mention of the supervisory relationship. In setting out the widely used 7-eyed model for supervision, eye 5 is the relationship between the coach and the supervisor, utilized for identifying parallel process as well as exploring the relationship (Hawkins and Smith, 2013, pp.196-197). Hawkins (2011) writes, in making the case for a systemic approach to supervision, that "it isn't what the supervisor does, but the attitude and perspective they bring and hold in the supervisory relationship" (p.173).

De Haan (2012), based on the research in psychological traditions, stated that the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee is "the most important active ingredient" (p.141) and defines relational supervision as having four qualities—focus on the relationships throughout the material brought by the supervisee; a solid productive relationship between the supervisor and supervisee; use of the development of the supervisor-supervisee relationship to role-model the development of a relationship between the coach and their client; and the supervisors' ability to trust themselves to use appropriate interventions, rather than being bound by a particular model (ibid.).

Hodge (2016) took an action research approach with 6 coaches and 5 coaching supervisors on the experiences within one-to-one coaching supervision. In her model, there are three pillars which hold the container for dialogue: the supervisory relationship, adult learning and reflective practice. "All the research participants stressed how vital the supervision relationship was to enable them to engage effectively in the process" (ibid.,

p.101). She listed the roles and responsibilities of the supervisor and supervisee, including the need for open, non-judgmental, respectful, and trusting relationships (Hodge, 2014, p.221).

Sheppard (2016) conducted a grounded theory study about coaching supervisees, researching what helps and hinders their supervision, by interviewing 12 supervisees—4 of whom had individual and group supervision, and one who had group supervision—and 9 supervisors. The enabling actions that supervisees took to enhance their supervision experiences included co-creating the relationship (ibid., p.114) and standing shoulder to shoulder with the supervisor (ibid., p.150).

> *"As well as trusting the supervisor, it is important for supervisees to play an active role in the contracting to establish the power relationship they would like to have with the supervisor"* (ibid., p.173).

Coaching supervision groups

In the coaching supervision practice books, there is usually a chapter on group supervision. The benefits are identified as costs (group supervision typically costs less per coach than individual supervision), supportive environment with peers, the advantage of learning from a variety of colleagues rather than from one supervisor, and useful to be in a group if one coaches teams or groups (Clutterbuck, Whitaker and Lucas, 2016, pp.23-24; Hawkins and Smith, 2013, p.209). Group dynamics, when negative, and less individual time are the downsides (Clutterbuck, Whitaker and Lucas, 2016, pp.23-24; Hawkins and Smith, 2013, p.209-210).

In the field of coaching supervision, there is a small start to research on the supervision of groups. Homer (2017) in his grounded theory research on peer group supervision utilized interviews of 6 colleagues and developed a description of the group processes. One of his intents was to give voice to the coaches' articulation of value experienced. The peer group developed operating

principles and used a process focused exclusively on the coach, not the client, and engaged in reflective practice together (ibid., p.104). By definition the peer groups did not have a supervisor, and this was noted as a potential limitation (ibid., p. 108).

Sheppard (2016) focused on one-to-one supervision and included only a few findings on groups—her 5 interviewees, who had group supervision, shared that fear of judgment was stronger in the group context, as was self-consciousness. She noted that supervisees could be impacted in a group: "some supervisees reported being overly concerned about being entertaining and not boring the group whilst others worried that there was not enough time to go into depth on their issue and so avoided bringing it" (p.116).

De Haan (2017) in a quantitative survey of over 500 experienced coaches on trust and safety in coaching supervision found that there was more trust with the supervisor in individual supervision, yet equal willingness to bring one's "most concerning/worrying/shameful episodes" to their supervisor in group supervision as in individual supervision (ibid., p.46). The survey also found that trust builds in the supervisory relationships over time (ibid.).

Butwell (2006) conducted research on a supervision group within an organization, comprised of internal coaches, that met quarterly. The positive feelings about the experience were the sense of community, the learning of tools and methods, the presentation of cases, and a space to consider boundary issues (ibid., p.48). The multiple relationships within the organization, confidentialities, fear of self-disclosure, perhaps because of the group dynamics were identified as downsides of the experience (ibid., pp.48-49). It was also noted that having participated for only four sessions, on a quarterly basis, there was not enough understanding of the supervision process and how to be a supervisee (ibid., p.52).

Each of these studies provide some insights into the group experiences that are related to the creation of a trusted and safe container.

Supervisory relationships in clinical supervision

Just as I was receiving project approval to proceed, I attended a research conference at Oxford Brookes on coaching and supervision. Beinart and Clohessy, authors of the just published collection of research on supervisory relationships in the clinical supervision setting, presented. Here was a collection of rich data. I expanded my literature to clinical supervision, with some attention to the differences between the clinical and coaching supervision settings.

Distinctions between coaching and clinical supervision

The roots of coaching supervision are in the fields of supervision in social work and counselling (Hawkins and Smith, 2013). I drew on the clinical literature to consider the descriptions of group supervision (Proctor, 2008) and the supervisory relationships (Watkins, 2018; Beinart and Clohessy, 2017). I considered the frameworks, theories and models; I did not adopt any of them wholesale (Hawkins and Smith, 2006, p.171).

There are distinctions between coaching supervision, as experienced in this setting, and clinical supervision. Clinical supervision is required as part of the training of the therapist; for coaches, it is voluntary. The life and work experiences of supervisees are vastly different—therapists in training are largely young and/or embarking on new careers; coaches, participating in this research, were experienced, seasoned professionals in their early 40s to late 60s who sought certification in mid-to-late career. There were evaluative and assessment roles for the clinical supervisor who reported back to the training programs; there were no corresponding roles here. With these discernments, there were applicable findings in clinical supervision research that intrigued me; some felt

resonate to my experiences and some gave me new ways of thinking about group supervision.

Supervisor-Supervisee Relationships are Primary

Beinart and Clohessy (2017) have researched and published extensively on supervisory relationships, primarily in the clinical dyadic supervision setting (p.3). The relationship is "the most significant aspect of supervision" (ibid., p.7). They define the supervisory relationship ("SR") as:

> *The SR is a collaborative, mutual working relationship, which supports and challenges the supervisee to learn and develop their professional practice. The relationship is developmental, needs-focused, open, and respectful. It is normally hierarchical and involves the negotiation of power. It has many functions including education, monitoring and/or evaluation, and support. The SR is influenced by multiple contextual factors including those contributed by the supervisory dyad (or group), the working context, and the wider sociocultural context. The relationship is bound by the ethics of safe practice and acknowledges difference and diversity in order to allow the supervisee to safely disclose and explore their professional dilemmas. Key tasks in establishing and developing the relationship are contracting and feedback (Ibid., p.6).*

Elements contributing to the supervisory relationships

Beinart's framework for the supervisory relationship was developed from the perspective of the supervisee. It identified what supervisees needed to feel "emotionally contained" within the relationship, including appropriate boundaries in the relationship, defined structure of the actual supervision sessions, and the development of a "mutually respectful, supportive and open relationship" in which the supervisee experienced the commitment of the

supervisor to their development and there was regular feedback between them (pp.26-27). Clohessy considered the supervisory relationship from the supervisor's viewpoint, identifying categories that were important in the quality of the relationship (Beinart and Clohessy, 2017, p.28). A summary table of their findings is below (Beinart and Clohessy, 2017, p.35).

Supervisor contributions	Supervisee contributions
Creation of a safe space in the SR through establishing boundaries and mutual expectations	Openness to learning; receptiveness to feedback and willingness to be open about their work
Use of therapeutic qualities such as empathy, respect, genuineness, and acceptance	Proactive stance: hard-working, committed, enthusiastic, assertive, mature, and appropriate autonomy
Interest and investment in the SR; being available to the supervisee	Ethical awareness
Collaborative attitude	Self-awareness and self-reflectivity
Flexibility and responsiveness to needs	Ability to critique own work
Appropriate self-disclosure	Ability to form good relationships in working context
Provision of feedback to the supervisee	
Awareness of difference and diversity, and ability to initiate supportive discussions	

Table 1: Summary of supervisor and supervisee contributions to effective supervisory relationships. Used with permission.

Inman and colleagues (2014) conducted an 18-year review of the clinical supervision research on one-to-one supervision and found the qualities that contributed to the supervisory relationships included the supervisor creating the safe container, supervisor providing clarity on roles and responsibilities tailored to the supervisee's needs, and joint agreement on goals. The supervisor and supervisee would have strong EQ skills, a mutual recognition that we all make

mistakes, the provision of constructive feedback, and role modelling by the supervisor.

These are consistent with the elements that Beinart and Clohessy identified as important, and as discussed below with Watkin's (2016) model.

Watkin's (2016b) developed a proposed contextual supervision relationship model (CSRM) in the field of psychotherapy supervision because of the lack of "a common, unifying way of understanding change or its absence across supervision models" (p.22). The "model's proposed common variables and pathways converge to explain productive and unproductive supervision relationships" (ibid.). It was useful for me to consider the model, and what it offered in considering the supervisory relationship. "Two fundamental grounding assumptions are (a) the supervisor-supervisee relationship serves as the most powerful mediator in instigating supervisee change; and (b) a common core of relational *and* intervention factors is inextricably linked in making supervisee changes possible" (ibid., p.25).

Just as Beinart and Clohessy (2017), Watkins places the supervisor-supervisee relationship as primary and states that the bond is forged through 3 elements— the cultivation of the relationship, the contracting and delivering what is contracted for, and the supervisee's participation (Watkins, 2016, pp. 24-25). He distinguishes two components of the supervisory relationship—the working alliance between the supervisor and supervisee and the "real relationship," which is "often hiding in plain sight and being quite extraordinary in its very ordinariness" (ibid., p.25), for example the "social conversation, warmth, friendly interest, expressing feelings about events…and the genuine and appropriate feelings supervisor and supervisee experience toward one another" (ibid., p.25). Watkins and his co-authors cite humility as another quality: "humility is fundamental, foundational, and potentially transformational for any and all supervision practice" (Watkins *et al.,* 2019, p.63).

Watkins (2018) eloquently captured the essence of our shared beliefs as supervisors when he stated:

> *We as supervisors uniformly believe in the power of the supervisory alliance (bond, goals, tasks) and relationship variables (e.g., empathy) to make ever possible supervisee change; we routinely embrace a reliable handful of educational interventions (e.g., teaching/instruction, reflective questions) to effect that change. Whatever is done in supervision, whatever the supervision system enacted, those fundamental and foundational essentials seemingly serve as our unifying supervisory anchor (p.24).*

The supervisory relationship research described above was mostly in the dyadic setting not in the group setting. My next direction considered the research on group supervision.

Groups in clinical settings

Limited research on group supervision

> *"Almost all that is known about group supervision has to be labelled 'anecdotal'. I want to challenge practitioners to transform anecdotal evidence in to practice-based evidence so we can engage in evidence-based practice…"*
>
> *(Proctor, 2008, p.xvi).*

There is significantly less research on group supervision in the clinical settings than individual supervision (Ögren, Boethius and Sundin, 2014). Hedegaard (2020) states that there is a need for additional research on group supervision, citing an unpublished literature review by Nielsen, Pederson and Mathiesen (2016, cited in Hedegaard, 2020) that found 10 themes present in the current

research, and that "none of the studies on group supervision is concerned with the supervisory alliance" (p.3). She hypothesizes that the complexity of the setting is "probably one of the reasons" for the lack of research, noting that the interrelationships of the group members complicates the consideration of the supervisory relationship. She goes on to state that the "supervisory alliance cannot be separated from the group processes" (ibid., p.1).

This gap in the literature on the supervisory relationships within group supervision is addressed by my research.

Group supervision requires management of group dynamics

Proctor (2000, 2008), the leading practical text on group supervision has been by my side since 2014 when I began my supervision training. A central tenet of Proctor's approach is the belief that "the method for good practice…requires a commitment to establishing the person-centred core conditions; and a culture suited to an adult learner" (Proctor, 2008, p.35). This person-centred approach (Rogers, C.R., 1980, pp.114-116) follows through to coaching as the underpinning of seeing our clients as whole, competent and capable; to our self-as-coach work (McLean, 2019); and to the practices of empathy and active listening (Rogers, J., 2008).

Proctor (2008) identifies five levels of contracting in creating the container for group supervision—these are the logistical and administrative agreement, the ground rules for the group to operate, the session agenda, the minute-to-minute management of the group, and the contracting with the presenting supervisee (ibid., p.55). They are negotiated to ensure mutuality.

Bernard and Goodyear (2019) consider three factors in the effective delivery of group supervision, each of which have implications for the creation of the safe container. The first is that the supervisor's management of the group processes

is as important as their supervision and necessitates the establishment and management of the relationships among the group to create a safe place. The second is tailoring the process to the supervisees' developmental levels; and third utilization of group processes that are appropriate to the stage of the group development (Bernard and Goodyear, 2019, pp.193-196).

Ögren, Boethius and Sundin (2014) bring together the research in Sweden since the early 1990s on group supervision in the clinical supervision setting. Their findings are consistent with the above, including the supervisor's ability to work with the group dynamics as essential in creating the safe container for learning. "To favour constructive and prevent destructive group processes, the supervisors must be well acquainted with the dynamics that characterize small work group, and at the same time, be able to handle his or her role as supervisor and leader" (ibid, p.650). The supervisor has three roles: group manager, leader, and supervisor of the case studies.

The supervisory relationship in the group setting is more complex and dependent on the supervisor's skills and capacities in facilitating within the dynamics of the group setting. This research addresses the gap of the group dynamics' implications for the supervisory relationship and creation of the container in coaching supervision.

Group typology – options for facilitation of the groups

Proctor (2008) defines four types of groups: the authoritative group, in which the supervisor has control of the group process, with essentially individual supervision observed in a group setting. The participative group, where the supervisor is primarily the supervisor but invites the other group members to co-supervise to some extent—the supervisor "actively teaches and directs group members in co-supervising each other" (ibid., p. 32-33). The co-operative group, where the group members are active co-supervisors, and the supervisor has

"overall responsibility for the supervision work and for the well-being of the group and has to be vigilant in monitoring and facilitating the work of the group" (ibid.). The fourth group is a peer group, without a formal supervisor role (Proctor, 2008, p.4).

The clinical supervision research on the supervisory relationship and on supervision in the group setting provide additional pieces to the framework for exploring and analyzing what occurred in this research. It is additive to the team and group dialogue, and reflective practice fields. In the final section of this chapter, I consider briefly experiential and transformative learning.

Experiential learning (Kolb) and transformative learning (Mezirow)
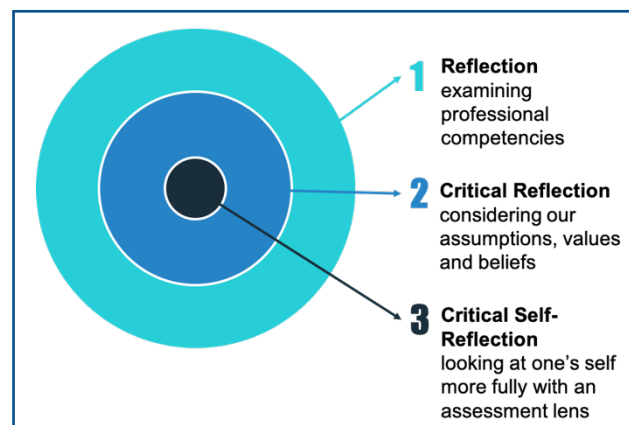
Figure 4: Experiential Learning (Kolb) and Transformative Learning (Mezirow)

Kolb's (2015) experiential learning cycle encompasses the four elements of learning: experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting in multiple iterations or "learning spirals" occurring over time (p.51). "We return again to the experience and know it anew in the continuous recursive spiral of learning. It is this spiral of learning that embeds us in a co-evolution of mutually transforming transactions between ourselves and the world" (ibid., p.61).

Kolb (2015) writes in the latest edition, contrasting reflection as used by Schön (1983, 1987), Mezirow (1990, 1991), and others who:

> *place reflection as the primary source of the transformation that leads to learning and development. Unlike these advocates of reflective practice, reflection in experiential learning theory is not the sole determinant of learning and development but is one facet of a holistic process of learning from experience that includes experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting. As we have seen, the shock of direct concrete experience may be necessary to initiate it (p.57).*

Mezirow (1990) defined three kinds of reflection as sequential steps on the path toward transformative learning: reflection, critical reflection, and critical self-reflection (Mezirow, 1990).

Perhaps most importantly, Mezirow's (1991) core propositions demand the use of reflection: they require a willingness to engage in inquiry about what we know and believe, consider how we explore problems, and recognize what our assumptions are about the context, which results in new ways of framing those situations (p.117). As one incorporates new understandings and ways of taking action, one is transformed toward greater professional competence (ibid., pp. 116-117). Mälkki (2010) developed a theoretical model that incorporates the emotional and social dimensions into Mezirow's model, making the case that for one to examine our own beliefs and values is difficult work, and transformative learning does not come easily. It is a struggle (2010, p.53).

Schön (1987) and Argyris (1977) describe single loop learning as reflecting on our actions (similar to Mezirow's definition of reflection) and double loop learning as reflecting on and challenging what one's underlying assumptions and beliefs are that inform their actions (similar to Mezirow's definition of critical reflection). Triple-loop learning was defined by Peschl (2007, p.138) as "a process of radically questioning and consistently changing the premises and studying their

implications on the body and on the dynamics of knowledge." Triple-loop learning is similar to transformative learning as described by Mezirow (but see Mälkki, 2010, p.210).

Yanow and Tsoukas (2009) raise the theoretical idea of reflective practice existing on a continuum that includes reflection-in-action and on-action, with both being part of the overall reflective practice process.

In this Chapter I have identified the academic theories that I have brought forward within which to situate my research. I will reference the literature in the coming chapters and will identify the contributions from my conclusions to these theories in Chapter 10.

In the next Chapter I set out my project plan, including my inquiry, and how I planned to conduct this research.

Chapter 3: Project Plan

"What makes a fire burn

is space between the logs,

a breathing space".

(Brown, J., 2016, p.34)

Principle Inquiry

What are the qualities and conditions that create enough safety in the supervision relationships within a group to enable self-disclosure, reflection, and learning? How are these qualities and conditions designed and brought forth?

I first set out to explore this question by asking coaches to experiment and bring their actual coaching to the supervision sessions through recordings, transcripts, or coaching in the session itself. This was a provocative ask of self-disclosure—to have a coach share with the group their actual work, rather than share through storytelling. It was an ask to experiment with an approach that was not utilized.

My initial project proposal was for qualitative research using phenomenological case studies of North American coaches in virtual small group supervision. The title of my project was "Bringing one's self fully into supervision: Moving beyond storytelling in developing our self as the instrument of our coaching".

I planned to collect data from two supervision groups. The data would consist of participants' reflections on supervision through surveys, responses to monthly journaling prompts, and four action learning meetings. In those meetings we would explore what had happened in their sessions, inquire about different approaches they may want to take, seek their agreement to do so, and in our next meeting, share what worked and did not.

Recruitment of the sponsoring organization

In planning the project, I approached an organization (the "Sponsor") with which I was affiliated as faculty, as coaching supervisor, and in a handful of other roles[3]. The Sponsor was the first, in North America, to establish a supervision center as part of their services for coaches that had completed their coach training certification. The selection of this community was intentional —I wanted to do this research as an insider-researcher (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010). The compelling factors were:

1. **Quality—**The Sponsor is one of the pre-eminent coach certification programs in North America, and they were on the leading edge of coaching supervision here.

2. **Relationships —**

   a. Easier recruitment—I had long term relationships within the system; I was respected and known.

   b. "Benefit of the doubt" from others when inevitable tensions arose in the process.

   c. Political savvy—I knew the culture, the leaders and faculty, and I was a member of the leadership team.

3. **Access—** This would provide access to a pool of potential participants of certified coaches and certified supervisors.

4. **Shared knowledge-**I knew the language and practices, including the curriculum, the coaching methodology, and the focus on the ongoing development of one's self as an instrument of the work.

5. **Giving back—**My own professional and personal development had flourished within this community. I expected my research would contribute to the professional and personal development of colleagues and influence our collective practices of supervision.

The three primary benefits to the Sponsor would be the opportunity for supervisors and alumni to learn as research-participants, early access to my learning, discoveries and conclusions, and contribution to our profession through sponsorship of formal research.

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[3] A detailed list of my relationships is set forth in Appendix 1   .

Supervision center operating principles

The supervision center had several operating principles. It had been established to provide ongoing professional and personal development for coaches. Supervision was available to alumni as well as to organizations who contracted for supervision of their internal coaches. The certified supervisors were active in the coach certification training programs as faculty, mentor coaches, and/or coaches for the students. Small groups provided a cost-effective approach; groups of six were preferred. The coaches paid for the supervision, and the supervisors were paid as subcontractors by the Sponsor. The supervision engagements were 10 sessions over about one year, and all sessions were 90 minutes, conducted virtually using Zoom as the videoconferencing technology. It was typical for the supervision sessions to be recorded, and the recordings shared with participants.

Collaborative recruitment

The broad outline of my ask was to conduct the research with supervision groups within the supervision center which would require collaborative recruitment. The participants would be engaging in paid supervision groups as research participants. The Sponsor and I crafted the agreement with particular attention to a design that would differentiate standard supervision from research. This was to mitigate the risks that if the research requirements led to dissatisfaction with supervision, the experience would be less likely to impact coaches' willingness to engage in future supervision. The Sponsor agreed to collaborate in the recruitment of participants. The sponsorship agreement, intended as a working set of principles, was signed in December 2016. (It is set forth in Appendix 1; redacted.)

Pivot #1 I will participate as a supervisor

The project was approved in February; by mid-March I had decided to participate as a supervisor. I was influenced by input from my academic advisor, substantive content adviser, two of my existing supervision groups, and other coaching colleagues. I requested and received approval to modify my proposal (Downing, 2017c). I let the

Sponsor know; they readily supported the decision. The data would include the recordings of my supervision sessions. This would bring the virtual room as supervision happened into the data collected; the "very task itself" (Revans, 2011, p.3).

My duties of care were to three sets of relationships—with the Sponsor as established by our agreement, and in service to their relationships with faculty and alumni; with the participants whom I supervised with the explicit goal to not negatively impact their supervision experiences through the research process; and with all the participants as researcher.
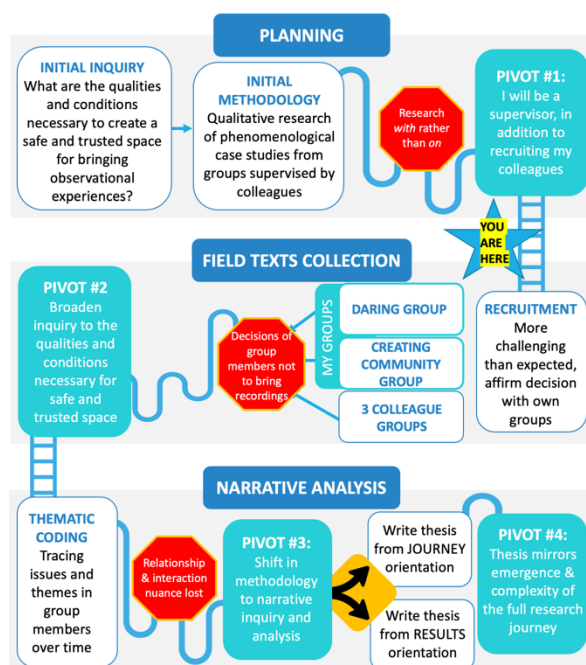
Figure 5: Pivot #1

Methods for collecting data

I planned to include five types of data collection methods: video recordings of my supervision sessions; video recordings of the action learning meetings; participants' journaling entries; email correspondence and other interactions among myself, participants, and the Sponsor; and my writings and reflections.

The video recordings – supervision sessions

The video recordings of the supervision sessions would provide the record of what happened in the actual sessions. Reviewing recordings was very familiar and comfortable. I had used them extensively to provide mentoring, developmental goals, and insights for coaches in training. As mentioned in the first Chapter, I had consistently recorded my supervision sessions and reviewed them periodically for my own learning and occasionally for use with my supervisor.

Each session would be recorded automatically on Zoom. I would then download the recordings and have them transcribed by a third party transcription service. These field texts would be stored on the One Drive software available through Middlesex. As a precaution, backup copies were stored on my local hard drive.

Unique Data Set

There are fewer than 10 doctoral level studies on coaching supervision; in seven of them, the data collection was based on interviews of individual participants. Hodge (2014) engaged in action learning sets with her participants over a year's time. Pampallis Paisley (2006) undertook collection of rich varieties of data including observation, interviews, journal entries, supervising coaches, and conversations with colleagues and members of the academy. Passmore and McGoldrick (2009) used observation of one supervision session and 6 interviews; and Armstrong and Geddes (2009) the researcher observed 3 supervision sessions and interviewed 10 participants.

The field texts for this research were planned to be a unique data set as they would include the recordings of the two groups' supervision sessions, totaling 25 hours over 12 months; and the researcher was not observing, she would be the supervisor.

The Video Recordings – action learning meetings

Similarly, the video recordings of the action learning meetings would provide the record of what happened in those interactions. The recordings, transcription, and storage would be handled consistently with the supervision recordings.

In my design, I intentionally selected action learning sets (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014), for collective learning through iterative cycles. I did not originally plan an action research approach (Bradbury, 2015), but I did plan to use "action learning strategies" (Revans, 2011; Fiss, 2009, p.427). I anticipated the groups would experiment, evaluate, and reflect; share what they were learning as well as inquire about the learning of the other groups; modify or refine their approaches, and do another series of experimenting, reflecting, evaluating, and sharing back.

The plan was to meet with each of the groups at the midpoint of their year, following the completion of their ten sessions, and once more, 3-6 months later. I was interested in learning with them during the year and again, at a later time, to see if their perspectives or process had changed.

However, as it developed, my relationships with the three groups supervised by my colleagues did not evolve as I had imagined—I had two significant discoveries about my standing as an insider-researcher with respect to their groups and the nature of our debriefing sessions. I explore my positionality and the evolution of the debriefing meetings into focus groups rather than action learning sets in Appendix 2.
In Chapter 7, I share the experiences of these three groups.

The journal prompts—individual views

The supervision sessions and action learning meetings would give me the perspectives of the groups. The journaling would give me individuals' reflections about the experiences. The entries would provide contrast and comparison of how individuals described the sessions privately, as well as views of their learning. I used open-ended broad questions

to create the space for them to share whatever was most on their minds. I assumed the journal entries might be more candid and forthright than the discussion in the action learning meetings and if so, that in itself would be good information.

Journal prompts would be sent to participants at the end of each supervision session. The original prompts were organized around the individual's learning (Q1, Q2 and Q4) and an inquiry about the supervision process (Q3 and Q5). The original prompts are set forth below in Table 2. I would ask in the action learning meetings if the questions were useful or if they would prefer others and modify as they requested.

Table 2 Journal Prompts to be sent to participants following each session

Q1. What is most on your mind from this supervision session?
Q2. What, if anything, did you notice, learn, discover, or recognize in your self [sic]? How might this impact you as a coach?
Q3. What was useful for you in this session?
Q4. Are there any other stirrings, observations, reflections, or ideas on your mind?
Q5 – Please check any of the approaches used in the session today
___ Case studies or sticky situations
___ Recording
___ Transcript
___ Coaching each other
___ Group dynamics
___ Other: _____

Table 2: Original Journal Prompts

Note that the journal prompts were intended for research purposes. What some of the participants coincidentally discovered was that journaling following the sessions resulted in continuing reflecting, learning, and identifying ways of experimenting with clients.

Data Collection: correspondence and other interactions

I would retain the email correspondence among myself, participants, and the Sponsor as well as notes, reflections, or recordings of occasional and informal interactions as part of the field texts collected.

Data Collection: My experiences and reflections

My collections of journaling, meditations, reflections, noticing, notes of conversations with colleagues, recordings of sessions in which I was supervisee[4], any watercolors, doodles, and sketched images would be included.

---

[4] My supervisor signed an Informed Consent to participate in the research as my supervisor, as a supervisor-participant that granted me permission to record our sessions, have them transcribed and included as data. It is included in Appendix 3.

Summary of data sources

1	Transcripts of subject matter experts, quasi-structured interviews
2	Interactions and discussions from recruitment and selection process
3	Recordings, transcripts and correspondence with pilot group
4	Expertise from a variety of relevant knowledge domains
5	Recordings and transcripts of 10 supervision sessions with Creating Community Group
6	Recordings and transcripts of action learning or focus group meetings
7	Monthly Journals of all participants during 12 months and 3 months after completion of the supervision groups.
8	My own journals, reflections, learning, and questions
9	Spontaneous dialogue that emerges throughout the research process
10	Changes in the culture, values, norms or procedures of the Supervision Center

Table 3: Data Collection Sources

Timelines

The timeline for the project was to begin recruitment in May-June 2017, have the groups begin in August-September 2017, and have the action learning meetings taking place over the 12 months of supervision with the final meeting about 3-6 months later. These are set out below in Figure 6 Research Project Timeline and Figure 7 Research Timeline for Data Collection:

Figure 6: Research Project Timeline

Research Timeline for Data Collection
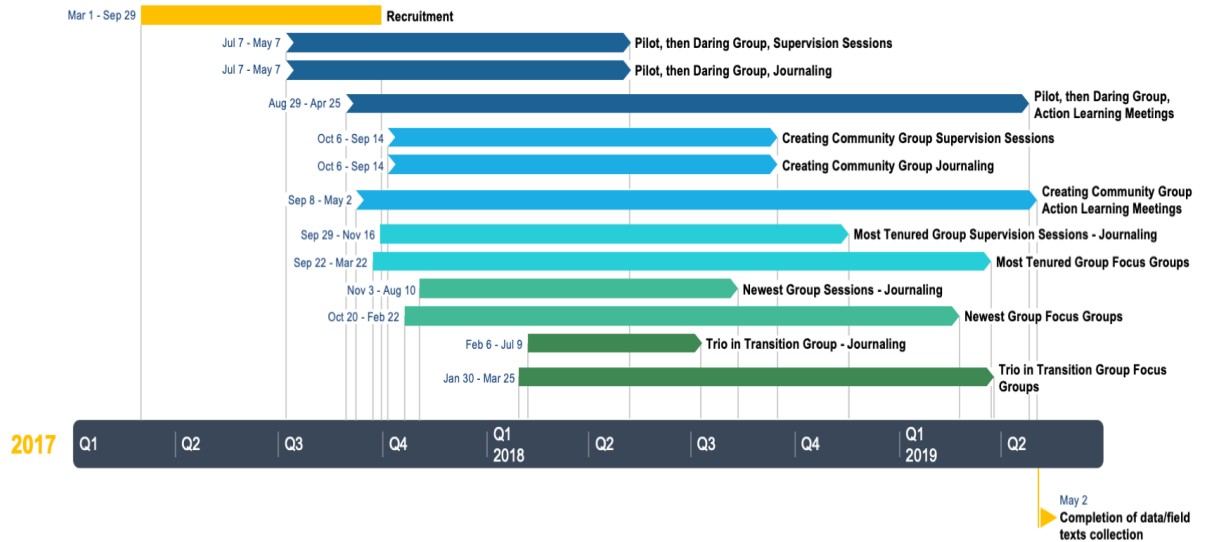
Figure 7: Research Timeline for Data Collection

The Informed Consents

The initial drafts of the Informed Consents were approved with the project and included provisions that the research was being conducted under the auspices of the University; the asks of the participants; the confidentiality provisions for the participants and their clients; specifically what data will be collected; how it will be stored and utilized; that participation was voluntary and participants may withdraw at any time without negative recourse; the intellectual property rights of the researcher; and whether de-identified quotes may be used. There were four versions of the Informed Consents, one for each of the scenarios: supervisor-participants, coach-participants, coach-participants in my groups, and with my own supervisor (See Appendix 3).

Protecting confidentialities

I was aware of the amount of information that was available online in LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other social platforms. At Harvard College in the early 2000s research was conducted anonymously from the researchers' points of view that subsequently exposed the identities of many of the participants (Zimmer, 2010). The ability to protect individuals, especially those situated in relatively small communities requires care. Consistent with the obligations to protect the identities of the participants, I planned to take the following steps:

1. To disclose, in this thesis, that Hudson Institute of Coaching[5] was the sponsoring organization. It was easily discoverable, as my affiliations within this community were (and are) visible in my LinkedIn profile, my speaker and author profiles, and on my website. The Sponsor was aware of this; I confirmed this with potential participants.
2. To disclose only the following limited information on the participants
    a. Participants were based in North America, with one exception
    b. Years as a certified coach: newly certified to 5 years, 6-10 years, more than 10 years
    c. Gender
    d. Whether the participant was actively coaching, an emerging coach, a coach in an organization role or no longer actively coaching
    e. Participants' experience in supervision in general terms; none of the participants listed being in supervision on their LinkedIn profiles
    f. The number of coaches in each group

Even with this care, it was possible than some participants could be identified or disclose their participation. Appropriate provisions were included in the Informed Consent.

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[5] The sponsorship does not imply concurrence, approval or endorsement of the views, content, findings or conclusions in this thesis.

Ethical inquiries about power, coercion, and relationships

I would look for signs of ethical issues throughout the project, including the potential use of power or coercion, as well as gauging if my care and availability were at appropriate levels. I held six values to guide the implementation of the project:

- Whatever happened in the supervision groups was just what the research needed as data.

- I would put relationships first.

- I would take a stance of inquiry and curiosity with the participants, not a stance of directiveness.

- My supervisor role would be primary in the supervision sessions with my two groups, and my researcher role would be primary in the meetings with the three other groups.

- I would share openly with participants the experiences and learning of the others, while preserving confidentialities.

- We were all adult learners, engaged in a commercial relationship, for the purpose of our mutual personal and professional development; the principles of adult learning would inform resolutions of conflicts or concerns.

- I would engage in supervision of my supervision and of my role as researcher with my supervision supervisor.

Data Analysis – not yet a plan

When I developed the project proposal, I merely said I would analyze the data. I was anticipating thematic analyses that were interpretative, consistent with a phenomenological study (Creswell and Poth, 2018); I believed the project would change based on what emerged; and that emergence had the potential to impact how to analyze the data. As a new researcher I had read about data analysis, thought about it, but had not yet practiced it. I had the propositional knowledge but not the experiential, practical, or presentational knowledge (Heron, 1999). I had the theories but lacked their application to the real world.

Three of my five original goals were about starting with the experiences of a few:

1. To carry out the research project as a case study exploring the lived experiences of the coaches in the two small groups.

2. To become a practitioner-researcher and learn more about myself as coach, as supervisee and as supervisor through incorporating the discoveries from the research into my practice.

3. To potentially change the practice of supervision within the Supervision Center as informed by the research and the individual experiences of the participants.

I decided to explore data analysis methods as I was collecting the initial data, so that I had actual data to consider how to move from collecting qualitative data to data analysis (Saldaña, 2015).

The Richness of Multiple Perspective and Possibilities

Flyvbjerg (2006) stated that the richness and complexity of sharing the details of the case, is itself "the answer" (p.240). In his passionate defense of case studies, he wrote:

> *knowledge that cannot be generalized does not mean it cannot enter*
> *into the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field or*
> *a society. A purely descriptive, phenomenological case study without*
> *attempts to generalize can certainly be of value in this process and has*
> *often helped cut a path toward scientific innovation (ibid.).*

His approach requires close attention to the experiences of each of the participants. He cautions against the use of theories to summarize or generalize (ibid.). In contrast, Czarniawska-Joerges (1997) notes narrative may enter organizational study through case studies, and it requires an interplay among the theories and the narratives. Both agree that use of narratives and the resulting narratives are themselves ways of knowing.

Flyvbjerg (2006) makes the argument that the case, if accurately and richly reported from a variety of perspectives, is genuine. By variety of perspectives, he is focused on the

possible contradictions and differences of experiences and the essentialness of capturing all that the participants experience. I intended to live these principles in the data analysis.

A case study did not require a particular method for data analysis (Yin, 2018); I deferred the selection at that point. Many methods can be used within case studies, as Fiss (2009) states:

> *that because the case study approach is a research strategy that aims to maintain the configurational, holistic nature of the case or cases, it is not limited to any particular form of evidence or data collection, and it can involve single or multiple cases, various methods of data collection and levels of analysis (p.427).*

I planned to review and consider the data regularly, particularly following each phase of action learning meetings. Willig (2013, p.38) writes: "the researcher collects and analyses data in a cyclical fashion so that initial attempts at data analysis inform strategies for further data collection, and so on. Such studies' findings emerge, in cumulative and piecemeal fashion, from the research process as a whole".

Ontological and epistemological views

I have placed this section at the end of this Chapter because I am writing it almost at the end of the writing of my thesis. The balance of this Chapter was written in the past and future tense – past represented in what I had planned and what I had planned was to take place in the future. This section is written in the present tense. My values and philosophies about research as framed by ontological and epistemological views were unclear to me for much of the time. Their articulation has crystalized within me.

> *"What we take to be the truth about the world importantly depends on the social relationships of which we are a part".*
>
> *(Gergen, 2015, p.3)*

Social constructionism (Gergen, 2015) is a way of making sense of the world in which we make meaning in relationships, we construct knowledge through dialogue with others, we pay particular attention to language, we accept "there is no one, authoritative account that represents all the participants" (ibid., p.4), we shift the perspective from the individual self to the relational self and the "*care for relationships* is primary" (ibid., p.13) *(emphasis in original)*. A principle of social constructionism is the hope of improving a part of the world.

Social constructionism has its roots in a variety of academic disciplines and is described as "an umbrella" or a "general theory" (Burr, 2015; Gergen, 2015, p.29). By its very nature of inquiry, it creates opportunities for new ideas and ways of being (Gergen, 2015, p.13, 32). It has five foundational aspects (Gergen, 2015). The first is that we construct meaning through our social interactions—relationships are central. The second is that our cultural beliefs in what is acceptable, and what is not, are developed through our relationships with others. This does not mean that we should privilege what we know more than what other cultures know, it is the opening up to the belief that if we have socially constructed them, then they are optional views of knowledge. Third, language is at the heart of social construction, how we use it, what words mean and how they are used in social interactions. Fourth, there is no universal truth, but rather multiple truths, based on how language is used in particular contexts by particular individuals. Fifth, our values, implicit and explicit arise in our relationships and therefore influence our understandings. "What we take to be knowledge of the world will always carry the values of those traditions that fashion our inquiry and our conclusions" (ibid., p.13).

My view of the world is within the social constructionist paradigm that regards "reality as being individually and socially derived" (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010, p.84). This arises from my experiences of the need for learning in community, that each of us construct meanings as we experience things, and the recognition that we each construct what happens based on our prior experience (Creswell, 2013; Karr, 2016). As Creswell (2013, p.8) states "the goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants' view of the situation being studied". That is my commitment in this endeavor.

In this chapter I have explained my project plan, methods and methodologies. In the next chapter I set out the process and results of the recruitment of participants.

Chapter 4: Collaborative Design and Recruitment

"You find twice the amount of life-giving nitrogen and phosphorus in plants that cooperate with fungal partners than in plants that tap the soil with their roots alone".

(Wohlleben, 2018, p.23)

Recruitment of supervisors

Meeting with supervisor colleagues – relationships first

The next step in the recruiting journey was to meet with my supervisor colleagues to invite them to participate in a short pilot in the summer, and potentially as supervisors in the full year of research.

I anticipated excitement about the research, a desire to participate, acceptance of my proposed process, and enthusiasm. Instead, throughout the meeting I met skepticism, worry and resistance. I managed to re-design in the midst of the discussion (Yanow and Tsoukas, 2009; Weick, 2004) while I listened carefully and responded to several of their concerns. I could see the validity and reasoning behind many of their points. I said I would respond to the remaining concerns in the next few days as I took in the totality of the conversation.

I sent an email the next morning with appreciation for their input and concerns. It stated "The most important take away for me may be the emphasis on the foundational principle of supervision...the most important relationship is among supervisor and supervisees. That is what I felt and heard yesterday—how to ensure the structure of the research is more in support of that essential relationship" (Downing, 2017b). The responses that came back were about my "grace" in the meeting, my openness, and my going forward by adjusting and negotiating. I had felt many things in the meeting and grace was not one of them.

Nepo (2012) defines grace as "when we can meet life with an open heart, receiving becomes indistinguishable from giving and we become conduits of grace" (p.49). In the receiving of their feedback, and the revisions to meet their concerns, there was grace. The reminder for me was that I had decades of experience as a facilitator, which had served me in that setting.

The revisions to the research process were numerous. They addressed the primacy of the supervisory relationships and the consistency in communication from the Sponsor to supervisees. They also began to address the consistency of concerns over the scarcity of time, and fear of using observational experiences. I intentionally prioritized my relationships with my colleagues by considering their input and modifying the processes to address their issues while keeping the viability of the research process at the forefront of my mind.

The challenges of insider-research require the ability to simultaneously be within the system of the Sponsor and stand back enough to "observe" what is going on, to manage the multiple roles of researcher and one's organizational roles, and to manage the politics within the Sponsor (Coghlan and Shani, 2015; Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). The recruitment process tested each of these abilities. If the research-supervision experience was not a good one overall, it could impact the relationships among the supervisor and coaches within each group as well as with the Sponsor. Similarly, there was the risk to me that if the participants had a negative experience, I would lose or damage my relationships with them and with the Sponsor.

I was aware that the concerns raised by supervisors could reasonably be expected to be raised by potential participants. Based on this, I produced short informational videos and a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document for the Sponsor's website so there was a consistent and single source of information on volunteering to participate. See Appendix 5 for transcripts of the videos and the FAQs.

Ethical Considerations

I had concerns about the integrity of the data collection process and ensuring it was captured accurately and completely and then transmitted to me. I structured a process for integrity and control of data beginning with the following questions -

1. **Integrity of recordings—**How to manage the integrity of the recordings of the debriefing meetings and ensure my access?

2. **Collection of journaling—**What is the process for sending journal prompts each month? The journaling would go back to the Sponsor and then be sent to me. What influence might this have on what the participant writes? How would I ensure that the journaling was fully sent to me each month?

3. **Confidentiality—**How would I ensure the confidentiality of the data collected if it was also stored electronically with the sponsor?

4. **Informed Consent**—How to manage the process of getting the Informed Consents through the supervision center. It needed the same security that is used for invoicing, and payment and I needed to maintain possession of the originals.

5. **Permissions—**How to describe the permissions needed from the clients? Did I need written copies? Did clients become participants through the use of the recordings in a supervision session and if so, did they need to sign Informed Consents?

Working with the Sponsor, we devised appropriate procedures to resolve these concerns. The journaling was the most significant. To protect the confidentiality, I subscribed to Qualtrics, a provider of online survey software, for the data collection system. The journal prompts would be sent, using the Sponsor's name and logo, and the journal entries would be returned to my account. This protected the confidentiality of the data as I would be the only one with access to the data collected.

Recruitment for the pilot

Pilots are a best practice (Gray, 2018, p.240). I wanted to pilot the use of observational experiences, and the journaling requirements, to further inform recruitment and the design for the full-year groups. I was considering how to devise a pilot, given that the supervisors had declined, when two coaches, Sally and Aileen[6], came forward, independently, to volunteer. They were both current supervisees, in an existing group that I supervised. They were enthusiastic and motivated by desires to work with me and contribute to the profession; they were willing to accept the responsibilities, including the obligations that at least one of them would bring a recording or a transcript, and both agreed to live-action coaching in the supervision session.

We had an exploratory call. The themes and questions they raised involved the minimum size of the group, my expectations for the structure and process of the sessions, and how the research requirements would overlay with the supervision process. I engaged them in the design of the pilot, and we collaboratively sketched how we could proceed. By the conclusion of the call, we had agreed to a three-session pilot, with one action learning meeting at conclusion, subject to their review and acceptance of the Informed Consent.

I modified the Informed Consent to reflect a Pilot of three supervision sessions and one action learning meeting. See Appendix 3.

My key learnings from the discussion and agreement were:
- **Importance of our relationships—**The participants in the pilot volunteered because of our existing relationships; they trusted me and wanted to support my efforts.
- **Expectations needed clarification—**The introduction of the research context required explicit contracting to confirm which standard supervision elements remained, and which new elements were required. This would be important to communicate to supervisor-participants.

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[6] Not their real names.

- **Prior supervision experience was useful**—Aileen and Sally were comfortable with the supervision structure; their focus was clarification about the research. The supervisor group's request to recruit coaches with prior supervision experience appeared wise.
- **Process for recordings**—Sally had not recorded clients before and needed recommended processes for client selection, seeking client permission, the mechanics of recording, and options for transcribing. I would draft a set of guidelines and make them available to all participants.

The Informed Consents for the Pilot were signed and returned. (Note to you, the reader, the Pilot group became the Daring Group described in Chapter 5, when they agreed to continue beyond the initial three sessions and engage for the full year.)

Recruitment of Coaches

It was not a straightforward process to target segments of the alumni for the supervision-research groups. The recruitment email blasts and conversations were to only those already in a supervision group or who had previously engaged in supervision. Any coach interested in participating was asked to take initiative by watching the informational videos and reading the frequently asked questions document. If they were still interested, they were encouraged to explore participation with their supervisor and group. These efforts did not result in potential participants.

I stayed in contact with a supervisor and coaches who had expressed interest and indicated they would volunteer. I encouraged two of the coaches to reach out to the supervisor to explore forming a group. I encouraged another coach to continue considering recruitment of her existing group. My encouragement was in the form of answering their questions, talking with them about the content of the Informed Consents, and clarifying what was expected of participants. I was sowing seeds.

The Sponsor and I revised our agreements to increase the number of potential participants. The acceptable profiles were expanded—past supervision experience was

no longer required if the coach had at least three years coaching experience. Groups of fewer than 6 coaches could be formed, subject to approval of the supervisor. The Sponsor experimented with new ways of recruiting coaches specifically to join the supervision research; no one responded. Both the Sponsor and I were surprised that recruitment was this challenging. We had anticipated more interest and receptivity.

The Pilot group volunteered to continue to participate for a full 10 sessions over 12 months. I accepted with relief—I would have at least one group for the full year and they could continue to provide implementation experience, as they were 3 months ahead, if any other group joined.

In discussions with trusted colleagues, I was counseled that I was making a "really big ask" to bring in observational experiences, that it was "very exposing" and "very risky" for the participants, particularly because it was in a group setting. I remained interested in my inquiry. I considered my approach to research supervision as we practiced it, with an invitation to experiment at least once with each of the three types of observational experiences, to be feasible.

Recruitment is Successful

I continued in occasional dialogue with my colleagues who had expressed interest as early as April, and by late in September and early October, the seeds began to sprout. I supported the recruitment discussions they were having with prospective supervisors and groups. With approval of individual supervisors, I met with two of these groups. I was discussing participation with one of my existing groups. I was a colleague, a supervisor, a supervisee group member, a coach, a mentor, and/or a friend to the potential supervisor participants and to some of the potential coach participants.

My interactions as researcher required a level of care, self-awareness, and collaboration that was equivalent to how I was as a coach, coaching supervisor and mentor coach. In the meetings with the prospective participants, I was invitational and shared my belief that whatever emerged in a supervision session would be just what the research needed.

I explicitly stated my commitment to not negatively disrupt their supervision experiences. Using the experience of the pilot, I clarified the research requirements and encouraged them to co-design with their group how to integrate use of observational experiences.

My relationships and reputation within the community made the difference in the recruitment process. Colleagues with whom I had good relationships volunteered, and through their relationships recruited others. By the end of October, participants in four groups had agreed to participate and signed Informed Consents. I was the supervisor-participant-researcher for two of the groups, and two of the groups were supervised by colleagues. The research was launched; I was energized. The fifth group joined three months later, midway through their ten sessions. The newness of supervision in North America is reflected in the supervision experience of the participants and the experience of the supervisors following certification.

Participants' demographics as of Autumn 2017					
	Years following certification	Prior Supervision Experience	Actively coaching	Other roles	Gender
The Daring Group					
Supervisor 1: Kathryn	**Coach:** 8 **Supervisor:** 2	8 years		Supervisor External Mentor Coach	F
Coach 1: Aileen	1-5	3 years	yes	Facilitation and training	F
Coach 2: Sally	10+	1 year	yes	Facilitation	F
The Creating Community Group					
Supervisor 1: Kathryn	Coach: 8 Supervisor: 2	8 years		Supervisor External Mentor Coach	F
Coach 3: Bob	1-5	2 years	One internal client	In transition because of required retirement	M
Coach 4: Felicia	1-5	2 years	no	In transition from prior career to coaching	F

Coach 5: Debra	1-5	2 years	beginning to develop role— started with 5 internal clients during the year	HR & OD practitioner in organization	F
Coach 6: Andy	1-5	none	no	In transition because of required retirement	M
Coach 7: Candice	1-5	none	Yes	Facilitator and trainer	F
Coach 8: Ellen	1-5	2 years	no	HR & OD practitioner in organization	F
Most Tenured Group					
Supervisor 2	Coach: 20+ Supervisor: 3	20+ years		Supervisor Faculty Organizational role	F
Coach 9	10+	5-7[7] years	Yes		F
Coach 10	10+	5-7 years	Yes		F
Coach 11	10+	5-7 years	No	organizational, doctoral candidate	M
Coach 12	10+	5-7 years	Yes	organizational	F
Coach 13	10+	5-7 years	No	In transition	M
Coach 14	10+	5-7 years	No	In transition	F
Newest Together Group					
Supervisor 3	Coach: 20+ Supervisor: 3			Supervisor External Mentor Coach	F
Coach 15	5-10 years	2 years	Yes	organizational	F
Coach 16	10+ years	none	Yes	In transition	F
Coach 17	10+ years	3 years	Yes		M
Coach 18	10+ years	3 years	Yes		F
Trio in Transition Group					
Supervisor 4	Coach: 20+ Supervisor: 3			Faculty Supervisor	F
Coach 19	5-10 years	2 years	Yes		F
Coach 20	5-10 years	3 years	Yes	In transition	F
Coach 21	5-10 years	3 years	No	In transition	F

Table 4: Participants' Demographics

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[7] Memories varied

Initial contracting with the participants

There were two levels of initial contracting with the participants: the first with the Sponsor for the delivery of supervision, and the second with me for the research. This is set out below in Figure 8.

With the agreement to participate, the coaches and supervisors had agreed to the standard supervision process as established by the Sponsor:

- Ten 90-minute supervision sessions over 12 months
- Ten 60-minute peer learning sessions over the same 12 months
- Virtual meetings using Zoom technology
- Usual and customary fees, payable by the coaches, in full, to the Sponsor
- Usual and customary fees, payable to the supervisors by the Sponsor

The coaches and supervisors had agreed to the research commitments with me as the researcher:

- Execution of the Informed Consent to document their agreement
- Respond monthly to journal prompts
- Experiment with the use of observational experiences
- Meet with me in three 60-minute action learning meetings
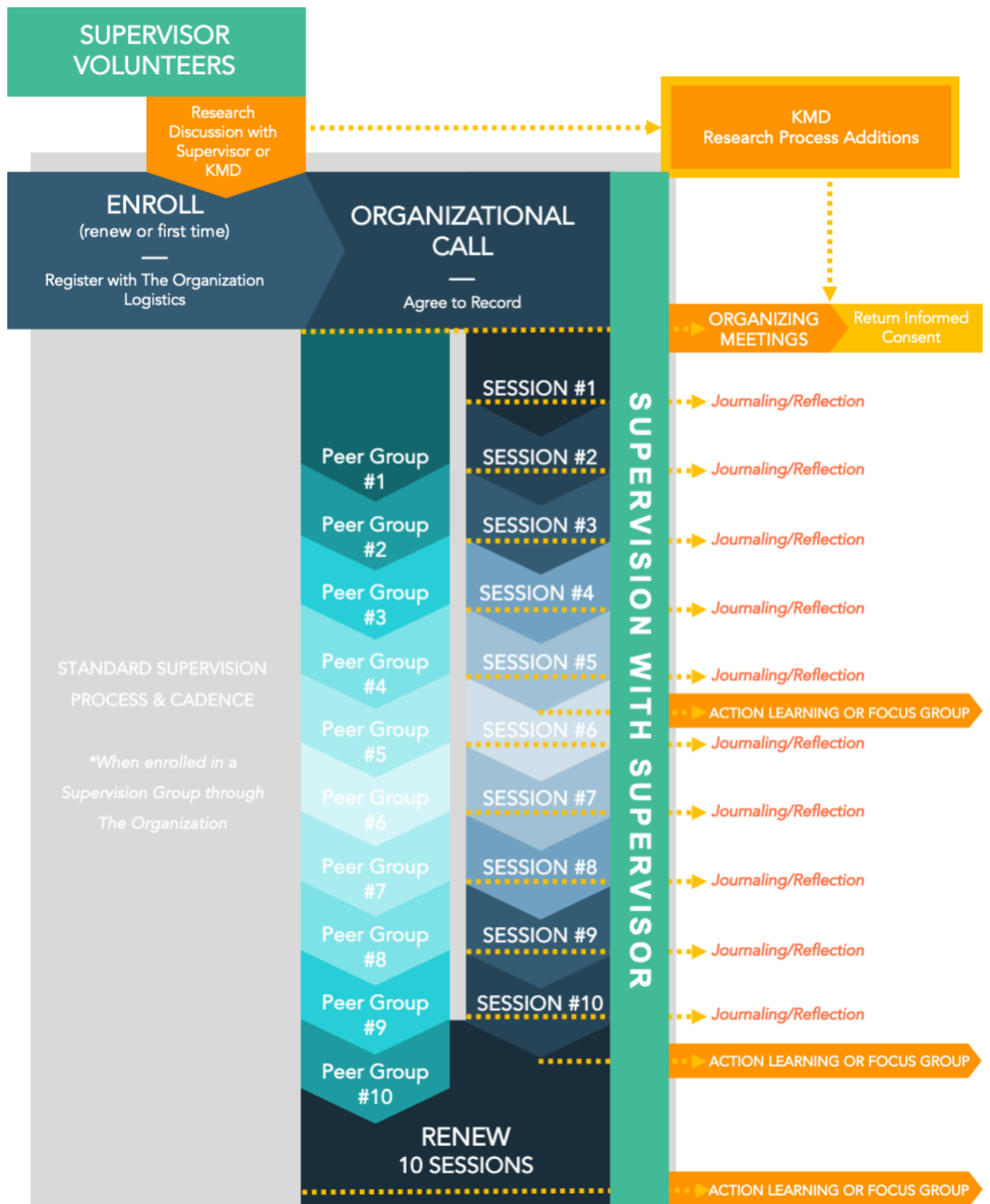
Figure 8: Initial contracting for supervision groups engaged in research

The standard time commitment for supervision was 25 hours. It was estimated the research commitment would add between 5.5 and 10 hours.

The Sponsor agreement remained fluid

The agreements with the Sponsor, with the groups, and with individual participants were fluid; we maintained strong working alliances. Revisions came through my reflections, through partnering with potential participants, and through what emerged in the organic process of supervision. Within each supervision group, some of the requirements of the research rubbed up against their commitment to their prior group processes, to what they noticed or knew about their own learning, or to the fears of exposure through the use of observational experiences in the group. In each instance those "rubs" were resolved in service to the participants' learning in supervision.

In this Chapter, I have described the recruitment process and the careful contracting that was required with the Sponsor, the pilot group and the participants.

In the following two Chapters, Chapters 5 and 6, I share my turn to narrative inquiry, and the experiences of the two groups that I was supervising. In Chapter 7, I share the experiences of the three groups supervised by colleagues.

Prologue to Chapters 5 and 6

"Practice is a laboratory".

(emphasis in original) (Jarvis, 1999, p.92)

"I suppose a room is the summation of all that has happened inside it."
"Yes, I think it is," agreed the Count. "And though I'm not exactly sure
what has come of all the intermingling in this particular room, I am
fairly certain that the world has been a better place because of it".

(Towles, 2016, p.331)

Turn to narrative inquiry

As described in Chapter 3, I planned to use an interpretive approach to analyze the
data collected. In supervision, the coaches primarily shared cases and issues through
storytelling. To understand the following chapters, it is necessary for me to make
explicit that I ultimately embraced narrative inquiry rather than phenomenological
case study methodology. My journey to embracing narrative inquiry happened
throughout the research process; for clarity, I explain it in this prologue to the Chapters
in which I share the narratives of the Daring Group and the Creating Community
Group.

Data Analysis

I began the data analysis with two steps. First, by steeping myself in the data: I read all of
the transcripts, journal entries, various emails, and my own regular reflections, as well as
re-watched the 47 hours of recorded sessions. I was observing myself as supervisor, the
group interactions and what I noticed from process and content perspectives. I
contrasted the early sessions with the later sessions; I contrasted each group with the
others. Then, second, I stepped back from the practice perspective and considered what
the literature offered me as different lenses of what was going on. At that time, I was
immersed in 4 books that explored dialogue in groups—Isaacs (1999) on dialogue, Coyle
(2018) on creating effective work teams, Block (2009) on building community and
Scharmer (2009) on reflective practice. These books captured my interest as they

explored small group interactions. I had not yet decided the focus of my research would be on the container and its ebb and flow in reflective practice. I was still holding the mistaken belief I could write about more than this single topic; I had a robust list of possibilities.

Thematic Coding

I began coding the transcripts. I used the thematic coding approach (Saldaña, 2015) of identifying themes, grouping them into larger themes by pulling meaning from sentences or sentence fragments. In coding the 14 hours of the first group's sessions, and their action learning meetings, I assigned 59 concepts that incorporated ideas from the literature and my knowledge of the intent, goals and process of supervision. It was a process that took me deeper into the transcripts. It also caused me to notice that by coding fragments, the relational elements among the participants were lost. In my late August 2018 meditations, I wrote:

> *I noticed I could not pick phrases or sentences from the transcript and code them – ala assigning words or phrases and categorizing these. (Saldana, 2015) The "pulling apart" of the words, phrases and sentences, did not help add meaning. Rather, it took away meaning. The transcripts are of interactions. People in relationship, in dialogue, in discovery, in exploration. The relationships and their facets, the dynamics within and among the group, levels of connection, deference, challenge – the dance within the group – is what provides the context. The context is what gives meaning to the data – it cannot stand alone.*

 My focus in the coding was on the process—e.g., facilitation of a recording review, exploration of the reflection question, inquiry by colleague, inquiry by supervisor—and on outcomes—e.g., increase in self-awareness, learning-in-the-moment, shame, vulnerability, etc.

I was beginning to identify my preferences to considering the data and analyzing it. I was drawn more to the story—the narrative of what was happening in the experience. I found myself focusing on the nuanced, complex, layered elements of the interactions: what was

between the lines of observable data, the relationship elements among the participants and the participants' evolving relationship with themselves. How the groups, and individuals, and our working relationships changed over the year; I paused the coding.

Focus on the inquiries within the container

I was feeling pulled in a number of directions: the supervision process itself was structured around storytelling (Clandinin, 2007); the coach's presentation of the case was narrative; and I was wondering how to capture what the coach was noticing, feeling, sensing, judging, or wishing. The complexities of what transpired in the sessions were rich with learning for many of the participants, and for me, as a supervisor and a researcher. I saw the potential of contributing to the academic knowledge through sharing meaningful narratives. Marshall's (2016) elegant prose had painted images for me at every turn and created a deep longing to engage with my research in a way that future readers might experience the power of the narratives.

I considered the data from different perspectives, exploring not the process but the content of the sessions. I began to consider that the "data" were the "field texts" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), within which there was the content that came into the room—the cases, issues, themes, inquiries, reflections and learning—as well as the processes by which the content were structured—pre-session emails, the format of the session including check-in and reflections on reflection questions, the type of facilitation used by the supervisor, e.g., hierarchical, autonomous (Heron, 1999), the use of observational methods, etc.

I revisited the transcripts and journal entries to track how a case or situation was first presented, how the issue shifted through the inquiry in the group, what the coaches took away with them in the session, and how their reflections shifted in the journaling following the session. I put these on flipcharts. I categorized the themes that arose in the consideration of the cases, identifying 30 in total, and connected the themes through the sessions using the low-tech approach of yarn. See Figure 9, a photo.
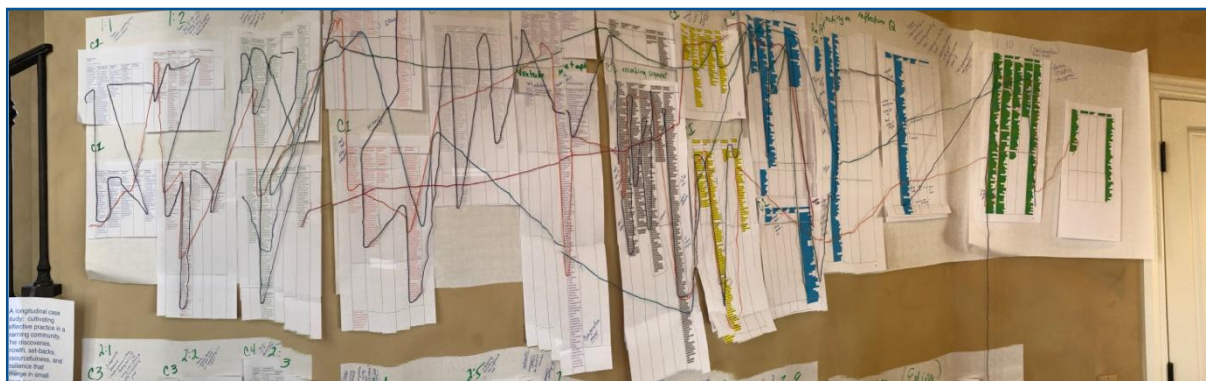
Figure 9: Flipcharts

I continued to consider the scope and fragmentation of the field texts. At the recommendation of my academic supervisor, I took a deeper dive into narrative inquiry, reading Polkinghorne (1988), Clandinin and Connelly (2000), some of the chapters within the Handbook of Narrative Inquiry edited by Clandinin (2007), and returned to two favorites – Bateson's Peripheral Visions (1994) and Karr's Art of the Memoir (2015). I also noticed that what pulled me into Block (2009) and Coyle (2018) were the stories—I could "see" the adults trying to build a structure with spaghetti strands, string, tape and a marshmallow (Coyle, 2018, pp.*xv-xviii*), and the bringing together of community members to create "restorative community" (Block, 2009, pp.47-54).

Primary focus on my two groups

I decided to focus on the two groups I had supervised and use the experiences of the three other groups to help me see more of myself as supervisor, and to further illuminate the experiences within my groups. Jarvis (1999) notes that "certain aspects of their practice, such as those that are tacit or habituated" are difficult to identify by their very nature (p.103). Our experiences inform what we notice; it is difficult to describe the water one swims in when one is a goldfish (Wallace, 2005). I have wondered about this throughout the research process—what was it that I was doing as a supervisor, or as a researcher, that was part of who and how I am, but was either unconscious competence or unconscious incompetence? What were the ways of excavating this knowledge, these skills or capabilities? The three groups supervised by others provided bright illumination.

As I learned about their experiences, I learned more about supervision in virtual small groups, and what was out of sight to me (Burch cited in Bryson, 2016).

Pivot #3 Arriving at narrative Inquiry
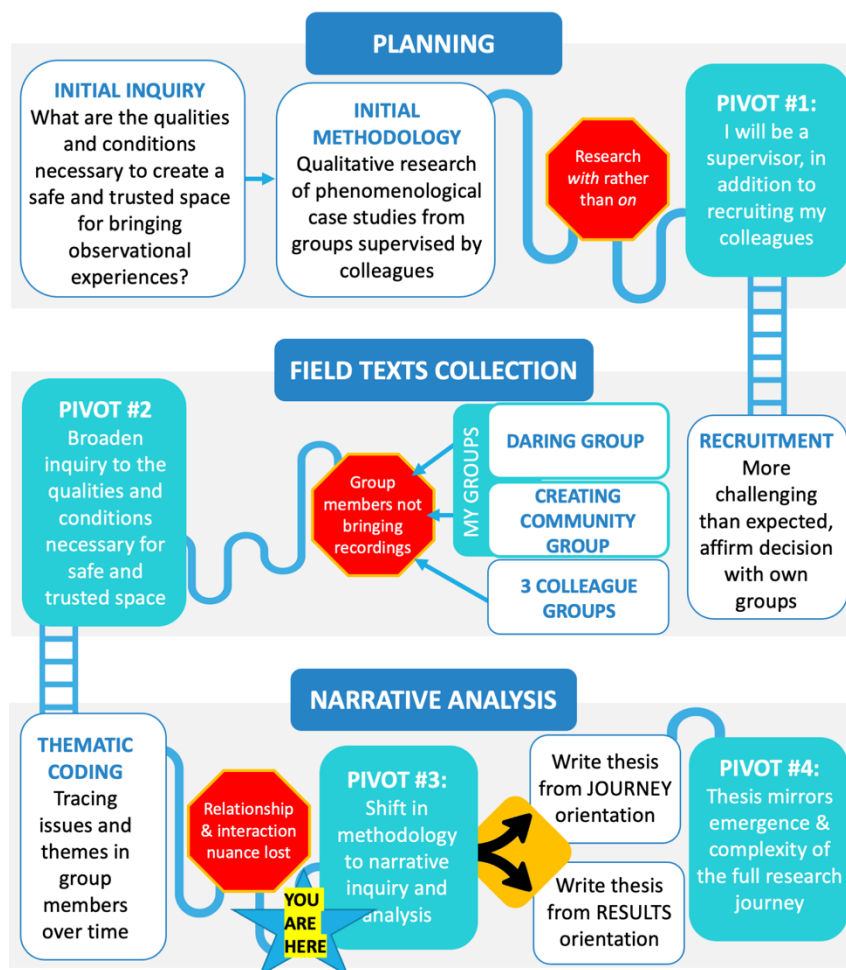
Figure 10: Pivot #3

Narrative inquiry—excavating what we know, how we reflect, our own stories, and what leads to learning (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000)—is the process of the supervision experience. I decided to demonstrate this, embody this, and create a lived experience for the reader. To place the reader in the wonder of "Who we are is how we coach" (Murdoch and Arnold, 2013), supervise (ibid.), research (Xu and Storr, 2012), and write (Marshall, 2016).

My stance as I undertook the narrative analysis incorporated and integrated what I had learned, and then was shaped and re-shaped over time as I continued to act, reflect, evaluate and consider (Kolb, 2015), moving deeper into self-reflection and critical self-reflection (Mezirow, 1990) with the benefit of the full arc of the year of supervision sessions.

Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) described the "four turns" to narrative inquiry:

> *We become narrative inquirers only when we recognize and embrace*
> *the interactive quality of the researcher-researched relationship,*
> *primarily use stories as data and analysis, and understand the way in*
> *which what we know is embedded in a particular context, and finally*
> *that narrative knowing is essential to our inquiry (p.7).*

I made these four turns over a long period of time, and not in sequential order.

Turn One happened in the first 18 months of the research through the development of my proposal, receiving approval, and navigating major revisions during recruitment. I moved from a theoretical commitment to working with the participants (Pedler and Burgoyne, 2015) to having been challenged with putting it into practice.

I was primed to make the second turn, the appreciation of words, language and story, early in my corporate career as I sought approval for development of new products as what mattered most were the stories, not the numbers. I made the second turn when, as described above, I was coding and found the loss of context and relationship to be a huge problem. In reading Marshall (2016) she further illuminated for me that narrative inquiry wasn't just about what happened but was about providing context through narrative detail to illuminate what happens beneath the surface and to allow for interpretation. I had read and savored the experiences of the stories.

Marshall's (2016) book was, at the most elemental level, a manifestation of being on the journey as a lifelong learner. She shared with the reader sweeping global perspectives and the smallest of details, she interwove first-person inquiry with the academic

literature, with being in relationship with others, her own journaling and collective writing. As she writes of "the southern group," she shares the landscape, the seasonal colors, the carpark, the drive with another group member (ibid., pp.125-128). I was caught off guard. Even as I write this paragraph in this moment, I marvel at the box I had created for what was "appropriate" to share within the stories. I had visualized including the personal and professional challenges of the participants when "relevant" (in my assessment) to the stories. I hadn't imagined including the change of seasons, the weather, the physical locations of the participants. The world that is alive around us was not part of my concept of what should or could be written; yet as I reread the transcripts there it was in its fullness: one coach "wishing you could see what I see out my window, distracted by the birds singing"; another noticing that her presence was different that day as she was driving, on the phone, and found that "[she was] more present in different way than on the video"; the supervisor who shared she was relocating countries and how much that meant in logistics, in loss, in possibilities.

I was struck by the parallels in the use of stories: coaches work with the stories their clients share (Drake, 2015; McLean, 2012); coaches bring the stories of their work with their clients, and the clients' stories to supervision (Clutterbuck, Whitaker and Lucas, 2016; Hawkins and Shohet, 2012; Bachkirova, Jackson and Clutterbuck, 2011). Narrative inquiry looks at the stories of the researcher and the researched (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000); as a coach and supervisor I was familiar with working with stories; as a supervisee and coaching client, I was familiar with my own stories. The challenging task to engage in narrative inquiry proved to be the move from the field texts to the research texts (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

Turn three toward narrative inquiry involved moving from generalization to the particular— "narrative inquirers embrace the power of the particular for understanding experience and using findings from research to inform themselves in specific places at specific times" (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007, p.24). This brought me back to the beginning of the research design as a practitioner-researcher. In writing about narrative studies Gergen (2015) states "narrative research features the first-hand accounts of people

themselves…their voices are treated with respect…" (p.73) and it gathers "the narratives by which we construct our lives" (p.72).

I saw that the markers for the possibilities of narrative inquiry were with me from the beginning; I did not yet know enough to recognize the signposts. These concepts are also found in action learning (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014, p.16) and insider-researcher endeavors (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010).

There was one more turn to consider as I made this declaration—the turn to acknowledging "multiple ways of knowing and understanding human experience" (Pinnegar and Daynes, p.25). Narrative inquirers "accept and value the way in which narrative inquiry allows wondering, tentativeness, and alternative views to exist as part of the research account" (ibid.). "Part of the narrative inquirer's doubts come from understanding that they need to write about people, places and things, as *becoming* rather than *being*…that they have a narrative history and are moving forward" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.145).

As I was writing and revising a book chapter (Downing, 2019), I saw that the disparity of experiences with bringing or not bringing recordings and/or transcripts were individual to each coach. Each one could describe why he or she brought it, why they didn't, why they intended to but didn't, why they were not going to do so but did, and so on. How to recognize all of this, without the need to find a generalizing principle, emerged in the Chapter entitled "A new dimension? Using Observational Data in Supervision" (Downing, 2019). I had arrived at the signpost for turn four.

"Engaging in narrative inquiry entails thinking within the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry—temporality, sociality, and place" (Clandinin, 2016, p.38). The temporality was the 18-24 months of the project, and the views of each of our lives before I moved "into living alongside" the participants (ibid., p. 43), as well as our prior relationships and our future relationships. The sociality was the group as we came together, our individual and shared experiences, the certification and training experiences including the methodology, language, format and process of the learning

experiences, the culture of the Sponsor's programs, our knowledge of the faculty personalities and foibles, and the lives of each of us outside of the sessions—our practice, our clients and their organizations, our families and friends. Sociality was about our internal landscapes as well as existential questions. Finally, the places were our Zoom windows during the sessions and all of the places we were in, whether office, home, automobile or other settings. It is also where we lived, traveled, referenced and planned for, e.g., training for a marathon, planning a wedding, raising a teenage daughter, or staying in a hotel room (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.50).

The stories of what happened in these two groups in Chapters 5 and 6, and the three colleague groups in Chapter 7, are told as institutional narratives "expressions of who 'we' are, what we're doing, where we have been, where we're going, and why" (Chase, 2018, p.550). The institution is the practice of supervision within the supervision center.

My theory of supervision: how I practiced

In 2015 I drafted my philosophy of group supervision—my approach as a supervisor. It is summarized at pages 9-10 in Chapter 1. The full statement is in Appendix 6. I share this because in my research it was clear that supervisors took different approaches in supervision, based on who they were, as well as the group dynamics. The reader will have a better sense of the vignettes in Chapters 5 and 6 by having the descriptions of my philosophy.

An alert to readers—a challenging read ahead

When I reached this point in the thesis I considered how to proceed. The shape of the next several chapters was not my initial starting point. With each draft, I went back to Clandinin's and Connelly's (2000, p.155-156) soup metaphor for research texts that leaves broad latitude to the author. As I introduced in Chapter 1, this was an emergent and iterative process, just as coaching supervision is an emergent and iterative process. In the cultural context of North America's very early and hesitant embrace of supervision, and within the context of 5 groups of coaches and supervisors with differing levels of experience as coaches and in supervision, on the leading edge of utilizing small groups for

reflective practice, I found the complexity and messiness of change, experimentation and learning. These five groups were not the norm; they were courageous enough to undertake supervision under commercial terms, and to participate as research participants. Five groups willing to be seen, to share their inquiries about themselves and their professional practices through their learning journeys.

Aa I take you through what we did together, I was present throughout as myself, with experiences including as a coach, as a supervisor, as a researcher, and in my many other roles as a human. While I cannot separate these role-specific parts of myself to the exclusion of the other parts, I did often bring one of the roles to the foreground in observing, interacting and writing. For example, I focused more on my three responsibilities as supervisor when I interacted with my two groups, although my researcher role was there as well. In interacting with the three colleague groups, I focused more on my responsibilities as researcher, although I was also observing and interacting with an awareness of my supervisor self. The coaches participated in dual roles, as coaches, and as supervisees. The voices of these roles are present in the following three chapters. This is why this section is titled "An alert to readers—a challenging read ahead".

I write in Chapter 5 about The Daring Group, in Chapter 6 about the Creating Community Group and in Chapter 7 about the Colleague Groups. I share narrative accounts of moments or segments of our work together that highlight what this research is about— the co-creation and stewardship of a safe container that creates the environment for self-disclosure and reflective practice. I do not necessarily share these accounts sequentially, nor are they told in ways that make the linear totality of the sessions coherent. In the supervision sessions and through journal entries, the supervisees and I lived and told our stories; in the action learning meetings and in later supervision sessions, we retold our stories, reliving some of them through how we had changed (Clandinin, 2016, p.34). The vignettes included in the following chapters are fragments in a mosaic of moments, each contributing to the bigger picture. "We must, in the composing, co-composing, and negotiation of interim and final research texts, make visible the multiplicity, as well as the

narrative coherence and lack of narrative coherence, of our lives, the lives of participants, and the lives we co-compose in the midst of our narrative inquiries" (ibid., p.49).

I write the vignettes in Chapters 5 and 6 primarily as supervisor and capture the voices and experiences of the group members with quotes from the recordings, journal entries and other communications. As I referenced in Chapter 2, the literature on the roles of the small group supervisor was primarily in the clinical supervision context and emphasized three roles of the supervisor as being in relationship with the individuals and the group, manager of the group dynamics and reflective practice guardian (Bernard and Goodyear, 2019; Ögren, Boethius and Sundin, 2014; Proctor, 2008). These roles emerged as important in this study. Each role required cultivation and ongoing stewardship. As I share the vignettes, I identify the primary role from which I am writing, whether *supervisory relationships*, *facilitating within the dynamics of the group setting*, or *guardian of reflective practice*. In several vignettes the interconnectedness of the roles is noted. In a few, I write from my role *as researcher* and make that explicit. At the beginning of each vignette, the role is identified in *italics* for ease of the reader.

I write the vignettes in Chapter 7 as researcher, rather than supervisor, and capture the voices and experiences of the group members through their journal entries and focus groups. By sharing the richness and complexity of the details of my experiences, and the participants, that in itself is partially "the answer" (Flyvberg, 2006, p.240) to what reflective practice is, and how it can be embraced in virtual small group settings.

Following the vignettes, in Chapters 8 and 9, I share my findings and continuing inquiries; in Chapter 10, I state my conclusions. In the final Chapter, I share my reflections and learning.

Chapter 5: The Daring Group

"We yearn for an unquestioned experience of belonging, to feel at home with ourselves and others, at ease and fully accepted. But the trance of unworthiness keeps the sweetness of belonging out of reach".

(Kornfield and Brach, 2004)

Part One: Beginning

Introduction to the Daring Group

As I noted earlier, The Daring Group started as the pilot group, comprised of two coaches, Aileen and Sally[8], who were daring enough to volunteer in early June 2017. As I described in Chapter 4, both were supervisees in one of my groups, and had independently volunteered. We had a shared purpose: we were motivated by strong desires to contribute to our professions. We were individually and collectively coming together for our own learning, the learning of the group, and to offer our initial experiences with the research to the groups that would begin in the Autumn.

Aileen and Sally varied by more than a decade in experience. Both were actively coaching and shared a similar level of competencies and capabilities in storytelling, working with executive clients, coaching methodologies and in commitment to their development and learning. They had comparable levels of ability to observe themselves, both in-the-moment and after the fact, to name what was going on for them and to imagine different ways of being. There was deep respect among us.

Coach	Years following certification	Actively coaching	Other roles	Gender
Aileen	1-5	yes	Facilitation and training	F
Sally	10+	yes	Facilitation	F

Table 5: Daring Group Demographics

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[8] Fictitious names are used.

Our life narratives

Aileen came to supervision a few years ago, immediately following her coaching certification. Her overarching internal stories were about perfectionism and pleasing others. She easily claimed her perfectionism—she needed and wanted to do things perfectly. With similar ease, she claimed being a people pleaser.

Sally came to supervision a year before the pilot, as a masterful coach with more than a decade of coaching experience. Her overarching internal story was about not being good enough—she wanted to consistently deliver value and perform. Both were committed to life-long learning, engaging regularly in certification programs, training and development courses, and group supervision.

My story was congruent; I don't think this was coincidental. I am a life-long learner, steeped in perfectionism, wondering if I provide enough value, and fulfilled by being in service to others. I was more driven by my internal stories when I was embarking on new learning, as I was in those early stages of the research—my first research endeavor—and entering my third year as a supervisor.

Logistics

The three pilot sessions, of 60 minutes each, were scheduled over the summer into early Autumn, before the year-long research groups began. We volunteered our time; Aileen and Sally would not pay for the supervision sessions[9] and I would not be paid. I outlined the requirements of the Informed Consent agreements, which they reviewed, signed and returned.

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[9] In the sponsorship agreement, we agreed that the research participants would pay the standard rate for the supervision engagement to avoid any negative impact on the revenues of the sponsoring organization and to conduct the research within regularly operating supervision groups. I sent an email to COO that the pilot was set up, there were no revenue implications, and it would provide good information before the Autumn start. I did not ask for her concurrence, permission or approval; with all the give and take we continued to be engaged in, I was confident she would let me know if this was an issue.

The pilot was useful. Our experiences shaped my discussions with potential research participants. I felt a bit more grounded in how to inquire, reflectively, about a recording in a group. My assessment was our learning, as we progressed through the full year, would likely continue to inform the other groups. There were not yet confirmed participants, but I was guardedly optimistic. Both coaches wanted to continue. We agreed to extend to a full year's engagement with one change—the sessions would become part of the field texts. They also renewed with their larger supervision group. I revised the Informed Consent agreement; they agreed and signed (Appendix 3). I communicated this to the Sponsor.

After we extended the pilot into the full span of 10 sessions, we engaged beginning in July 2017 and ending in May 2018, and had four action learning meetings, between August 2017 and April 2019. All 14 hour-long sessions occurred on Zoom and were recorded and transcribed as part of the field texts. Aileen and Sally submitted individual journal entries following most of the sessions.

Note to you, the reader. As noted above (pp.85-85), I have named the role(s) that were at the forefront of my thinking, observing and reflecting, during the vignette. This is intended to assist the reader in understanding my primary frame of reference in those moments, and to experience as you read the complex dynamics of small group work.

Supervisory relationships shift

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, focused on supervisory relationships.

Almost immediately, I noticed shifts in our relationships. In the prior year, the prevalent feeling was I was in service to their learning. There were moments when I had shared what I had learned from them, yet my sense was that it didn't really land as significant. As we began, they were explicitly in service to my learning as a researcher; we were co-learners about our process of supervision. There was more mutuality and, contradictorily, it felt as though they had me on a slightly higher pedestal because I was undertaking doctoral studies. To further muddy the waters, there were performance anxieties as they were more visible in this intimate setting and wanted to do what was good for the

research. I was intentional in seeking more shoulder-to-shoulder relationships as supervisor and not reinforcing the researcher's pedestal.

There was respect among the three of us. Deference bounced in and out of the room, depending on the process or content. Sally was richly steeped in somatics and the use of the body. We looked to her to contribute that knowledge to our inquiries; we deferred to her greater expertise. Aileen was bold with experimentation with her clients; we collectively learned from her willingness to engage in new practices. We had an empathic resonance with each other, which enabled challenge and resourcefulness. Our familiarity with our inner critics was useful in co-creating a container for the six of us (ourselves and our inner critics) to engage in various configurations.

Heron (1999) defined four stages for a group (pp.51-52). The stage of defensiveness—as a new group is coming together and does not yet have trust and likely has anxieties; of working toward establishing trust and quieting anxieties; of authentic behavior—with openness, connection, learning and caring for the others; and of closure. As we started, we had anxieties and we had trust, which I discuss more below. The trust we brought forward from our past relationships enabled us to function mostly from a place of authenticity; our ability and openness to name our fears, anxieties, shame and other emotions, and be with those feelings was from a place of being true to ourselves with each other.

Balancing care of supervisees with care of research participants

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, focused on supervisory relationships.

One of the most important aspects of being a supervisor were the relationships I cultivated with each group member and with the group as a whole. I was quite attentive to building and nurturing our connectedness. My approach as supervisor aligned with the need for me, as researcher, to proceed with care (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). I felt the need to attend to the overlay of supervising and researching. I wanted to stay awake to any relationship issues, especially for any divergence. What came initially to mind was how strongly to encourage the use of observational experiences. As a supervisor, I would

not have encouraged them to bring observational experiences; but as the researcher, I really wanted them to experiment. My belief was that they would develop in their self-awareness just as I had. I threaded these concerns carefully and stayed intentionally invitational with respect to the research asks.

Detailed contracting for the pilot

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as guardian of reflective practice.

Our initial contracting was detailed and set forth our mutual expectations for three supervision sessions and one action learning meeting in the pilot, the process and structure we would use in each session, and the research asks. Collectively, we decided our usual practices in supervision would continue. These included advance reflection questions, verbal sharing of what the supervisees were bringing to each session, exploration and inquiry, and closing comments. The full details of the contracting are set for the Appendix 7.

The process invited Aileen and Sally to bring their work into the sessions, either a particular client case or an issue or theme, plus whatever was on their mind or in their heart related to their self, their self as coach or their coaching practice. There was space for them to bring issues of stress, depletion, burn-out, and other concerns. We agreed, following each session, that I would send a link to the recording of the session and we would continue to share resources including articles, books, podcasts and other references that supported our learning.

For the research, we would add to the process the occasional use of observational experiences and journal reflections following each session. The sessions would be recorded and included in the field texts. The sessions and action learning meetings would be confidential; however, our mutual intent was that I could share themes and learning to inform the other research groups.

More instructions on recordings needed

Role(s) at forefront: Researcher

The potential use of observational experiences created discomfort, particularly for Sally. Aileen had previously recorded client sessions as part of the coach certification program. Sally was certified as a coach prior to their use; she had never recorded a coaching session. She was concerned that she didn't know how to do so. Her questions included how to approach her clients, wondering if it was appropriate to share that she was looking at her own development, what the typical provision for confidentialities was, and about the logistics of recording and transcribing. At their request, I created a guide for recording and transcribing sessions, and Aileen added to it based on her experience. I also provided a draft agreement for "permission to record and use in supervision" for the coaches to review, revise and use with clients (See Appendix 8). I did this as the researcher, providing my own experiences, to facilitate the participants' abilities to respond to the research asks.

Part Two: Vignettes

Paradox: anxieties and vulnerability

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as guardian of reflective practice and as facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting.

Aileen, Sally and I were meeting as a trio for the first time. Though we had worked together in a larger supervision group before, I anticipated we would need to give ourselves the time to get to know each other in this setting and develop a rhythm. The session started with Aileen, caught in traffic, on the phone in her car. Just as she arrived home and went to join from her office, Sally came on. A few moments later the three of us were on Zoom, each of us in our video windows—Aileen in her home office on the East Coast with a painting of branches with buds behind her. Sally on the comfy looking sofa in her living room in Northern California, a beautiful cabinet behind her. I was in my home office in the central coast of California at my desktop, with a large poster framed on the

wall behind me and the French doors to a small patio casting warm sunlight into the room. We recognized each other's spaces, as we had been in a larger group the prior year. We already knew some of each other's family life—the passing of a father, the planning for a wedding, the raising of a teenage daughter, recovery from major health challenges, and other bits and pieces. Sally and I had met in person at a learning conference; Aileen and I had only met virtually.

There were greetings and small talk. I was warm and welcoming, happy to be with them and to be starting the research. I invited each to respond to the question, "How are you arriving?" Sally checked in anxious, excited, and curious. Aileen was in a place of appreciation and gratitude. Both noticed the synchronicity of raising the same theme for the coaching issue—the transactional nature of a current coaching relationship. I acknowledged and responded after they shared that I was a little anxious, excited, and was internally reassuring myself this was "just supervision."

Both Aileen and Sally noticed how much more visible they felt in such a small group, without "the ability to hide in the larger group". Paradoxically, even with the anxieties of increased visibility, both were more revealing. Sally shared that she still felt new to supervision, having had "only" one year of experience; she was "intimidated" with the overall setting and "terrified" of getting the inquiry wrong. This surprised me—I had no inkling, as this had not come to light in the prior year. I had assumed she was confident and settled in the process. Hiding in the larger group she had ceded space to other coaches, perhaps assuming they were getting it right. Here, with significantly greater visibility, nowhere to hide, she shared her truth. There must have been a level of safety present in that hour, for her to admit what she had not been able to share before.

Shame arrived

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as guardian of reflective practice.

Aileen brought a transcript to our second session. I was relieved; this was our first experience with one of the specific asks for the research. Aileen and I inquired about it together as Sally was unable to join until halfway into the session. I was surprised by

Aileen's inquiry—she did not want positive feedback, she wanted only to look at what was not good. She was nervous and had performance anxieties about sharing the transcript; she was also "anticipating feeling very appreciative" of what she would learn. Following the session, my reflections were about how we had reflected on the transcript, teasing out an element or two of the distinction between a transcript used as a competency review and one used in reflective practice.

When Sally joined us, I welcomed her, and she checked in briefly with apologies. We continued the inquiry with Aileen's transcript and then worked with Sally's client situation. I did not sense any impact on safety among the three of us. Following that session, Aileen and Sally responded to the journal prompts. I was surprised at the perceived difference between what they had written and our interactions in the session. Their reflections opened up new views for me.

Sally's entries were filled with shame. She had felt disruptive arriving late and was doubting her value in heartfelt terms; she also wrote from her head that she knew this wasn't true. There was a pivotal moment in the session, which I had not realized. I returned to the recording—her written words were verbatim the phrases she had used in the session. Yet, in the group those words did not register—they were spoken, but not totally heard. They registered differently with me when I read them, and I felt my own shift into shame for having missed it. In contrast, Aileen was not impacted by Sally's late arrival; she had not felt the disruption. She had designed how she would engage in experiential learning having identified three specific practices she was going to experiment with as a result of reflecting on the whole session.

Three people, same Zoom room, together in dialogue, with three distinct experiences underlying a mutual emotional experience of anxiety and shame. Aileen's, how to step into managing her shame about bringing a transcript and anticipating experiential learning while resisting positive feedback; Sally's shame and unworthiness at arriving late; and mine in the session of how to facilitate using a transcript, and after the session strengthening my attunement to energetic ripples I had missed.

Contracting for what had not yet been experienced

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor as facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting. Researcher.

In our first action learning set, we inquired about our process in the first two sessions considering what we could learn about our process that would be useful for the full year research groups. One issue that was highlighted by Sally was how could a coach engaging in supervision for the first time or agreeing to be a research participant understand what was expected.

In the first vignette I shared the unexpected disclosure by Sally that she was unsure how to be a supervisee. She raised this again "self-reveal…being new to supervision…part of my struggle was am I doing this right? Am I contributing?" and focused on how a coach new to supervision could understand the initial contracting. Her recommendations came from her interior needs to do it "right". She was using her experience of being terrified of doing it wrong to recommend the supervisor provide experiences of the process as part of the contracting conversation for group members who were coming to supervision for the first time. This could address the challenge of how to know what one was agreeing to, when one had not yet engaged.

I noticed the parallel process—I was doing the Pilot for just those reasons, to give me first-hand experience in the process before the full-year research groups began. It raised questions for me: to what extent had Aileen and Sally known what they were agreeing to as participants? How could I enhance the recruiting process, in service to a more comprehensible consent, for the full-year participants? As I started new supervision groups with coaches who had not previously had supervision, how might I contract differently?

A possibility shaped the coach

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as guardian of reflective practice.

The second theme in the action learning meeting was about recordings. Aileen had brought a transcript of a recording. She was able to observe herself, notice aspects that she was unaware of, share the transcript with us, and inquire with us. Sally noticed that the possibility of recording a coaching session flooded her with worry that she wasn't the masterful coach she thought she was. The thought of recording was both impossible for her to imagine doing and impacted how she coached. She noticed she was shifting in her client sessions toward what she thought was better coaching, what might be recorded as such. "Just the possibility of it…it has shaped my coaching even without having done it…just the idea of it." Aileen had enough experiences with recordings to be able to do them; yet she limited the feedback to only negative reflections. Sally was unable to record; yet she saw positive shifts in how she was as a coach as a result of our working with recordings. I noted I would share these experiences as the full-year groups formed.

Following the session, my reflections were largely on what Sally shared about recordings and how the mere thought sharpened her awareness within the coaching session. I wondered if this was conducive to her practice or inhibiting her presence. Her deep competitive and comparative instincts were at the forefront as were her desires to be useful, valuable, and effective with clients. I wondered what it meant about the likelihood other coaches would bring recordings to their groups.

Facilitating a group of two

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting.

Group size came up again. At the end of our first session Aileen had said she was already feeling sad that we would only have three sessions together; she preferred this format already. It was rich and satisfying for her. She continued to prefer the group of two to her experiences in the group of six. Sally contrasted her sense with Aileen's—she would prefer three coaches to lessen her sense of "needing to step up…contribute in a different

way". As I noted in the introduction above, they continued supervision in the group of six coaches with another supervisor during the year as research participants. They often observed in our sessions how they felt more visible, more accountable and "safer" in this group. They attributed those feelings to being only with each other. I wondered what else might be in the mix.

This was my first experience supervising a group of two, though I had been in a group of two as a supervisee for several years. I noticed that I had not greatly varied my approach or facilitation because we were a smaller group, and that I enjoyed the intimacy. There was ease. Contributors to my ease included facilitating two instead of six, the mutual compatibility and appreciation, our commitments to collectively learning, and engagement with two actively coaching supervisees who brought a seriousness of consideration to diverse and complex client situations and had good reflection skills.

I had come to see through the research that each of the four supervisors had different processes, approaches, requirements, styles and personalities; the supervisor for Sally and Aileen's group of six was not a participant in the research yet I was sure this was true for her as well. I wondered how these facets of who we each were contributed to the container and which supported more visibility and accountability? How might the participation in service to the profession infuse the container? My hunch was our bonds were different in a group of two, the bonds between Sally and Aileen, between me and each of them and among the three of us. I imagined our collective inquiries might be changed by the very nature that the process anticipated that both coaches would bring a case to every session. In short, what was it about what the three of us were doing that made it a container able to hold more vulnerability and visibility?

Experimentation

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting.

As we were ending the action learning meeting, Aileen reflected on the principles of adult learning and the role of the supervisor. She could see a supervisor might want to be in teach mode as the supervision engagement started and that while she was an adult

learner she would be "very happy to be told up front" what it takes for successful supervision experiences. Sally asked if I would share what I knew about best practices for supervision, while acknowledging that she understood the purpose of this research was to discover what those might be.

I briefly explained what was useful to me as a supervisee in a group of 2, a group of 8, and one-on-one. I continued by sharing with them a few creative approaches I used in my non-Sponsor related supervision groups. I used experimentation with mini metaphors, with cards and objects, and with drawings; I did not use these in my groups within the supervision center. Aileen and Sally challenged me about my stories about what was acceptable—they felt I had boxed myself in unnecessarily. They asked me to bring these approaches into the work with them. This was a transformative moment—I let go of the belief that I could not utilize these kinds of interventions in all of my groups. I decided to use more experimentation.

The research asked a coach to experiment with observational experiences. It was an ask for experimentation. I wondered how else I might introduce new elements that could be playful, or move us out of our intellect and into our hearts, or intuition, or bodies in different ways? What might strengthen the container or add to its flexibility, fluidity or texture? I use three words that are not similar, and may not exist in the same container, to represent that the container is different to each member of the group – for some it is fluid, for others it is a texture weaving or fabric, for others it is a flexible space, and for me it can be any of those as well as a garden, the metaphor I use in Chapter 8.

Our inner critics were with us

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as guardian of reflective practice.

Our dialogue in the sessions included recurring elements of being with our inner critics. Sally committed several times to bring a recording, yet she did not do so. I offered that she might explore recording just for her own listening. Would it be safer for her to record if she knew she did not have to share it with us? She found she still could not. The process of recording was too much—she reiterated it was too risky, that she feared

exposing herself as a less-than masterful coach. This was her inner critic, a deep belief that she was not enough.

Sally's inner critic showed up frequently in the sessions and in her journal reflections. In one session, I had started facilitating in a hierarchical stance, and then invited us to move to a co-cooperative inquiry (Heron, 1999, p.8). Sally engaged enthusiastically, and then noticed her engagement and retreated, labeling her enthusiasm as "taking up too much space". She continued to hold these feelings in her reflection afterwards.

Aileen framed her inquiries in the sessions with her inner critic's voice. She inquired about what she was missing, what she had not done or had done wrong, what she should be doing. She was focused on improving, becoming a better coach. In her journaling, Aileen's focus was on what she had learned and what she was taking forward in her work with a client. She resisted receiving positive feedback or considering her strengths—the inner critic would not allow her to land on what was good enough.

My own inner critic's voice was alive and well in our sessions too. I found myself hedging statements at the start of my inquiries, e.g., "I am not sure this will resonate" "I wonder, this may not be a good question, but..." At the time, I considered this to be in service to Sally's and Aileen's learning. I interpreted it as inviting their consideration of a question while signaling that I had no attachment to its value. My focus, as I reflected on our sessions, was like Aileen, consistently geared toward what I could have done differently in the session, what I might have missed, and what I would do differently in upcoming sessions.

Energetically, there was tension as we navigated how to be open in relationship with each other and how to quiet our inner critics in order to move into a space where dialogue was possible (Isaacs, 1999). What were the qualities and conditions necessary for showing up, being vulnerable, engaging in inquiry, and learning?

Our inner critics pushed us to identify areas to develop, shift, and to pay attention. They did not assist in our abilities to notice, articulate or deepen what we did well. I wondered

why supervision was structured to reflect on what was not going well—on cases where we were stuck or struggling or knew something wasn't quite right. Where was the space to catch up with our development—moments where we were the coaches we wanted to be—and explore what it was that we were doing in those instances that made visible our learning and development?

Comparison fed the inner critics

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as guardian of reflective practice.

In an earlier session, I asked Aileen and Sally to watch a short video of an infant[10] reaching for a toy and notice what came up for them as a coach. We had a light and fun time exploring what they could see in themselves. It was a neutral practice space for them to observe themselves in the moment. Drawing on the learning from this experiment, in one of our subsequent sessions, as a reflection question, I asked Aileen and Sally to watch a short video of a coach using metaphor with a client to notice what they noticed about themselves as coach. I wrote about their reactions in my published book chapter (full text provided in Appendix 9) (Downing, 2019):

> *As we started to explore, judgment, comparison and the inner critic entered immediately. The coaches noticed that they had a lot of judgment about the coaching session. Was it staged? Was it too easy for the client to use the metaphor? They then moved from negative judgment of the coach to judgment of themselves as they acknowledged feelings of inadequacy of their coaching. This led to a rich discussion of judgment of our clients and of our inner critic. The sense of why judgment was so front and center in the use of this video was expressed by one coach as because it "put me with coaches, that is so close to what I do and how I serve the world, it feels, the word, threatening is coming up. What if they're so much better and I figure out I really suck at this?" Looking from the balcony at the whole of the supervision*

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[10] Downing, 2019, pp.91-92

session, I could see the inner critic and comparison gremlins threading
through from the moments we checked-in until we concluded.

You may notice that this group has developed the depth of safety
between them, and with their supervisor, that they dared to surface
fears, inadequacies and the painful voice of their inner critics in service
of the group and individual learning. As one coach shared "What I have
learned from supervision is that there is learning in everything. The
power in becoming the observer is how it opens up access to choice."
Choice, to this coach, means the ability to recognize in the moment how
she is feeling and choose how to proceed rather than reacting (p.94).

This raised a number of questions for me. How did comparison come into play in our
inquiries? Were there times when either or both felt inadequate as we explored with the
other? I could see more clearly the deference in Aileen to Sally's expertise with somatics;
how did this influence or contaminate our container? Where did she hold back? If
deference was there, was it fueled by the comparison gremlin? I held these questions as I
marveled at how they were able to reveal their "fears, inadequacies and the painful voice
of their inner critics" (ibid.). This was mystical and magical to me – that they could so fully
come into our container.

Identifying and naming parallel process

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as guardian of reflective practice and focused on
supervisory relationships.

The idea of parallel process is that what the coach feels while coaching a client may be
parallel to what the client is feeling in their system; in supervision, the supervisor may
feel or act in a way that is in parallel to the struggle of the coach with the client (Tracey,
Bludworth, and Glidden-Tracey, 2012). Tracey and her co-authors note, there is little
consensus of the definition of parallel process in the psychoanalytic realm, except the
recognition that there are parallels in the client-therapist relationships that sometimes
show up in the therapist-supervisor relationships, and that this can be bi-directional

(ibid.). Parallel process in the coaching realm has been frequently written about, but there is little research about it. There are a number of examples of parallel process throughout these field texts, across the groups.

Aileen brought a case—she was struggling with a client who did not have any resourcefulness. She found herself resorting to advising—providing the answers—rather than staying in coaching stance. Her metaphor was that the opportunities to give answers was like giving candy. Aileen's pace at the start of the session was fast, with few deep breaths. As she started to explore her work, she slowed down, and her facial expressions conveyed more seriousness.

In inquiring about this case with her, she felt little resourcefulness and I found myself advising her, rather than staying in supervisor stance. This was parallel process in action, and I caught myself when I noticed she was furiously taking notes. I laughed and pointed it out to her. (See Appendix 10 for a storyboard presentation of this.) That moment of pointing out parallel process brought a lightness to the inquiry, the awareness that we are all susceptible. We identified three parallels: the client in his system moved to expert stance and felt good about having the answers; Aileen moved from curiosity with him to knowing, providing the answers to the questions he couldn't answer; I had just moved to giving Aileen answers. She relaxed into a sliver of self-acceptance, which created space for her to learn and grow. She could feel her desire for me to give her an answer, which led her to recognize her desire to give her needy client an answer. She moved to wanting to experiment with noticing her proclivity to be the expert; to increased awareness of when she was going after the candy.

The container expanded a bit. My "not getting it right" as a supervisor opened up receptivity. Our mutual laughter at my foibles softened the self-criticism. Naming parallel process normalized their experiences and gave them something to notice in the future. My noticing in the moment was role modeling how to use immediacy in client sessions to share one's own fallibility.

Challenge and assessing readiness

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as guardian of reflective practice and focused on supervisory relationships.

As described above, in our second session Aileen had brought a transcript of her coaching session and her inquiry was only about what had not gone well. I easily agreed. My assessment was that her courage and willingness to be vulnerable was fully tapped by bringing the transcript; I should not push her.

A few sessions later, Aileen brought a recorded video segment of a client session as her case. She introduced it briefly, noticing that she wanted to edit her story "to justify where I am with this client" and that she was quite uncomfortable listening to it again, because it was inconsistent with how she thinks of herself. We watched about 10 minutes together, bearing witness to what had happened in the coaching session. At the conclusion of the segment, Aileen shared how difficult it had been to watch it again, and yet, she realized, it was more comfortable to watch and process with "people I trust to do it with me". This was a key learning for her: that inquiring together with us was a safer place than on her own with her fierce inner critic.

I asked her if we could start the inquiry by sharing what she had done well. Her automatic response was that she'd prefer for us to focus on the negatives. I wondered what would emerge if she could open up to more than that. If she could let go of her judgment, open her heart to the trusting connection with us, and let go of her need to control the focus. I did not share my reasoning with her, I merely inquired "Would it work for you for us to share what we loved about this part of the coaching session or not?" She sat in resistance; embodying disbelief that anything went well. I held the silence while she processed. She continued to resist and promised to argue with any positive points by putting up her fists in the screen. Aileen had not made that kind of gesture before. Then she shifted her stance slightly. With a deep breath she shared that since she could imagine no good things had happened, she was curious what we'd seen. She had opened

a small part of herself to consider different possibilities and facts, to stay in heart-to-heart connection, to let go of her need to control the reflections.

We had moved, in those moments, to deep listening, described by Scharmer (2009) as having these "three conditions...unconditional witnessing or no judgment, impersonal love, and seeing the essential self" (p.187).

We took our time, moving slowly, to share with her what we had seen, and as we shared our observations with her, Aileen began to experience a change in the aperture of her self-perceptions. She could see places we had described where she had been present, curious, engaged with the client. She discovered that she was negative about the session in large part because of a subsequent development that she could not have anticipated. She was holding herself responsible for what happened in another setting for her client. She came next to the "biggest question[s]"—was she staying transactional with the client rather than moving to explore the deeper emotions, and how did that relate to whether she was in coach stance or advisor/consultant stance? She discovered a recurring theme of moving from curiosity to knowing and then to advising, rather than coaching.

Aileen, in the challenge and her recognition that there was more than "everything was wrong", learned it was not safe to listen to recordings on her own due to her very loud inner critic. In the future, she would hope to listen to recordings with trusted friends and colleagues who could help her balance her observations. Sally also journaled that this conversation was a strong reminder that she, too, focused primarily on what was wrong in her sessions, just as Aileen had done with the recording; here was her "not-good-enough" frame of reference again.

Challenge was the enabler of learning, and it was dependent on some combination of three variables—my challenge, coming from my assessment that there was enough of a working alliance and there was potential learning in considering the fullness of the segment; the coach's willingness to consider the challenge, and decision to embrace it; and the other group member's ability to identify positive attributes within the coaching.
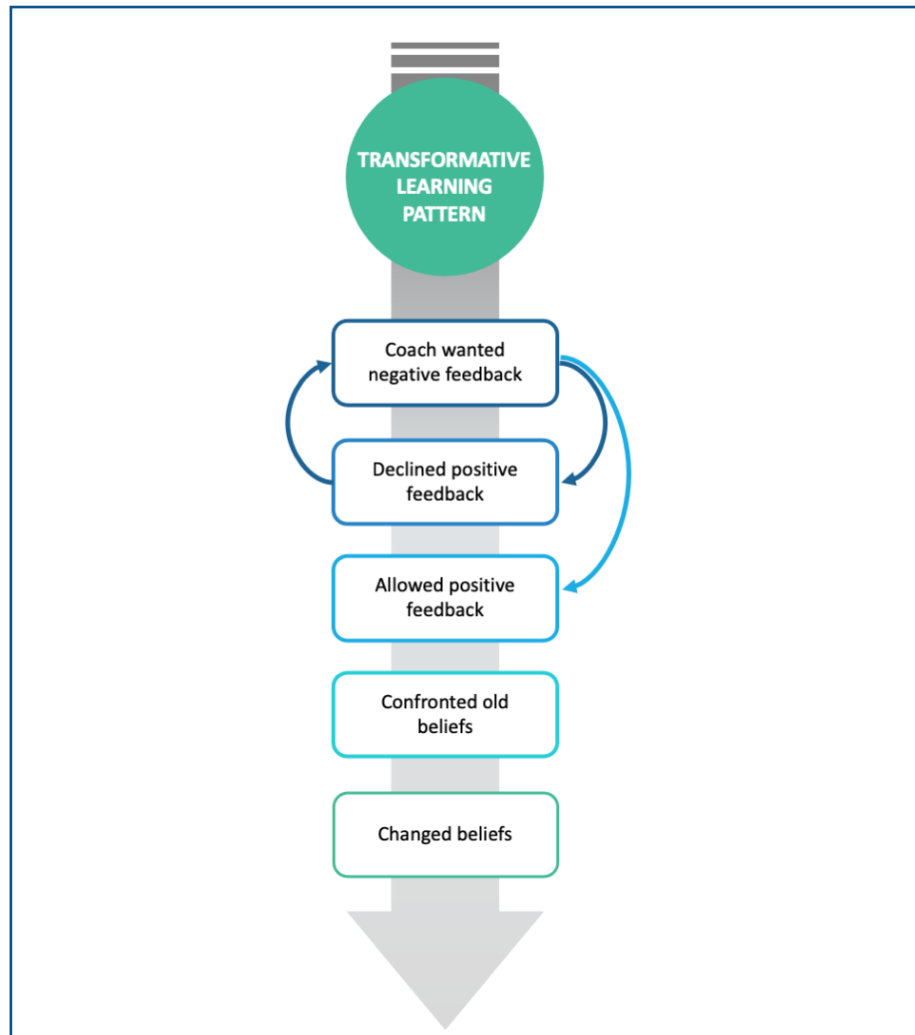
Figure 11: Transformative Learning Pattern

I had a realization following this session: I wanted to invite coaches to explore what was going well, what might demonstrate progress in their journey toward mastery. I wanted, as well, to reflect on what went well in my own practice when I met with my supervisor. The exploration and identification of these moments had the potential to assist in our abilities to articulate, integrate, and catch up with our learning.

Cultivating presencing practices

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as guardian of reflective practice.

The fullness of life impacted how Sally and Aileen came into the sessions; the qualities and conditions of the container were not always sufficient to contain all that they brought. Sally frequently arrived discombobulated with the overwhelming aspects of her

personal life, and not having prepared for the session. While she had been motivated to make a commitment to show up to our sessions prepared, her ability to live into this was not yet firm. Aileen often arrived with a faster pace, a frenetic energy, getting ready to hop on an international flight with short notice, or addressing parenting issues. The write-ups in advance of the session often would not happen; sometimes one of them would not have something for us to consider together.

In exploring how it was for them to arrive in these ways, we agreed on a centering practice to start each session. Sally typically led the practice; occasionally either Aileen or I did. It became our opening ritual and contributed to our settling into reflective space; to moving into presence. Its impact on our lives outside of the sessions was variable.

Sally identified in an early session that rushing into a client session, without a centering practice prior to the start of the session, negatively impacted her ability to be present. She committed to schedule time ahead of each session to center herself. A few sessions later, she "caught herself" in the same situation as before—that she was not allowing herself time to center. We became a place of accountability for her—she could notice with us that she had previously decided to shift her practice to schedule time to prepare for each coaching session. She could share she had not consistently done so and acknowledge that in this client situation it had gotten in her way. She was frustrated with herself; she re-committed. The commitment was part of her training as a somatic coach, the theory she sought to embody was that centering was done in support of a commitment, a purpose. By the end of the year, centering had become a more regular practice for her. The learning and integration came over time: initially noticing, committing to a different practice, noticing it wasn't consistently implemented, committing again, practicing, and integrating it going forward. The container provided a place for her to notice, commit, notice and practice.
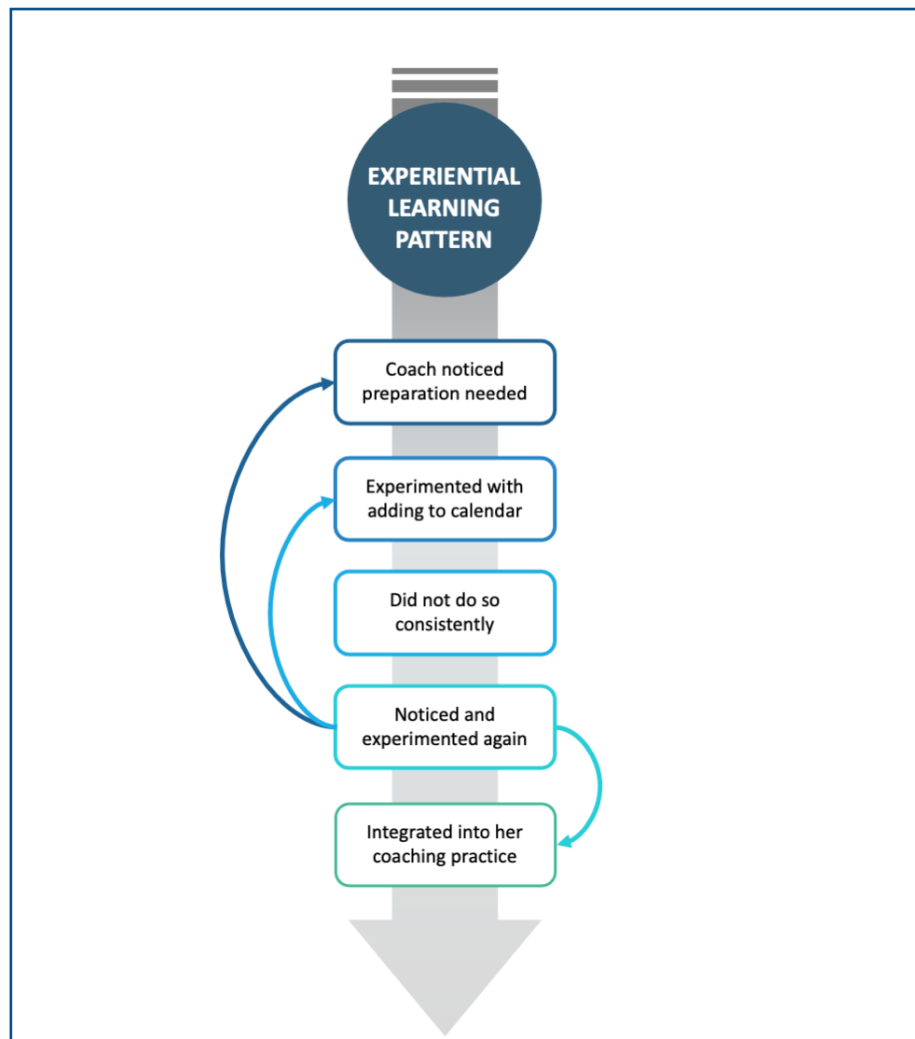
Figure 12: Experiential Learning Pattern

Sally and Aileen ultimately adopted it as a preparation ritual prior to going into most client sessions, now and again they would use it with their clients. However, they did not consistently use it ahead of our sessions to create preparation times. My stance continued to be acceptance—however they were arriving was acceptable, they were welcome as they were. One of the purposes of supervision is resourcing the coach; I believed my acceptance was in service to that purpose.

Business arrangements

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as guardian of reflective practice.

The impacts of the business arrangements for the coaching engagement were discovered in a handful of our inquiries. The purposes of supervision are usually expressed as

developmental, qualitative and resourcing (Hawkins and Smith, 2006). Hawkins and Smith also observe that the complexities of coaches working within organizational settings requires a more systemic perspective.

In one of the cases brought forward, Sally discovered she was not bringing her full coaching methodology to the engagement; she was holding the belief that the organization that sub-contracted with her would not want her to use some of her expertise and process.

The financial arrangements she had in this engagement led her to coach differently. There were four parties involved: the coach, the organization providing the coaches, the client and the client's organization, which led to at least four contracting relationships. The contracting between the two organizations for the financial arrangements and scope of work; the contracting between the provider of the coaches and the coach for what she would be paid and her scope of work; the contracting between the client and his or her boss on the expectations for their development through the coaching engagement; the contracting between the coach and client about the client's goals, the coaching process and the confidentialities. In the coach's regular engagements, she contracted directly with the client's organization and the client; in this specific context she had no dialogue with the client's organization. She had not had a discussion with the company that sub-contracted with her specifically about her coaching methodology; she had made certain assumptions. These assumptions came to light in our inquiry.

In another setting Sally was to coach newly hired senior leaders, for their first six months, as they were onboarded into the organization. She was hired by the recruiting firm that had placed the client. If the senior leader left the organization within the first six months, the recruitment fees were refundable to the hiring organization. In exploring this situation, the coach discovered that as a result of this financial arrangement she was driving to deliver results; she felt responsible for and was taking on the client's responsibilities.

In our inquiry and reflections, it was typical to explore the contracting between the coach and client, and almost always between the coach and the client's organization. As the above scenarios came to light, we introduced into our practice an inquiry about the contracting arrangements with the coach. These questions came to life for Sally; they made her question these: What assumptions was the coach making because of those arrangements? What provisions were emerging as a challenge for the coach? What provisions would the coach want to agree to in the future, and what provisions would she want to renegotiate or decline? What additional conversations might be necessary or useful?

There was an interesting parallel to the assumptions I made about what creativity I could bring to my Sponsor groups as contrasted with my non-Sponsor groups, described earlier in the vignette about experimentation. Just as Sally and Aileen had challenged me to not box myself in, Aileen and I challenged Sally not to box herself in based on the financial arrangements.

Beginning of Pivot #2
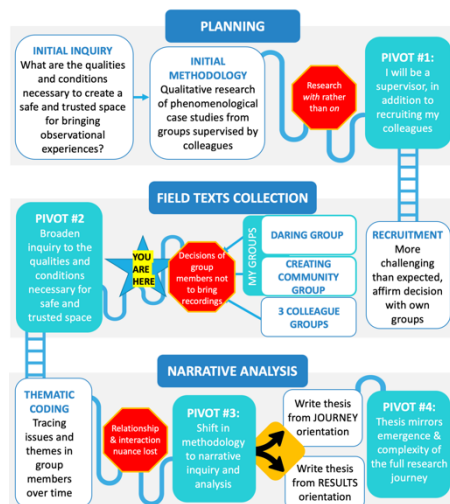
Figure 13: Beginning Pivot #2

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as guardian of reflective practice and focused on supervisory relationships.

In our second action learning meeting we explored the use of recordings and transcripts in supervision. Only one transcript had been brought in the 5 sessions to date. It was not clear what to make of that, there were a number of possibilities: too time consuming, a lack of willing clients, too scary, not useful, no motivation to do so, new process that needed encouragement, or some combination of these or other reasons.

We explored what was inhibiting using recordings and discussed a variety of approaches that might address those barriers. Both Aileen and Sally committed to bring recordings in the coming sessions. The starkness of their reactions to bringing recordings imbued the discussion with richer components, I believe, than if we had explored what they brought to supervision and did not bring. This was the opening to learning about stewardship of the container and what its dimensions might be in the context of an inquiry about an experimental intervention. I felt some stirring that the inquiry was more than the use of recordings and transcripts. I took in what they shared; I remained drawn to observational experiences with a growing sense that maybe it was different than that. These moments I had a sense that I needed to lean into what was emerging; I felt resistance to completely letting go. It is useful to note that although this was an action learning meeting, which I approached with more of the stance of the researcher, I moved to my supervisor stance as the meeting began, staying in service to their supervision experience.

I did not yet know that the research groups would refocus the overall inquiry to the qualities of the container for self-disclosure, reflection and learning rather than on the use of observational experiences.

Using a quote; crossing a threshold

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, focused on supervisory relationships.

Earlier on the morning of our 7th session (as we had extended to a full 10 sessions), I was a supervisee participating in the supervision group with my colleagues. In the "How are you arriving?" check-in, a colleague shared a reflection that included the quote from Ram Dass (Dass and Das, 2013) of his teacher asking, "Don't you see it's all perfect?" (p.104). I

was intrigued in those few moments about how it would be to live into that phrase. I decided to experiment with its application in two ways. With myself, in the continuing practice of self-compassion, self-kindness, and acceptance of my foibles and idiosyncrasies; and with the Daring Group, as collectively we had continued to notice our own stories.

We began our Daring Group session at noon that day; it was unusual for us to start that late. Our usual custom was to start early to mid-morning Pacific time. We arrived, the three of us on Zoom, each of us in our video windows—Aileen in her home office with a painting of branches with buds behind her, on the East Coast. Sally in her spot on the comfy looking sofa in her living room, with the backdrop of a beautiful cabinet, in Northern California. I had been displaced from my home office; I was upstairs in the guest room on my laptop, with very little visible in my setting other than a small glimpse of a lace curtain on the window, a bit of white wall and sky-blue ceiling. I preferred to do these sessions on my desktop with its larger screen. I would have been more visible—not just my face and a bit of my neck but also my hands which were often animated, and the Zoom windows for the coaches were larger on a desktop, which would have enabled me to see their faces more clearly.

We began. I introduced the quote in my check-in with Aileen and Sally, sharing that I had been in my own supervision group that morning. This was important context; I too was a supervisee in a group exploring my work. Aileen's response to my sharing of the quote "Don't you see it's all perfect?" (Dass and Das, 2013, p.104) was immediate and candid:

> *I just have such a hard time with that. My whole identity is about it's not perfect. It's not all perfect and seeking more perfect…its identity-shaking to hear that quote, or to be in that question.*

For Sally she shared that she was showing up "embarrassed to say I have absolutely nothing (laughs)". I said that was perfect. Her response illuminated the struggle of self-acceptance, the failure to live up to her responsibility to bring a case each session.

At the end of our session, I offered to Sally:

I just want to come back to you for a minute and notice that we are out of time and doesn't it emphasize the note of perfection, of just how we come? It would've been a very different discussion if we had had two situations to work…

I left the session curious about what impact introducing the concept of acceptance had had. As it turned out offering the quote opened a door and we stepped across a threshold.

Accountability may not have a place

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, focused on supervisory relationships.

I was holding tension throughout the first several months of the research. What accountability should I hold as supervisor, if any, and what accountability should I hold as researcher, if any? I had not previously considered the place for accountability in supervision. I had taken an invitational stance and trusted the coaches would do what was useful for them.

Through the research process, I learned that the other supervisors, and their groups, had more requirements in the supervisory process. It was not clear whether these were requested by the supervisor or co-created in contracting with the group members. One group required case write-ups in advance, two encouraged them; one had the coaches assigned to a particular month for bringing the primary case to the group; one asked the group, meeting in the peer learning[11] session, to organize who would bring the case or cases to the next session. As the researcher, I wondered if I should actively encourage my groups to experiment with the research asks or stay purely in my supervisor role. I asked myself if, as researcher, I should encourage, push or cajole the groups who were not using observational experiences. I was aware of the tension; I explored it, as a supervisee, in the supervision of my supervision.

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[11] The Sponsor's format for supervision included 10 peer learning sessions, in addition to the 10 sessions with the supervisor.

Crossing the threshold with the Daring Group through the use of the quote that day, I let go of the tension. I did not want or need to provide greater accountability. I was savoring a different experience of acceptance; I could feel I had moved to a deeper belief in unconditional positive regard for the coaches I supervised, and saw that this enriched, rather than limited, the research.

As a supervisor

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, using my self-reflection to inform guardian of reflective practice and focus on supervisory relationships.

As I shared above, I felt anxious about the pilot. I wanted to show up as a good supervisor and wanted to be a good researcher. I took this issue to my own supervisor and to my peer triad to process, reflect and settle into. Growth required letting go of wanting to get the research "right," just as Sally and Aileen's growth required letting go of wanting to get it "right."

Ultimately, I supervised as I normally did, intentionally from a stance of appreciation and affirmation. I normalized their experiences and noticed the courage, depth and tenderness of what they were sharing. Aileen and Sally did the same with each other. Our pace was spacious for reflection, for considering possibilities, and for inquiring together. Both coaches brought a case or issue to be considered more frequently than not. We discussed the reflection question, inquired into each of their cases, considered what learning there was from each situation, and concluded the session. Throughout the year, there was ease; there were anxieties; there was shame; there were joyful discoveries. We found our rhythm as a group.

Trust was in our field

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting.

In a professional practice book that I have used for almost a decade, Feltman (2009) makes the case that there are four elements to building trusting relationships—

competence, sincerity, reliability and care. His articulation of trust resonates with my experiences, in the corporate world, in coaching and in coaching supervision. All four elements emerged in the Daring Group's interactions.

He defines competency as others believing "you have the requisite capacity, skill, knowledge, resources and time to do a particular task or job" (ibid., p.35). Sally and Aileen exhibited these consistently bringing forward client situations, holding them to the light, and learning together. As I described in the introduction of this group, they both brought similar levels of competencies, capabilities and capacities.

Sincerity is about being honest, expressing thoughtful opinions and maintaining "actions align(ed) with your words"; reliability is doing what we say we are going to, that we "keep our promises"; and care is being concerned about the group, the profession, each other individually, not just our own success (Feltman, 2009, p.4). We lived these values in our sessions—the care of each other, our showing up for every session, bringing our work forward and giving feedback, challenge and encouragement, holding up of mirrors for each other, offering feedback, and inquiring together. We trusted that we were in service of our mutual growth.

There was another part of establishing and nurturing trust in the group and that was forgiveness as a part of care. It was the balance between reliability—keeping our promises to show up in the group, bring cases or recordings forward—and care with others in the times when it was not actualized. We had the opportunity to practice not striving for perfection, not holding each other to perfect track records when one of them was late because of car troubles, discombobulated and distracted because of a major life event or a new laptop, or showed up with low energy. Through our relationships we practiced the ability to meet others where they were and hold them in unconditional positive regard.

Contributions to our learning

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, focused on supervisory relationships.

Our interactions, reflections and learning were informed by relationships and interactions beyond our monthly meetings. Sally and Aileen developed their relationships, and how to reflect, in their larger group supervision experiences as well as within our trio. There were references, not infrequently, to something that had happened in their other supervision group of six; they would bring that knowledge and experience, incorporating the learning into our inquiries. I would reference my learning from readings, other supervision groups, in my own reflections as a supervisee, and from having watched our prior sessions. I often identified when I was bringing a new pattern; and requested their agreement to introduce it. We came to each session having been slightly changed by what had transpired in between.

Designing our process for the coming year – co-creation of the container

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, utilizing all three roles: supervisory relationships, guardian of reflective practice and facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting.

The third action learning meeting occurred after our final session. We reflected on the past year and utilized our experiences to design the process for our next year in supervision. I weighted these elements more heavily than I did others that had arisen because we were using them to plan our future work. The elements we agreed to bring forward were about the container we were co-creating in each session:
- to remain as a group of two coaches
- to continue, within our overall process:
    - my invitational stance
    - to use the quote "don't you see its all perfect" (Dass and Das, 2013) – trust that whatever emerges is just what we need
    - to identify and name moments of parallel process
    - the use invitations to try things differently, to experiment

     ○ to send reflection questions a few days in advance and the journal prompts immediately after the session

There was no interest, from the coaches, in committing to the use of observational experiences.

There was an ache for a continued broader purpose in our upcoming season. Aileen noticed her greater seriousness in supervision, the past year, because she had been in service to the broader profession; she had a different commitment in her engagement. She wondered aloud if we could frame a shared purpose that was bigger than our own learning for the upcoming year. Sally shared the resonance of that sentiment; and added that she needed community as nourishment in her development. In those discussions they both felt the positive impact of the experience as participants.

As they shared these reflections, they interwove their work with their clients. Each shared how they brought these experiences into their client sessions, and how the "us" expanded to include the client's system and stakeholders; their introduction of experimentation; and their ability to move into new depths of acceptance.

They called out the need for stewardship of our space; that we could not rest on what came before. We remembered moments of discomfort, and moments of joyful discovery. We held on to the feelings of being together with the wisdom to know it was not a given. Yet we could feel it was stronger in our final sessions than in the beginning; our connection had developed over time. As Aileen shared "it's special, it's safe and it's intimate. I feel this worry inside me that brings me to tears, which is, is it fragile". Our relationships, and the space within which we worked, took continuous intentional attention.

My embodiment of the "don't you see it's all perfect" (Dass and Das, 2013, p.104) was transformative for all three of us. Aileen and Sally referenced instances when they had arrived unprepared and felt the grace of being embraced, not judged. One necessary ingredient was the repetition of this response before it could be felt fully. As Sally shared

the "honoring our wholeness of however we show up… I feel seen, I feel heard, I feel taken care of, and I feel in relationship with each of you individually and collectively".
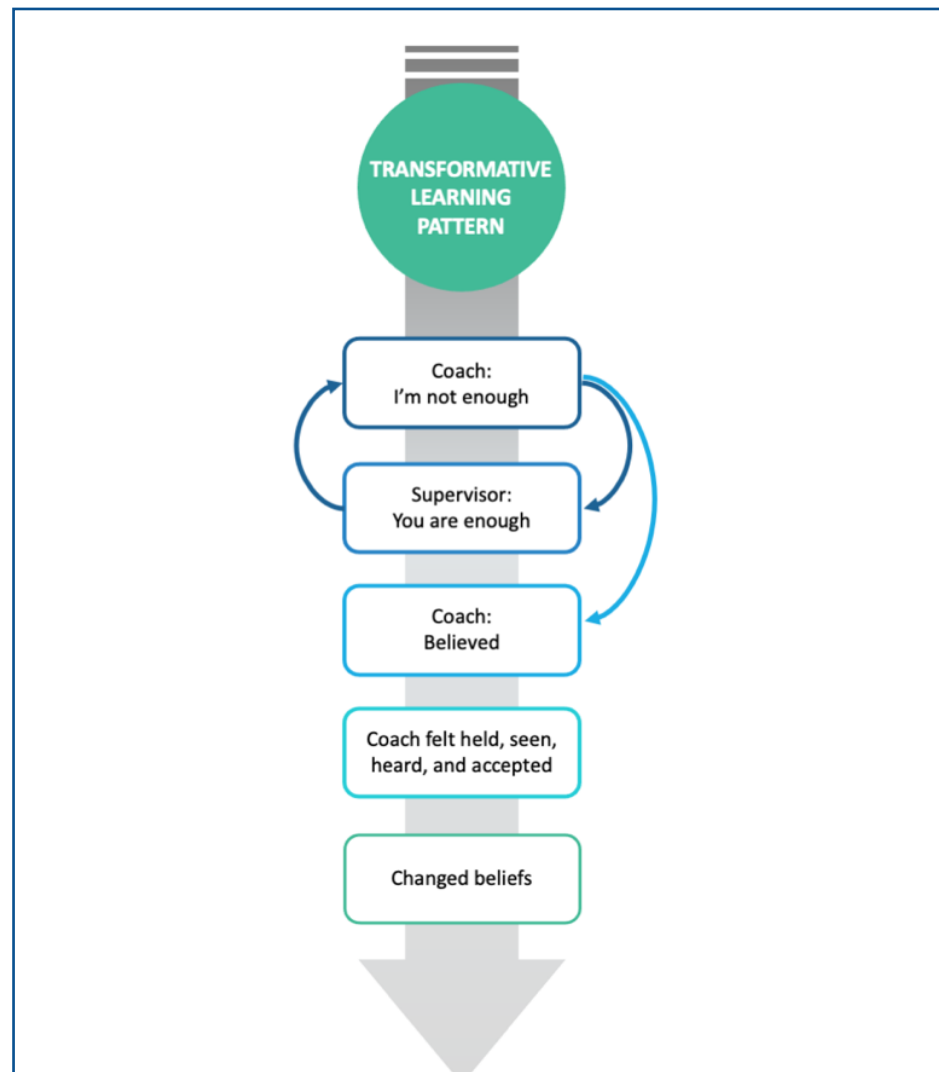
Figure 14: Transformative Learning Pattern

I felt humbled by the mysteries of how we interacted, created the container, used the idea of "it's all perfect" in service of not being perfect, in service of looking at our failings, our mistakes, our foibles, together.

Expansive acceptance, reflecting 11 months later

Role(s) at forefront: Researcher

The fourth action learning meeting occurred several months later. With time and distance, there were four themes front and center for Sally and Aileen.

- The first—the expansive acceptance from me that they experienced with the use of the concept that whatever happens is just what we need: "don't you see its all perfect?", "that's just the way it should be", "isn't that great, what a useful starting point!" They felt the honoring of their wholeness, their humanity.
- The second—how we collectively took care of the whole: the "us", which included our clients, their systems, our communities, our profession; our "intuitive sense of what that means and looks like".
- The third—my introduction of different ways of engaging, reflecting, learning; the value of "disrupting and disorganizing". The experiments (i.e. using recordings, watching the infant video, the coaching with metaphor video, using the Dass quote, self-disclosing I had gotten caught up in the parallel process) were fun; they created new possibilities.
- The fourth—they took more risks in how they showed up, with their clients and in our intimate group.

Group size

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting.

There were benefits and drawbacks to a group of two and a group of six. The group size has a number of variables to be considered with respect to its contribution to the container. Because of the difficulty of recruiting, and the willingness of these two coaches, I made the decision to start the pilot with only two supervisees instead of the Sponsor's norm of six. What those two coaches expressed, in our first session, was that they felt safer than in their group of six, even though there was more visibility and responsibility to come prepared and to participate. As is evident in the vignettes, we had participated actively in inquiring with the presenting coach, in challenging and appreciating the situations.

This group, after the initial sessions of performance anxiety, had frequently epitomized dialogue (Isaacs, 1999). The mutual vulnerability, the depth of trust in the relationships, the commitment to mutual learning, the connective tissue, or muscle, was well

developed. If one looked only at this group, it would be evident that the three of us together engaged in meaningful explorations that resulted in significant learning. At the end of the research, they concluded that it was safest with just the two of them. They had renewed for another year in both groups; there were benefits to the group of 6 and it was safe enough. I wondered about how many reasons, conditions and qualities were in their assessments of which groups to join or stay in or conclude.

Technology glitches

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting.

We experienced technology glitches. They varied from instability of WIFI, a new laptop that was not yet set up for Zoom, Zoom connectivity issues, audio issues, and so on. I intentionally was calm, accepting, and did not raise any frustrations. We worked to solve them, and then continued. They occurred frequently enough that I was used to them and let them come and go. My sense was that this way of being, as though they were disruptive traffic noises coming in an open window in a meeting room, communicated acceptance of whatever came into the space. My calm acceptance was not mentioned or referred to in the context of Zoom; yet it feels to me to have been an important ingredient.

Impacts of participating in the research

Role(s) at forefront: Researcher and Supervisor, focused on supervisory relationships.

There was development, over time, of their perspectives of the impacts of being participants. Initially, Aileen and Sally were anxious and worried about being "good lab rats". Through the ten sessions they referred to a "much more serious level of importance and responsibility" which contributed to their engagement and learning. They shared its positive impact with their clients. At the end of our year, they had shared a number of benefits. Identification of negative impact did not arise until our last meeting, 22 months after we began, when Aileen shared that she had felt observed, which had created moments of lack of safety for her. We had moved another step closer to fuller disclosure; she could, at that moment, share more fully her experience within

the research, a negative to go along with the positives. I wondered if she had recently come to the awareness of the feelings of being observed, as I had asked her to read some of my writing about our work together; she had read only the first few pages and stopped. Or was this an example of something she could not say out loud before, evidence of how many facets and complexities there are about what the container can hold at any point in time?

I had not included in the original ask of the participants that they review my writings. Sally and Aileen offered in January 2019 that they would be willing to do so if it would be useful to me. I offered that it could be potentially, and that I was worried it could alter our current relationships in unanticipated ways. I shared a draft chapter with the following care:

> *If you have time to read or scan it, would you notice what feelings arise, any stirrings about each of you and us together. What is on my mind is wanting to be quite careful that if in your review of the writing you feel shifts in our relationships that we make that explicit and talk about whether your potential review of the subsequent chapters, which are deeply about our work together, will be useful to you and to our collective ways of being, or if you detect any discomfort that means we should pause and re-evaluate whether you want to read the other chapters (Downing, 2019).*

I agreed to consider their comments but not necessarily to make the edits they suggested or requested. If their understandings were different from mine it would inform my writing and I would acknowledge the multiple perspectives. They both reviewed the first few pages of the chapter and did not continue. There could be any number of reasons for that and I honor their decisions. In fact, I was quite relieved which I shared with them. The benefits of having them read the chapter did not seem worth the risk that it might have any detrimental impact on our continuing relationships; I was particularly concerned that they might feel "observed" in our current or future work and that would interfere with how we were together.

In this chapter, I have brought to light the experiences of the Daring Group, across the span of the research inquiry, sharing how we began, the initial co-creation of the container, how we experienced the dance of supervision.

In the next Chapter, I describe the experiences of the Creating Community Group, a group of six.

Chapter 6: The Creating Community Group

"The greatest gift of relationship proves to be that as the result of encountering each other, we are obliged to grow larger than we had planned".

(Hollis, 2008, p.xi)

In this chapter I write about what happened in the Creating Community Group. I introduce the group and its members and follow the format of the previous Chapter with vignettes, moments and experiences that contribute to the mosaic of the research.

Part One: Beginning

Introduction to the Creating Community Group

This group is named the "Creating Community" group because most of them described their experiences within this group as the safest, most trusted environment for them to show up just as they were—a supportive environment where they were able to bring life struggles, challenges and difficulties. There were six coaches, based in North America, four of them having engaged in supervision together before, and two joining the group at the start of the research. I supervised the group, and consequently there will be "in the room" stories as with the Daring Group. The demographics are shown in Table 6 below. All six were active participants throughout the research.

Coach[12]	Years following certification	Actively coaching	Other roles	Gender
Bob	1-5	One internal client	In transition because of required retirement	M
Felicia	1-5	no	In transition from prior career to coaching	F
Debra	1-5	beginning to develop role—	HR & OD practitioner in organization	F

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[12] Fictitious names are used.

		started with 5 internal clients during the year		
Andy	1-5	no	In transition because of required retirement	M
Candice	1-5	Yes	Facilitator and trainer	F
Ellen	1-5	no	HR & OD practitioner in organization	F

Table 6: Creating Community Group Demographics

Life narratives

The three internal coaches were Ellen, Debra and Bob. Two coaches, Andy (new) and Felicia were not yet coaching clients; they were in transition toward building a practice. Candice (new) had a robust facilitation and coaching practice; she was significantly more experienced as a coach. I have chosen not to share their life narratives at this point, as I did with the Daring Group. Rather, I embed their individual narratives in the vignettes, where it is relevant, so the reader does not have to track between this section and the vignettes by individual group member.

Logistics

We engaged in 10 supervision sessions, beginning in October 2017 and ending in September 2018, with one organizing meeting and three action learning meetings, between September 2017 and May 2019. All ten 90-minute supervision sessions and the four 60-minute meetings were recorded and transcribed as part of the field texts. The six coaches submitted individual journaling entries following most of the sessions.

Attentiveness to relationships

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, focused on supervisory relationships.

Four of the coaches, Felicia, Bob, Debra and Ellen, had been in supervision with me, as part of a group of six, for the prior two years. We were starting our third supervision year

together. With the addition of two new coaches, to bring us back to the standard size of six, we became a new group in some ways, and remained familiar in others. Our newness came from integrating Candice and Andy; our familiarity came, in part, from the patterns and relationships among the five of us who had been together for so long. In part, it came from other connections. I had prior coaching relationships with Candice, as I had with Ellen; I had been a mentor coach for Andy, as I had with Debra. Thus, I had relationships with both the coaches joining. Andy had been in the coach training and certification program with Felicia, Bob, Debra, and Ellen. He was not a stranger to them. Candice had an ease in joining the group. These relationships contributed to less novelty than might have happened if the two new coaches had been unknown to us. It was something between a new group and an existing group.

As mentioned above, I had a coaching relationship with Ellen; it was an existing one that had renewed during the prior supervision year, with the group's permission. I had disclosed this to both Andy and Candice when we had explored their joining this group. There were no references in the sessions or in the journaling that this additional relationship with Ellen created issues within the group. In many of my groups, and across the groups within the supervision center, there were multiple relationships, among the coaches, and sometimes the supervisor. I held a watchful curiosity throughout the research; I continued to stay curious about the interplay of relationships outside the group within the group.

There is a curiosity for me in how the group is described as a group of six. As noted in the glossary at the beginning of this thesis, and in the literature on groups (Bernard and Goodyear, 2019; Ögren, Boethius and Sundin, 2014; Proctor, 2008), the group is described by the number of supervisees. This perplexes me as I consider myself a group member as the supervisor. Thus, when I think of this group, I think of us as a group of seven. I did not find supervision literature consistent with this.

Organizing Meeting

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, focused on supervisory relationships and as facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting.

I began this group, with their permission, with an organizing meeting that did not count as one of our 10 sessions. Typically, I would contract for our session structure and process in the first of the 10 sessions; however, I expected there would be several questions about the research process, and I did not want to answer those during a paid session. I wanted to honor that the coaches were paying for supervision and volunteering incremental time for the research[13].

In the advance-meeting email I sent, I acknowledged we were a new group and that we would agree on how we would work together, using the last year's process as the starting point. I intended this to be the co-design of our supervision sessions over the coming 12 months, with a particular focus on the use of observational experiences.

I arrived for the session. There were user difficulties with the Zoom link, which delayed our start. When those were resolved, 4 coaches were on video; one was audio only, just as he had been in the prior two years[14]. The sixth coach would join in the next meeting. With the technology challenges and the opening inquiry "How are you arriving?" we utilized 45 minutes, half the session. Typically, we would take no more than 15 minutes opening the session. I made the decision to allow for longer responses to begin to build the relationships necessary for co-creation of the container. The coaches were sharing more about themselves as they met the new-to-the-group coach and caught up with each other after the summer hiatus.

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[13] I took this action because it felt appropriate. I hesitated momentarily to consider if it set up any inequities with the other research groups. I had not discussed this with the other supervisors because it felt inappropriate to suggest they give additional unpaid time; they had been quite clear at the outset that time was limited, and I should not ask them to give any more beyond the original ask. As it turned out they utilized the same approach.

[14] His organization had a firewall that did not allow video conferencing applications; he was at work during the sessions.

The discussion about the research components, with many questions and clarifications, took up the remaining time. I felt anxious. I wasn't sure whether it was in the field, or my projection; it was undoubtedly both. The detailed level of the questions, what was most on their minds, were how they could be good participants and do what the research needed. I shared my commitment to be unattached to the outcomes for the research and to be intentional, and vigilant, in wearing my supervisor hat. I confirmed with them that they were still willing to participate.

We had a short organizing discussion of how we would be together in supervision. The previous members shared what they wanted us to continue, and they issued a joint challenge to themselves to bring more cases, and to be willing to coach each other in the session (live-action coaching) to use as a case study. They shared the sentiment that they had relied on a prior group member the previous year to bring most of the cases and they did not want to do that this year. The newest member, Candice, was open to whatever worked for the group. She was enthusiastic to experiment and "lean in".

Two items were on my mind following the session. I wondered why there had been Zoom link issues—we had had other kinds of Zoom issues in prior sessions, but not where the coach had the wrong link. Calendar invites and an advance email had been sent with the correct link. Second, one of the coaches asked if I was going to waive the fees for supervision this year, since the group was in service to my research. I appreciated the question; I had expected it in the recruitment process, and it had not arisen. Here it was, and interestingly, it was after everyone, including the inquiring coach, had paid the fees. I replied that the research had been developed to be in the commercial setting. She replied that was fine, she just wanted to check if that was the case. Her question planted another seed within me to be even more attentive to the nature of our relationships—paid supervision and research volunteers.

Process from our prior year

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting and as guardian of reflective practice.

As mentioned above, we were going to use our process from the prior year and modify it as we proceeded. The process was similar to the one I used in the Daring Group.. The key elements were:

1. A reflection question and call for cases/issues/themes sent a few days in advance.
2. Initial check-in "How are you arriving? What do you have for us?" to get everyone's voice in the room and build connection.
3. Reflections on the reflection question to the extent it resonated with the group.
4. What was our focus for the session, which coaches had something, did anyone want to engage in live-action coaching?
5. I would offer the order and time allotment for their concurrence or revision.
6. We would begin, and I would contract with each presenting coach on their inquiries; the group would co-inquire, we would proceed around the circle, to ensure everyone had opportunities to add to the conversation.
7. In conclusion of each case/issue/theme I would ask the presenting coach to state what they were "sitting with" or "taking" from the dialogue. I would then ask each coach what they were taking as their own learning about their selves as coach or about their practice.
8. We would move to the next item and follow a similar path.
9. At the end of the session, we would each offer closing comments, thoughts, take-aways or learning.
10. I would send the reflective journal prompts immediately.
11. I would send the link to the recording of the session and any promised resources within about a day of the session.

Our sessions were more fluid than this list may convey. I used in-the-moment contracting and permission-based interventions to dance with the emergence within our space. These elements served as guideposts; they were not rigid.

Fullness of life

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, focused on supervisory relationships.

Similar to the Daring Group, there were, throughout the year, an enormous amount of life challenges among the six coaches and me. These included two facing possible cancer diagnoses, loss and grief, severe health challenges within families, forced retirement, challenging and unsettling developments with young adult children, DNA results that opened up family secrets and new family members to two of us, three of the coaches moved residences, and the day-to-day challenges of our work, whether in organizations or building a practice. There were ongoing discussions and reflections around these events. I reference the fullness of life in the vignettes below, but not with specificity or time of any particular challenge, in service to protecting anonymity.

Part Two: Vignettes

Journaling

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting and as guardian of reflective practice.

I sent the journal prompts immediately following the organizing session via email. They responded very quickly. I noticed, as I reviewed the entries, that more than one coach had referred to their experience in the session as practice space for their coaching competencies. Ellen wrote "My ability to be present and listen to everything everyone was saying and how it was said. This helps me in my coaching by really allowing me to "see" the client". Debra noted she felt her mind wandering, she had been distracted. She wondered "How often does this come across in my coaching practice. Will watch for this". Felicia had technical issues and wrote that she wished she had taken the time to ensure Zoom was working in order to have been present in the session. She connected this to her coaching "not preparing in this way shortchanged the experience with the group and would certainly impact any coaching session. This was a good reflection and noticing for me".

Writing about shared vulnerability, Candice said "I like the vulnerable sharing about performance anxiety because I feel now like I could share any concern and it will be held respectfully". Ellen raised a concern about how to continue the level of vulnerability "How will we continue to make our sessions a place where we can be real, authentic, not feeling the need to "show up" in a certain way but a place where we can bring our whole selves and not censor".

As with the Daring Group, the entries were informative glimpses into the individual's experience in the group and reminded me that the abilities to observe one's self, and to reflect varied across the group. The variances stood out more starkly to me in the journaling than in that initial session. Candice had written extensively, noticing several aspects of herself and connecting to what others had shared, noticing how she participates in a group, identifying a known "saboteur lingering", and how she might take this into her coaching. Bob wrote briefly and factually about what had happened.

I had been caught off guard with the mentions of practicing within the sessions. It was not an explicit purpose I had articulated for supervision and our processes. I wondered about my assumptions and what I was doing in supervision of which I was unaware. I had no memories of having stated to any of the coaches that supervision was practice space for coaching competencies. In fact, in considering how to bring recordings, I was quite clear we would not approach the reviews as competency reviews, but rather as reflective reviews. Clear that was what our approach would be; I wasn't clear about what the distinctions were between those two approaches. I appreciated the idea of practice space. I was going to look for more opportunities that arose that could be defined as practicing space.

A prior breach of trust

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, focused on supervisory relationships.

Debra, at the end of her journaling, wrote she had experienced a breach of trust with me. She shared when we had been together at a conference, several months before, I had offended her and that needed to be addressed. I was not surprised. Intuitively I knew

something had happened between us as she, uncharacteristically, had not responded to my emails during the summer. We had a one-on-one call. We explored the situation and repaired the breach in our relationship. It was a reminder that our intentions can be constructive or positive, yet the impact on the recipient can be critical or negative; that was what had occurred. It was also a reminder that when there was hurt, one could repair it through listening, acknowledging and apologizing.

Interestingly, the journal entry was a safer space than other ways of communication for her to share this; I wondered about the dynamics of that. I noticed, again, the value of the journaling as a vehicle for informing me of individual perspectives that were not being raised in other settings. I wondered what might have created the conditions that she could have reached out to me directly, and sooner, to have this discussion.

First supervision session – Jumping in

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting.

I sent the advance email with a reflection question about their developmental goals, a request for cases/issues/themes, an invitation for them do to a brief write-up in advance if it would serve their learning, and the Zoom link. Three group members jumped right in. Andy and Candice, the two newest to the group, sent in brief write-ups. Candice also volunteered to bring a recording and transcript to the following session in November, and Bob wrote up a case for the November session as he was not able to attend this session as the date conflicted with a holiday in his country—here was a cultural miss in our scheduling[15].

This was an opportunity for us to continue to contract collectively for the coming year, building on our prior organizing session. I took us into the session, using the process and structure outlined above. In this group it worked as four of the coaches "knew" the process and Candice was willing to go with the flow; in her journaling after the organizing

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[15] We had a regular practice of keeping our dates unless more than 2 coaches could not attend, in which case we would reschedule. He may have assumed we would not reschedule; I learned from this to ask each group, at the start of the year, if there are any holidays we need to take into consideration.

meeting, she had written "I also like both structure and ambiguity. I think we set the stage for both to come in". Andy engaged as well. In my reflections following this session I was wondering if I should have done more explicit contracting? What is the level of contracting that sets the stage for each member of the group to know their roles and responsibilities, to have a comfort level with expectations and the process? Were any members of this group feeling the way Sally had been, hiding within the larger group? Or were there other points of differentiation that contributed to our ability to proceed without additional contracting, such as, these were all coaches who had been certified in the last five years and therefore had been introduced conceptually to supervision in the training; or were Candice's and Andy's needs for structure less than Sally's? Or were Candice's and Andy's inner critics quieter? How to assess each group's needs and tailor the contracting process, as well as the structure and processes within the sessions? A rigid standardized approach to the beginning of each group was inappropriate.

How are you arriving?

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting.

I have paid close attention, in my supervision practice, to ensure that every one's voice is in the room, and that there are comparable opportunities for each person to speak throughout the session. The concept of the circle is easily facilitated in a small group on Zoom. We approached this in a couple of different ways—in the opening, one person would start, and then pass to another. During the inquiries into the case or issue or theme, we would speak as we were moved; each person would typically participate. Often it was through offerings to the presenting coach, rather than a back-and-forth dialogue. The goals were to open perspectives and expand possibilities, not to convince anyone of a particular point of view or solution. We were not problem solving; we were co-inquiring.

I welcomed them, introduced Andy who was joining the group for the first time, and asked how they were arriving. This got everyone's voice "in the room" and started the sharing. The candor of the responses reflected the starting structure of the container, and the level of relationships. In listening, I was able to feel the connectivity or

resonance, candor in disclosure, presence, or challenges, or the lack thereof. Often as a new group comes together, there is hesitancy or caution. That morning there was deep engagement. Candice set a high bar with her willingness to bring the messiness of her practice immediately to a new group by bringing a case to the first session, having shared a write-up in advance and volunteered to bring a recording of her coaching to the following session. Her vulnerability and openness were the boldest I had seen with a coach coming into an existing group. It was refreshing, inspiring, and a good reminder that how we operate in a group, and what we each need to feel safe, were significantly influenced by who we were.

I felt, in the session, a perceptible stepping up by the other group members. Were we all swimming in performance anxiety and trying to get it right for the research? Was there an undertone of competition spurred by the addition of Candice? What were the subtle dance moves? Over the course of the year, I came to hold another question about how Candice came into the group. She occasionally referenced her need to perform, her need to prove her worth and add value. In the later sessions she journaled about not getting so "wrapped up in adding value". Was her vulnerability bold? Or driven by her need to establish her value within the group?

Experimentation adds to the container

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting and as guardian of reflective practice.

We had the written cases from Candice and Andy, and Debra brought a case verbally. I offered the order and time we would give to each, and the group agreed. We began.

Candice briefly described her case, I contracted about what she wanted from the group. She wanted others to share what they had done in similar client situations. I had the possibility of an experiment on my mind because my group coaching supervisor had done this in several sessions over the past years and I had found it useful. I had introduced it in the Daring Group, and they had found it useful and they had encouraged me to bring

more experimentation to our sessions. The benefit of what the others noticed often opened up a new perspective or awareness for the presenting coach. It was an opportunity to notice one's reactions as practice of observing one's self in the moment.

 I asked if the group would try something new, briefly, before we responded to Candice's ask. They agreed. I invited the group to share "What came up for you? Visuals or feelings or stirrings—just what did you notice in yourself as Candice described the case?" We took turns responding. Felicia and Andy moved right to offering a solution; they did not name any noticing in themselves. Debra shared she had felt tenderness and care; Ellen found herself in many different places as she tried to notice what she was observing and stay present to Candice's descriptions. I shared an image that had popped for me that Candice was an adult figure, and her client was a younger person, and that they were not shoulder to shoulder.

As the next step, I paused the group and asked them to share what they noticed about themselves as coach in the responses to what was stirred in them. Andy and Felicia, who had jumped to solutions, noticed that they had done that and reflected on the challenge of learning to let go of their solution orientation and move into coach mode. Ellen shared she was unable to stay in presence. Debra discovered by not taking notes she had found herself able to be fully present: "my ideas or thoughts just floated away...I've never noticed that before". Candice discovered a theme as she listened to the others—over the last 90 days, she had been shifting her stance with some clients away from unconditional positive regard when she had a story about their lack of resourcefulness.

The experiment stayed with us—this idea of learning how to observe one's self and stay present to the others. Ellen shared "there was an ask to pay attention to what we're noticing in ourselves...staying present for myself... and [the presenting coach] ...and of course thinking about the story and how would I coach, and oh yes, I had a similar client. I found myself being in many different places". The coaches noticed the links between what they were experiencing in the session and how it tied back to how they were in the world and as a coach.

As we were nearing the end of the session, I contracted with the group on two items regarding experimentations. The first, what were they noticing in hearing the case, and what were they taking about their self as coach—was it useful, should we do it again? This experimentation created, I learned, a greater sense of safety: "I thought this was an extremely powerful call…you're holding a really special container for us to allow us to bring ourselves in a different and special way". There was agreement to integrate experiments into our process.

There was the paradox that one cannot have a safe container without vulnerability, and yet vulnerability needs a sense of safety to engage. This was our first session; we had begun to construct our safe space. We were a new group, and this was the invitational introduction of a new process. It contributed to our overall willingness to be vulnerable.

The second was to contract about our next experiment—the recording and transcript Candice was bringing in the next session. Would people agree to listen in advance? What would one listen for? We distinguished assessment for competencies and development areas, as they experienced in the coaching training program, from reflective inquiry about the recording. I was struggling to articulate what the differences were. While I had used recordings in my own sessions as a supervisee, I used them intuitively, and had not articulated my process. My attempt was "This is listening and being present to what's happening in the session in response to the questions…[that she] will tee up for us…That's the first level. The second level is, gosh, as I listen…what is stirring for me about my stance as coach". Candice noticed she felt "a little scared". I noted her willingness to share that with the group, her openness, and wondered how it would show up in the next session.

I appreciated how experimentation in the session had created opportunities for us to reflect, disclose, and learn in different ways. I decided to continue to integrate experiments into my supervision process going forward and utilize the permission-based approach through contracting in the moment.

Communications outside the group

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, focused on supervisory relationships and as facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting.

For the next session, Candice had volunteered to share a recording and transcript with the group. I sent the reflection question a week in advance and referenced that she would be sending the recording and transcript prior to the session. She sent them to the group and then emailed me that she was feeling "guilt and shame" for sending the recording a few days later than she intended. I felt compelled to create an empathic connection with Candice as an individual group member. I have found there were appropriate times for the supervisor to have one-on-one communications outside of the full group setting.

In addition to assuring her that everything that happens is fine just how it happens, and that it would provide learning no matter what, I also wrote:

> *Your timing is absolutely fine. If someone doesn't have time to listen - that will be good input as well - and I am not sure whether it will be about timing or about their own views and responses to recordings. Great grist for the mill. If folks do take the time to listen, again that will be rich with learning for all of us. In my experience whatever happens is an opportunity for learning - about ourselves, about the group, about the ways we are reflecting and learning together… I am holding no judgment about the timing. Our lives are all full - sometimes more than we hope. It is a new undertaking to share with the group your recording and I am appreciating that you have done so (Downing, 2017a).*

Candice responded:

> *Wow. Your response made me feel seen and heard and valued. What a cool experience to have across email and appreciate the beautiful reminder that there is learning in everything. I'm actually going to save*

your email for a reference in other times when I notice my inner noise
voices are getting in the way of being present.

My response demonstrated unconditional positive regard and an understanding of shame and shame spirals; it deepened my connection with her. Candice felt, as evidenced by her response, seen and heard as well as valued. I believed this was an appropriate interaction within the boundaries of the group system.

The issue of when it was appropriate for a supervisor to have one-on-one communications with a group member was one I had explored several times with both of my supervisors. I was consistently on the lookout for the shades of gray that were lurking in these interactions. My primary experiences interacting with a coach individually, outside the group, was when I had said something that disrupted their sense of unconditional positive regard or breached our relationship. For example, when they had been triggered by a comment or observation. There were a handful of times when a group member seemed to reach out in a bid to build a closer alliance; in those situations, I did not respond, or I responded with a request to bring the point to the group.

Many of my colleagues, in the US and Europe, shared with me they did not have interactions with individuals outside the group setting. I thought I may be more of the exception in my approach. Through the research, I discovered I was not unique within my community; in the three groups supervised by my colleagues, there were individual interactions between a group member and the supervisor. I learned about those from the journaling; in each situation it was mentioned as increasing the coach's safety within the group. Did it decrease the safety of others in the group?

Shame in the group

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting and as guardian of reflective practice.

Candice's shame about sending the recording late preceded further shame in the group. The group had committed to listen to the recording in advance of the session; when they arrived, they reported that one listened and read the transcript, one read the transcript but did not listen, three did not listen or read the transcript. I wrote about this in a chapter on using observational data in supervision and the need for a variety of kinds of safety:

> *One aspect that I noticed throughout was that the participation of the individuals who had not listened contained more hesitancy and apologies for not having listened. This shifted the dynamic in the session by placing individuals in different strata – those "in the know" and those who viewed themselves as not. This difference in strata felt to me as though it significantly diminished the presence of those who had not listened as their numerous apologies and body stance suggested diminution. It raised contracting issues, questions about committing unexpected time to prepare, and the different levels of communication needed when transcripts or recordings were sent in advance. This also raised the question about how many containers were needed for this one group? I use the word "container" here to describe the boundaries around the different elements that make up the whole holding of the group within the supervision context. For example, how does the supervisor hold a container for the person bringing the recording, for the part of the group that listened, for the other part of the group that read the transcript and for the part of the group that was using the narrative description only? (Downing, 2019, p.99).*

As we began our exploration of the recording, I moved to settle the group about the impact of not everyone having watched the recording:

What I want to say to each of you as a group is however you're coming into this discussion is fine, just as it was with Bob. Sometimes we don't have time to read an email. Sometimes we don't have time to listen to recordings. Sometimes we don't see it in the inbox. Sometimes it doesn't arrive, so let's just let any feelings about that go, and let's just be present. Those of us who heard the recording will reference it, no doubt, and those of you who haven't, just be in this as the way you would any case in the group.

This was insufficient. The group members who had not listened could not move into a safe space in this session; their inner critic and sense of shame held them captive. This was an example of an insufficient container; in those moments, their sense of safety was contaminated—they could self-disclose that they had not listened, but they could not fully be open, explore and inquire in the reflections as they were immersed in their not having done enough. My reassurances weren't enough to rebuild the container during that session.

See the illustration below which shows there may have been safety among the group members who came prepared, the presenting coach and myself. There were not safe enough relationships among the three coaches because of their inner dialogues.
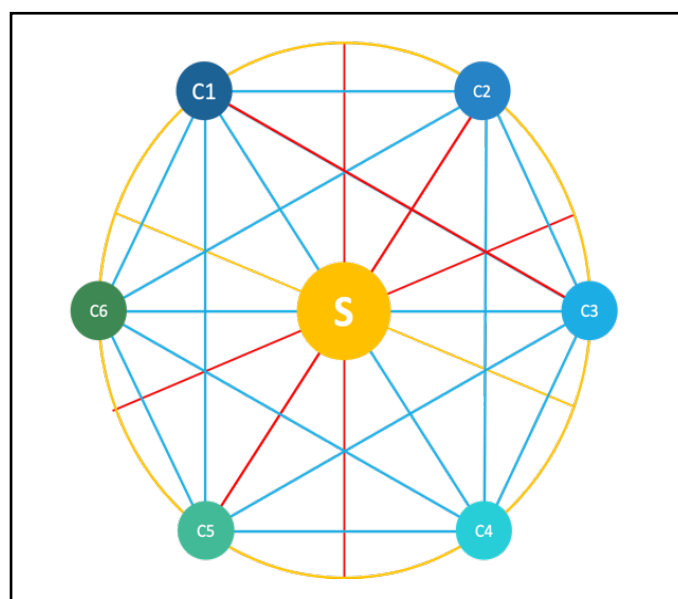
Figure 15: Relationship Diagram

This session reinforced my emerging understanding that the fabric of the container is stretched, shrunk and torn by individual members by situations and circumstances that happen outside the group, as well as within the group. That the process or topic or content that we considered in the session had triggered a lack of ability of one or more coaches to arrive, be present and fully participate. They were in a space that was diminishing rather than generative.

Courage to respond to feedback

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting.

In this same session, I asked each coach to share what they had learned about self as coach in reflecting on a case presented by Bob, an internal coach. Felicia asked for feedback, as she noticed she went right to problem-solving while the rest of the group was more reflective. She saw how she responded differently than others in the group. The group reassured her she could come as she was. I responded that I thought it was a contracting question with the presenting coach, in this case whatever Bob wanted. Although she had not responded directly to his inquiry, he assured her that he appreciated her comments.

On reflection, I had different views of the group's reassurance. I realized I did not trust that I could provide Felicia with direct feedback in a way that she would truly hear it. Prior experiences of her fierce temper had impacted my ability to be candid. However, I felt my hesitance took away some of the safety within the group because honest feedback was requested, in service to another's development, and there was insufficient candor. Was this lack of courage? Was it insufficient commitment to her growth? Was this collusion with the group to avoid conflict, choosing assurance instead? Was it knowledge, or projection, about how Felicia would react, based on difficult prior experiences? Were we (was I) unsure of our working alliance and whether it was strong enough for sharing experiences truthfully? Had I moved out of unconditional positive regard?

On the other hand, in a subsequent session, Candice shared that this interaction with Felicia had increased her level of safety—she had realized in that moment that it was OK to have a different approach or response than the majority of the group. Two good reminders came up for me: that each of our experiences were shaped by who we are individually, and with the interactions we have had with another individual; and that diversity of perspectives adds to the depth of the container.

I also recognized through this experience that the container had gained more dimensionality— I added to the consideration of the qualities and conditions necessary for the coaches, those necessary for the supervisor. "However, rooted and grounded in respect, empathy and authenticity a group facilitator may be, there will be times when one, or more, do not seem accessible" (Proctor, 2000, p.117). I felt I had let an important moment for candid feedback go by, which would have had rich possibilities for individual and group learning.

Supervisor self-disclosure

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, utilizing all three roles: supervisory relationships, guardian of reflective practice and facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting.

A pivotal moment in my work with the Creating Community Group was triggered by an invitation from one of the other supervisors to participate with her group for an exploratory discussion about their participation. She strategized with me, based on what had occurred in the last few months with the other groups, to develop an approach she thought would be beneficial to her group and to the research.

When we came together, she asked the group if they would play a bit with her, and they readily agreed. She then shared with them, in the session, several minutes of a recording of one of her own "messy" coaching sessions. She asked them to supervise her, and they explored the session together. This was self-disclosure by a supervisor in action. At the conclusion of the session, she said to them, "You know I would never invite you to do something, I wouldn't do myself. That's why I brought my recording first, before you

made a final commitment to participate". I was moved by her approach, as was her group. They opted in; and they were the only group in which every coach brought a recording. They said she inspired them!

My literature reviews were intentionally plural, as I was not homing in on a handful of literature areas; rather I was identifying all my curiosities about areas that could be relevant. There was interplay between my learning, thinking about and applying ideas in my practice and holding the research process. A few weeks after the session with my colleague, I was reading about the supervisory relationship between supervisee and supervisor (Beinart and Clohessy, 2017) and I focused on three journal articles exploring what supervisees reported got in their way (Ladany *et al.,* 1996), about beneficial supervisor self-disclosures (Ladany and Lehrman-Waterman, 1999), and non-disclosures by trainee-supervisees (Mehr, Ladany and Caskie, 2010).

I was curious about self-disclosure, given how my colleague had shared her recording, as well as through my reading. I took this experience into the work with my group. The quantitative research on supervisor self-disclosure found: "The results also support our hypothesis that supervisor self-disclosure predicts the strength of the supervisory working alliance. That is, the more frequently a supervisor self-disclosed, the greater was the agreement between the supervisor and the trainee on the goals and tasks of supervision and the stronger was the emotional bond between the two.... the study shows that sharing counseling struggles uniquely influenced the emotional bond between the supervisor and the trainee" (Ladany and Lehrman-Waterman, 1999, pp.156-157). I also had in mind Sheppard's (2017) research findings that included one of the ways coaching supervisees hinder their supervision experiences is by having the supervisor on a pedestal.

At about this same time, every member of the Creating Community group was struggling with serious life and work issues that left them drained: the fullness of life for them collectively was quite daunting. There was less inquisitiveness about their own coaching practices. They arrived at the February session with no cases, themes or issues. We explored a YouTube video on coaching with metaphors (TPC Leadership, 2012) and

Candice gave us a brief update on a client. Sensing that I could be of service to their learning, and my own, I made a quick decision to self-disclose about my work with one of my coaching clients. I asked if they would supervise me as I was "stuck with a client".

I was wondering how it might shift the energy for us to work on my sticky situation. As Brown, B.C. (2012) often says vulnerability invites vulnerability and I was testing that theory in an experimental way.

> *"When we pay attention, right in the midst of the difficulties and strains,*
> *and the pleasures and pains of our lives, it's the unexpected, the puzzles,*
> *the paradoxes that catch us, open us, change us".*
>
> *(Marc Lesser, 2019)*

This opened up a discussion on mastery, as there was some consternation and doubt, particularly from Andy, that I could be "stuck" since I was a supervisor. He considered me to be a masterful coach who would not get stuck and expressed it was "ironic". We talked about what mastery means and the potential for lifelong supervision, regardless of our level of mastery. Here it was in the moment—the asymmetrical nature of my relationship to the group as supervisor: I was on a pedestal of varying heights, holding the power of approval (Ögren, Boëthius, and Sundin, 2014).

With their agreement, I described the circumstances of the case. Their co-inquiry with me was useful to me as a coach. It also gave me the opportunity to give feedback to them, in real time, about what input, inquiry or reflection was helpful and what was not. I was quite explicit as to what I wanted and didn't want and engaged with them by articulating the feelings and thoughts that were coming up in me from their responses.

I took the opportunity to address Felicia's problem-solving. I shared that when she jumped to a conclusion about the client and knew what the solution was, it was not helpful or useful. In the journaling following the session, and in the 3 action learning meetings, some members of the group seized on my self-disclosure as being the most pivotal in our years together. One coach also wrote about my interactions with Felicia,

describing them as "the in-the-moment reaction that was not judgmental but also highlighted how to raise awareness about impact". It created a deeper sense of safety, because if I could get stuck it was more OK for them to share when they were stuck. It also role-modelled for them a way to give more direct feedback to a group member.

Here were two instances of supervisor self-disclosure, from my colleague and my own. I discovered additional instances throughout the research, especially when the coaches, in the three groups supervised by others, shared appreciation of their supervisors in the meetings with me. Many of the coaches exclaimed that the supervisor's willingness to share their struggles had contributed to their overall experiences in the group and enabled their stepping into their own vulnerability to share their challenges.

Pivot #2 I let go fully of my original focus on observational experiences and moved the focus to the creation and stewardship of the container
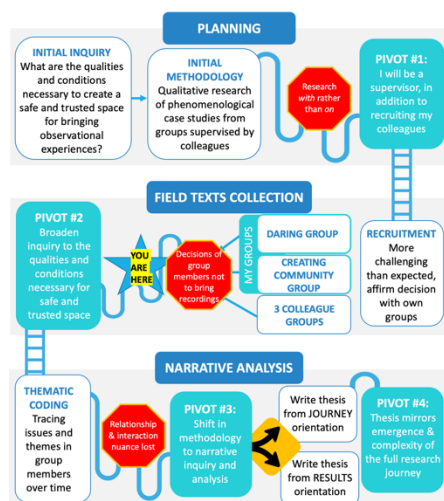
Figure 16: Pivot #2 realized

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, all three roles: focused on supervisory relationships, guardian of reflective practice and as facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting.

In preparation for our first action learning meeting, I sent out reflection questions. We were at the midpoint of our year together. I inquired about the impact, if any, of participating in the research. I was continuing to focus on the use of observational experiences. It was my learning in this action learning meeting that crystallized my focus

back to the full supervision experience. The reflection questions are set forth in Appendix 14.

I had intended to facilitate this action learning meeting with my researcher role at the forefront. However, as we were exploring our work in the supervision sessions, I found I was front and center as the supervisor, paying attention to our relationships, our dynamics and how we were crafting our reflective practices. We started with our usual check in of how we were arriving. As each coach put their voice in the room, I sensed again the fullness of life in this group. Felicia was focused on her website; consistent with having claimed in earlier sessions her failure to launch, she said she had no expectations in the next year or so for any new business. Candice was noticing her reflections and anxiousness about business, while also noting the hope of seeing spring flowers emerge. Andy was facing into continuing serious health issues with a family member. Ellen's husband was home on crutches, she was dealing with aging parent issues, and was the mother of an almost teenager. Bob was facing into forced retirement, selling and buying homes, and imagining how it would be to start over in a new community. Debra was half a world away on business travel, so could not join because it would have been in the middle of the night for her. I arrived present and in recovery mode from jet lag, having been in London for a couple of weeks.

As had developed from my early sessions with the Daring Group, I started the discussion reiterating that whatever was coming up for them was just what the research needed, just as in our regular sessions. I was looking for their usual candor and vulnerability. I asked them to share their responses to how it was to be in this group with the overlay of the research.

There was as much diversity in their responses as in how they were arriving. Andy shared, being new to supervision, "this had been really special...feeling emotional support...each time I join these calls". He identified no negatives. Felicia noted her mixed feelings about the questions— "Ugh, you're gonna ask me to go inside my body...Oh, god. I gotta go inside and really have a thoughtful opinion...I struggle, am I doing it right?" Ellen spoke about her belief that to be of value she had to perform, and "this is giving me the space

to open myself up more to others and to be vulnerable". She noticed no negatives, and she was not feeling observed; yet she wondered if she was giving me enough for there to be value to the research. There she was in her story; I felt in the moment that there might have been a negative of being in the research if she was feeling more pressure to perform. Bob shared that he was growing professionally and personally, that the learning was sticking more for him because of responding to the journal prompts. He was happy to give back for the research, and that the group felt "like a family". Candice shared, being new to supervision, she didn't see any impact of the research except feeling good if she is contributing. She noted that the "contemplation" that we do within the group was very valuable; the reflection "cements or opens up some new learning".

What was noticeably absent in these comments were references to observational experiences, until Candice, who went last, shared her appreciation for the reflections on her recordings. I invited the group to share how it was for them, and they stayed briefly there, but noted it was an intervention. That caught my attention. Ellen challenged the group to step up to more live-action coaching since there were few opportunities for several of them to bring recordings or transcripts because they were not actively coaching. "We say we feel secure…held in the group…supported…what's holding us back?" It would be "bringing more to the game". The conversation pivoted from the interventions to considering whether the space was safe enough for them to challenge themselves.

The group focused on the value of supervision as a unique experience of being in community, supported and held, learning about themselves and their practices. Two coaches raised that the most impactful experience had been my asking them to supervise me. My self-disclosure as a supervisor had been powerful.

Their focus throughout was on the overall supervision experience, and that took me back to my research inquiry—what are the elements of creating and maintaining a space sufficient for the coaches to self-disclose and learn? The recordings were intimidating for most of the group; only Candice brought them. The response to introducing them brought the qualities necessary for safety to the forefront. I had not asked the participant

discussing a case or issue what the barriers were to their bringing a case to the group—they each brought them, with varying degrees of vulnerability. When I asked the question about the recordings, the inquiry evoked participant's stories about themselves, about their fears or comfort, about their willingness, or inability, to share more of themselves. I asked them one more question.

What would they say to a colleague considering supervision, and would they say anything about observational experiences? The answers were rich with the value of supervision; and confirmed that was where my focus should be. Nurturing a unique space; a safe place to share and learn; learning from each other, supported by each other; power in witnessing the experiences of others; value of dialogue about the process without being in the process; a way to continue learning; deepen capacities as human beings, and coaches.

The journaling provided peeks into inner dialogue

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as guardian of reflective practice and as facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting.

The group members had varying levels of emotional intelligence ("EQ") (Goleman, 2013)— some had greater self-awareness, some were better able to be mindful in their interactions. They had different levels of practice and competency as coaches. Some had more comfort in the group setting than others.

The journaling provided insights into each individual's reactions to the interactions in the sessions—a candid view that was sometimes different than what was shared within the session. Their journal entries presented brief peeks into their inner dialogue. Descriptions of their life narratives included "never good enough", "need to solve it immediately", "sabotage myself – failure to launch", "care what others think so edit what I share – am I adding enough value". These inner voices impacted their ways of being in the group; in different moments, the voices led to an individual loss of safety, often with no outward manifestation.

Reading how they were processing the sessions gave me different vantage points to reflect on what I was doing as a supervisor. This was a feedback loop unique to being a researcher. Candice wrote that she was really irritated with a group member giving advice when that was not how she had framed her inquiry. I wondered if I should have been more assertive in the session, and paused the coach who was giving advice, or paused the presenting coach to encourage them to re-contract with the advice-giving coach on what they wanted. Candice also wrote of her impatience with long soliloquies; I inquired with myself whether my facilitation could be crisper. I continued to consider the journaling entries as I observed myself.

What was evident was that the individuals who were more reflective, and had deeper capabilities to observe, could question their meanings and values and design new experiments to learn. A couple of the coaches, Bob and Felicia, would acknowledge their life narratives, but did not evidence any further reflection; they stayed, at least as of then, in the place of acknowledging who they were.

These entries enriched what I was awake to in the sessions. I continued to use the information to shift my facilitation in nuanced ways, e.g., to make the group dynamics more explicit, to pause and have us reflect on what was going on in the room, what were we each learning about ourselves from the others. I started with small experiments and fine-tuned my approaches based on the experiences. I began to develop a frame about the container that went beyond its co-creation. I had an expanding sense that it was a vibrant, living container, ebbing and flowing in response to large and small ripples, some visible and many invisible. My intentional attention was shifting.

Catching up with my development

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, using my self-reflection to inform guardian of reflective practice and focus on supervisory relationships.

I noticed I was appreciating the work the group members were doing, calling out their courage, their willingness to explore, their transparency, the joy of being in the messiness of our coaching practices. It did not feel to me that this was different from how I was in the past. Yet, they stated that I was showing up differently and that was creating a safer space for them.

Debra sent me an email in early December about how different the sessions were this year, attributing that to how I was different as the supervisor. She noticed several elements: my combination of flexibility with structure, nice balance in managing the time, "a lovely balance between inquiry, connection, sharing a point/points of view/observation", asking profound questions, and more intentionality coupled with respect.

It was hard to accept acknowledgment of what I was doing well. Yet I found Debra's reflections, as if she held up a mirror for me to see more of myself, useful indicators of what was shifting in my ways of supervising that were not yet conscious competencies (Burch cited in Bryson, 2016). She articulated some of the important threads in our weaving a safe container.

I wondered if, in the fuller context of gratitude for the research, I was more animated in my appreciations. I viewed, just as I had in the Daring Group, our relationships as more mutual—in prior years I was supervising in service to their learning and development; I always learned from them, but that was not a stated purpose for our engagement. The added dimension was that they were explicitly in service to my learning and development both as a supervisor and as a researcher. We were mutually in service to each other and somehow that was being transmitted to, received, or felt by them.

In combination, the feedback from Debra, with my experiences in the Daring Group that had raised bringing our good work to supervision, and the greater mutuality in our relationships, focused more of my attention on myself as a supervisor. With each supervision session I led, I was gaining experience as a supervisor. Immersion in the research had awakened me to noticing and inquiring in completely different ways and I

especially benefited from the comparing and contrasting with the three other groups. The breadth and scope of my reading across additional academic fields had opened up new ways of thinking, framing and exploring. Could the change in my energy and pace have resulted in a positive impact?

I wondered, as I had in the Daring Group, about highlighting positive shifts in development, signposts on the journey toward mastery. My responses were discomfort for doing that myself and a drive to offer it in my groups. My curiosity was about inviting coaches to bring their moments of coaching to supervision in which they felt satisfied with or even very good about; I wanted us to learn from those interactions, as well as the ones where we were in inquiry about stuck-ness or challenges. I decided to experiment with inviting this kind of reflection in some of my groups; and to experiment with claiming those moments when I was a supervisee. I appreciated that I had more enthusiasm to offer it to the coaches than to do it myself. I knew I needed to use my resistance as I framed the offer in the groups.

At the end of our year-long engagement, in the action learning set #3 with the Creating Community Group, I asked about how we had invited work into the sessions and asked how they would design supervision in the future. Their answers were phrased mostly as feedback on my development as a supervisor. Shifts in me that they named included:

- My bringing my case to them, articulating my challenges, and what I was sitting with, was unique to this year and had been intriguing and appreciated.
- Demonstrating my own vulnerabilities more and "driving home this is a never-ending learning cycle".
- The question asked every session about how what we were discussing impacted each of them as a coach.
- The benefit of the initial contracting question with each presenting coach which opened the possibilities to noticing, observation, inquiry rather than advice or consulting.
- The session in which I noticed the lack of energy and responded to that with my case. I had noticed and respected how they were in those moments with a response that had served the group.

- My ability to pivot in the moment when I noticed a group dynamic, and respond to it, which was helpful to the dynamics and safety of the group.

- Ability to create an environment where the coaches could come, be vulnerable with each other, not be judged or need to nudge each other, with a commitment to each other's growth and development.

- My providing the mid-point check in and inquiring what each might do differently in the second half of the engagement resulted in one coach stepping up more.

- I created an invitational space; there were not expectations of performance.

- My pausing the sessions and asking the group "what are you noticing right this moment in yourself and your self as coach?"

- An enhanced balance of asking, listening and information rather than as much telling as the first year I supervised.

- I had developed the capacity to "hold command differently", I commanded in a way that others wanted to follow, "not demanding and not like commanding with a salute" but through presence which held the space.

- I was settling into my wisdom in the role of supervisor.

The feedback enabled me to catch up with my development and learn what had been visible to the group through the year.

An interesting dynamic – competitiveness

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting.

Coming into one session, Candice had volunteered to coach or be coached in the session. When I inquired about what the group had for us, there was interest in live-action coaching[16].

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[16] The coach and client would work together for about 15 minutes. The rest of us were observers, muting our microphones, and turning off our videos. At the conclusion of the coaching, we came back on video and debriefed together, focusing the inquiry on what we noticed about ourselves. It was not a competencies evaluation of the coaching; we were not providing feedback to the coach unless they requested it.

Ellen said she would like to be the coach and Felicia said she would like to be the client. I asked Candice to defer, although she had volunteered first, because she had already had a lot of time as the presenting coach in the earlier sessions. She readily agreed, and Ellen checked in with her, sharing her intent was to be vulnerable and open, not to "bump her off". We started with sharing our responses to the reflection questions, which had been about judgment. Andy had asked to explore the major transition he was in, as it related to his judgment of his client, before we moved into the live-action coaching.

I invited Andy to present on the transition he was in; I inquired of the group how it was to hear of this type of transition from a colleague as contrasted with a client. Quickly in the discussion, something very different happened. As if spurred by Ellen volunteering to coach, Felicia stepped in and began to coach Andy, who responded to the coaching. I was curious about what was happening and let it continue for about 3 minutes, and then I paused the interaction to return us to the question. I invited Debra to share her reflections, and she engaged with Andy, referencing when she had coached him in the past, rather than as a group member in mutual inquiry. Andy responded in the rhythm of a client. I let it continue for just a couple of minutes, curious about what dynamics were at play.

It felt like competitiveness. It may have been in response to the higher bar of vulnerability set in the earlier sessions, or, in this session, by Ellen and Candice both volunteering to be the coach in the live-action setting. In the prior year, I don't believe Felicia or Debra had volunteered to coach, yet here they were, consciously or unconsciously volunteering through their actions. What does this mean about the ebb and flow of safety? Does one's competitiveness make one braver, so one is less concerned with safety? Or does one's competitiveness mean that a slightly different version of the person was present in this session, one who was more willing to be vulnerable? Or, does it represent a diminishing sense of individual safety—comparing oneself to the coach, and wanted to be perceived as just-as-good-as or even better-than?

How I am arriving as supervisor

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, using my self-reflection to inform guardian of reflective practice and focus on supervisory relationships.

Between the December session and our January session, the fullness of life in my part of the world was roiled in disruption and tragedy. We had what was at that point the most destructive wildfire in California's history. I evacuated with 2 grandchildren, 2 great grandchildren, a husband, a friend, 2 rabbits and 2 dogs. We fled south, not knowing for two weeks if our homes would be spared or perish; watching on TV the ongoing destruction of our beloved communities. We returned home 23 December, having driven through miles and miles of complete devastation. Then on 9 January came massive debris and mud flows, with 23 lives lost, and unfathomable devastation. Our 2 grandchildren, 2 great grandchildren and the bunnies moved in with us.

Ten days later, the group convened for our next session. In a bit of casual talk while the group was arriving, a group member asked me about what had happened, and I shared a brief overview. I did not share how as I was arriving, rather I noted several facts including a 5-word reference to the fire and mudslides and we began. It bothered me that I had not acknowledged any emotion—my response had been flat and succinct. In the next couple of weeks, I went back and watched the recordings of all of our sessions. What I noticed was that my answers to "How was I arriving" felt a bit constrained to me through the Autumn as did my fact-based check-in in January.

The purpose for the "how are you arriving" question is to invite the coaches' voices into the room and to have a good sense of what is in our field that day, the personal connection with their full lives. The reason for me to share is that I, too, was a part of the group; if I did not, I would be separating myself. It was our opening ritual, our collective way of greeting each other. The ritual afforded us the opportunity to practice vulnerability in the group; to know that however one was coming to the group was perfect; to embrace acceptance of things as they are. Yet, as a supervisor I had a responsibility to hold and facilitate. I could not arrive depleted or overwhelmed. My intent was to arrive at each session calm, centered, open-hearted to be with them with

warmth, care, and intentional attention. I wanted to arrive with love. My self-disclosure, in the earlier case of sharing a client struggle, added depth and richness to the container. Yet, in this scenario, the self-disclosure felt like it would impact the container differently

I took these observations and desires to my individual supervisor in our next session. We explored how I viewed my role as supervisor, how I wanted to show up with sincerity, not with cheeriness. My concern with sharing more about how I had been in January was that the group may have moved to rescue or caretake, or they might have felt shortchanged by my presence. The foundational question, with respect to January, was: "Was I fit for purpose?" (Hodge, 2014) Was I resourceful enough, able to be in relationship and present with the group? Or was I traumatized, grieving and therefore too limited in emotional capacity to have supervised? I had traveled this terrain before. I knew the necessary internal inquiry and assessment, and I had concluded I was fit for purpose prior to the group session. My supervisor and I did not uncover any new perspectives that altered that assessment.

As we continued to explore, I discerned a framework to use in considering both the regular monthly sharing and sharing in the context of a more significant circumstance. Pausing to consider if I was capable of engaging the group was a necessary first step. If not, then I would reschedule. If I was, then what did I want to share, if anything? In this case, all of the coaches had been in the town I live for their coach certification training, and they knew from the national news coverage what had happened. Looking back, I wished I had shared in January that I felt loss, that I had sufficient resources for myself and I was arriving fully to be with them.

This experience made me wonder, what did I want to share month to month? If there was a minor situation, e.g., recovering from a cold, or wishing the sun was out, or the joy of a new grandchild, I would likely share that. If there was a significant development that they would not otherwise know about, e.g., a health issue in the family, or other personal development, I would not share. This framework is set out in Figure 17.
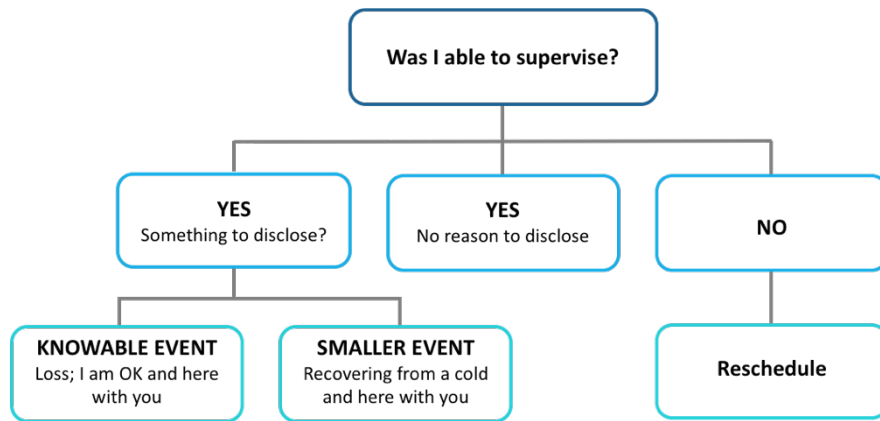
Figure 17: Supervisor Framework

This decision tree could be useful for coaches, who were similarly situated. When there were situations in their life, it was likely that on occasion they would need to assess their ability to be a good enough coach on a given day. In this group, there were huge personal challenges; coming to our sessions depleted was acceptable. There were times when I experienced one of them as unable to coach in those moments. One of the purposes of supervision is to resource the coach; one of the purposes must also be to provide a process or framework for how a coach would consider their "fitness for purpose" (Hodge, 2016). I offered them my decision tree process.

Reflection – inadvertent role-modelling

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, using my self-reflection to inform guardian of reflective practice and focus on supervisory relationships.

I was in London for our March session, and the hotel Wi-Fi was not sufficient for me to stream my video and have audio without delays. My solution was to stream the group Zoom video on my laptop, but with my audio and video turned off. I called into the session to have the best audio quality. The group accepted this, and we proceeded in our usual ways. It was most helpful that I could see them.

In the next session, Candice, who joined our call before attending a seminar, selected audio- only. Then Ellen joined audio-only because she was not attired professionally,

having taken a very early morning call. Neither had joined with audio-only in the past; there was no indication from either of them that it made a difference in their participation. Then in the next session, Bob, who had been on audio for all of our sessions, suddenly joined with video. The group responded to Bob being on video with delight and gentle teasing. In our last supervision session Ellen joined by audio-only because she was on a long-distance car trip. The group did not express any feelings about the audio-only participation. I did not ask what was behind the shifts, although I noticed them. I accepted, without questioning, the explanations the coaches offered. I had a strong feeling that by participating with audio-only when I was in London, I role-modelled it was acceptable. I think it was likely that the coaches used my actions to have given themselves permission to join that way.

I had experienced a realness in Ellen as she had participated in the session. I was curious to see what she would share, if anything, in her journaling. Her experiences were transformative, a culmination of a number of years in supervision, that blossomed through the phone lines that morning. She shared that she had "a feeling of being free on the call, speaking my mind, not self sensoring [sic], no rehearsing in my head what I might say, but just waiting my turn and sharing what was coming up for me in the moment…it will impact me as a coach by growing my confidence, trusting myself, using immediacy…it will help me by bringing more of my authentic self to all interactions at work and outside of work". When I varied my routine, the container was more robust with options. What I did opened up possibilities to the group. This was an example, similar to my asking them to supervise me, of my actions having repercussions. Ellen's reflections articulated her learning over the last few years; this learning came from a variety of experiences, not just supervision. She had had the opportunity to catch up with her own development.

Building trust

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting.

We valued in our sessions the care for each other, our showing up, bringing our work forward, curiosity and inquiry, giving and receiving challenge and encouragement. The holding up of mirrors for each other in service of our mutual growth. We kept our

promises as best we could and practiced forgiveness when it was not actualized. Showing up distracted, late, or with low energy gave the group the opportunity to practice not striving for perfection. This was practice space to also deepen one's ability to meet others where they were while striving to regard them as competent, capable and able.

My acceptance of what the coaches brought was expansive; I moved into negative judgment rarely. In one case a coach shared she was very judgmental, of everyone. My response was how good that she knew that, and I invited her to use our time together to play with noticing when she moved into judging. I responded to another coach who had shared a deep fear that "I really marvel at your saying you're feeling out of your depth, because I think that's such an important thing for us to feel and own, that we are skilled in a certain frame and not in others…. I think it takes great wisdom to say I'm out of my depth. I think it's a very strong statement of recognition of what's going on [with the client]".

These values were consistent with three of the four elements in Feltman's (2009) trust model: sincerity, reliability, care and competency. What was missing was in the dimension of competencies. The experiences of coaching were vastly disparate between the actively coaching member, Candice, and the non-coaching members. This impacted the amount of trust in the group interactions, especially around opportunities for shared vulnerability, and for giving and receiving challenges. The less-experienced coaches held the more experienced coach in a more rarified space, on a pedestal of sorts. They did not have cases to bring—while they could inquire together based on their life experiences, their inquiries were limited by the lack of coaching experience. Andy journaled "It was clear to me that I would be getting more out of these sessions if I had actual coaching clients".

Candice expressed, in her journaling, occasional frustration and impatience with the others. Meanwhile, a couple of the other non-practicing coaches journaled about how much they learned from Candice's cases and themes and how grateful they were to have her in the group. My read was that Candice grew slightly more frustrated with the group as the year progressed. In the sessions, she participated fully and showed appreciation

for her colleagues. In her journaling, she voiced more of her frustrations noting that the long narratives of others caused her to "go unconscious" and lose the train of thought; that advice giving is not useful to her, and she recognizes that she does it sometimes with her coaching clients, noting curiosity about how it might land with them.

These interactions nagged at me and made me wonder about our selection criteria for group membership. I recognized that I had encouraged Candice to join the group without exploring the characteristics of the other coaches' practices. Through observation, I saw clearly the difference in abilities to observe, reflect and challenge one's self that Candice had developed as contrasted with the others. They were in different places in their learning journeys. I wondered about selecting group members based on matching more closely their respective levels of coaching practice and developmental maturity (Kegan and Lahey, 2009). I recognized that would raise inclusion and exclusion issues and go against the culture that certified coaches were treated similarly in my communities.

Practicing coaching competencies

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as guardian of reflective practice.

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, some of the coaches referenced practicing coaching competencies in their journaling. We had opportunities to practice intentionally in our sessions and I began to identify those more consistently with the group. There were practice opportunities when the coaches arrived deep in worry or loss; just as their clients might. We acknowledged with compassion and empathy that we heard their struggle. We (one of us, either myself or a group member) would inquire if there was any support we could provide. We respected his or her answer. The respect reflected our shared commitment to hold that group member as competent, capable and able; to not move to caretaking or rescuing.

Debra reflected in her journaling about practicing following our ninth session: "Supervision is a learning intervention on many levels" noting that the opportunity to practice showing up authentically without the need to perform, while a stretch, is "a great place to explore this side of my 'self as coach' work". Felicia shared that she found

being with "coaching clients is very different than being with a group of coaches" which raised for me whether she saw this as practice space.

In one of our sessions in a recording that Candice brought, the client was a millennial. Felicia and Andy pounced on the negative stereotypes for that generation, affirming them based on their own experiences. I paused the discussion and named the negative judgment; the group laughed, seemingly letting the judgment go and refocused to the struggle of holding clients as competent, capable and able. We each attempted to embody unconditional positive regard, and we demonstrated our own fallibility when we moved out of that stance. Yet moving out of the stance also allowed us to learn how to notice our perspective and practice letting go of the judgment. These interactions increased the safety for the group, because we were not asking each other for perfect behaviors—rather, we were using the sessions as practice space to further develop our abilities to embody this foundational coaching competency.

These instances of moving into judgment of our clients necessitated cultivating the ability to notice in the moment and reflect on what had just happened. Judgment was always present in the room, just as it was always present in our daily lives. Our relationship with judgment was one we discussed several times in a variety of settings. The theme I shared was that all judgment was data, which was a framing I had learned from my supervisor. It could be useful if we were self-aware enough to notice we had moved to judgment, and then instead of immediately acting on it, paused and considered what it was telling us. Then there was the opportunity to use that information in one of at least three ways: if the judgment was about ourselves and had no relevance to the client or to our supervision session, we could use our skills in self-awareness coupled with self-regulation and put it aside for the moment. If the judgment was about the client, the coach could use it, immediately, in the session, e.g., if the coach felt the client was condescending, the coach could share with the client those feelings, and ask the client if they recognized that in feedback from others. Was this a pattern for the client? The client could defer, deny or move forward at their discretion. The third option could be for the coach to note it and put it aside until a time when it was relevant to the work with the client, or until they felt they could challenge the client with this potential insight.

There were aspects of teaching, as well as opening of possibilities and expanding perspectives in these actions. I noticed I was moving into a mentoring or teaching role less and less as I supervised more groups. What was this about? I discerned that some of the coaches in my groups with whom I had been supervising for two and three years had learned more about coaching and supervision. Some of the coaches had not. The focus of the inquiries by the coaches was moving from a focus on tools and how to do something and shifting to more of an inquiry on what was going on in the relationships with the client, the client's system and within themselves as the coach. There were opportunities to practice; did that mean that there was a place to teach and or mentor? What happened to the container when I shifted to more of an expert mode? How to balance the concepts of practicing with reflecting?

Development of the group over time

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting and focused on supervisory relationships.

In the journaling, the coaches who had participated in prior years, were writing about how the group felt safer than past experiences. They experienced others as sharing more openly and with more transparency. They attributed it in part to how I was facilitating and in part to the collective cohesiveness of the group. I was puzzled about this. I held multiple perspectives on my facilitation: in the early sessions, I was observing my faster pace, which I imagined was not in service to safety—my definition of safety has a lot to do with quiet, stillness, spaciousness, and sitting in deep inquiry. I had internalized what one of my supervisors always said: "Nothing to do, nowhere to go". I knew I was wrestling with some performance anxieties that made me feel less safe, and likely I was projecting those.

I contemplated the group composition and whether it was working. I wondered if Candice's all-in approach with the group was inviting their vulnerability as they saw she felt safe to be open and vulnerable. I also wondered if it felt safer because there was less

pressure for them to bring cases because Candice had a richness of situations for the group each month. I wondered if their experiences in the prior year had given them a greater sense of what supervision was about, which was giving them more confidence

I had another set of perspectives, and this was in noticing how they were engaging with each other. In the first two sessions, Andy and Candice, both new to the group, introduced a pattern of appreciating the other members—they would acknowledge what another said, reference the point another made as also true for them, build on the idea another coach raised, and respond to an offering with why it wasn't within their framework while still valuing the offering. Ellen and Julie had appreciating patterns as well, though there were slight differences in the ways they did this. Ellen would admire what the other had done or said or offered, often in the context that she was inspired by their courage and vulnerability. Debra would embed her appreciation in a longer narrative and link it to her own experiences; she also often gave advice in the mix. Bob was more reserved; when he offered his appreciation, it was simultaneously heartfelt and succinct.

There were expressions of the courage it took for the presenting coach to bring the case, or theme or recording to the group. This was done when most of the group could feel and sense the level of vulnerability it took to bring the messiness, often with shame, of that case forward. A coach would offer they could hear how much the presenting coach cared about their work with the client, or was really frustrated, or felt the difficulties with the client. The acknowledgment had one or more impacts for the presenting coach—it normalized their challenges, or they did not feel negative judgment from the group, or they felt seen and heard, or held by the group.

By contrast, Felicia almost always responded differently—with advice, with what should be done, with having created a story out of whole cloth about the client. These actions distanced her from the group, and she articulated this separation throughout the year long engagement. She felt that she was different in her approach, that she moved to fix, that she didn't see the issues the others saw. In the moments she was responding, there

was less connection in the session, in those moments it was as if she was in a separate container from the rest of us.

I contracted with the presenting coach about their inquiry—what did they want to explore, how could the group support them. Sometimes they were not sure, and they started by simply describing the client, the situation and the questions they had. In these situations, I explored possibilities, what I heard as questions or themes, and together we continued the exploration until the coach articulated what he or she wanted from the group. To the extent the other coaches honored the ask of the presenting coach, there was a sense of having been heard; to the extent the other coaches moved to what was on their mind rather than what had been asked, and especially if they offered advice, there was a slight crack in the container. Those cracks were most visible in the journal entries. I became increasingly curious about inviting the expressions of frustrations into the sessions for us to learn together. If the coach was offering advice in this setting, likely they were doing the same with clients. This was an important learning opportunity about our group interactions and about one's competencies as a coach.

I wondered about the interrelationships of vulnerability inviting vulnerability (Coyle, 2018; Brown, B.C., 2012; Isaacs, 1999), the lessening of the pressure to bring cases, the gestures of appreciation creating bonds of inclusion (Coyle, 2018; Isaacs, 1999); and the repercussions within the group from our relationships with Felicia's ways of being and engaging. I noticed a challenge for me was to be in relational presence (Cavicchia and Gilbert, 2019) with the full group; I had relational presence with subsets of the group. I was challenged most by Felicia, and also by Bob. What was that about for me? What was driving my feelings of wanting to be more in service to the others? What were my biases?

I started to diagram how many relationships there were. I counted twenty-one dyadic relationships (coach<—>coach, and supervisor<—>coach) plus the supervisor with the full group equaled 22 relationships. In addition, there would be a variety of other subsets of relationships within the groups. There were numerous complexities. I felt greater awareness as the supervisor to pay attention to these differing relationships, including the ones I had with the various combinations.

Impacts of participating in the research

Role(s) at forefront: Researcher

The third action learning set was following the completion of our 10 sessions. I inquired with the group about what impact participating had had on their supervision experience. Both Andy and Candice, who were new to supervision, stated that they did not feel any parts that were research, as distinct from what they experienced as supervision. Debra noticed that she came more intentional to the sessions, with a bit more preparation; she wanted to be a good contributor to the research. Ellen, Felicia and Bob shared it did not have any impact; that it felt like the prior year.

However, they each noticed the impact of having the journal prompts immediately following the session and commented on the power of reflecting and writing following the session. Their desires for the content of the prompts varied; Felicia would have preferred unique prompts each time; Candice preferred the same ones. The others had views in between. Yet there was unanimity that having the accountability from a research requirement to submit their journaling was a catalyst that deepened their learning from a session, and over the year.

Epilogue to Chapters 5 and 6

Learning in the groups

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, as guardian of reflective practice.

The purpose of coaching supervision is personal and professional growth. Was this accomplished in these sessions? What were the learning outcomes of these year-long engagements in supervision? Are these the questions to start with? I joined the participants for several months out of their several decades of life experience. I had supervised many of the coaches the prior year, I stayed with them for this limited period during the research, and then they continued on their journeys. The Daring Group and three coaches in the Creating Community Group renewed supervision for the next year (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

There was no way to say they learned this, they did not learn that; it was their declarations, in the sessions, in the journaling, in the action learning meetings that enabled me to write about the learning they claimed at those moments in time. I brought my own observational skills to frame what other learning may have occurred – and I offered those instances—as well as what I perceived as obstacles to potential learning.

Obstacles to learning

I perceived barriers to learning. My vantage points on those are set out in this section; these were not identified by the coaches explicitly.

The motivation of one's own learning and development is the major determinant of whether there will be experiential or transformative learning; the individuals who came for familiarity and community rarely identified they experienced these; they did identify small shifts important in their development as a coach such as being more present, not moving as quickly to judgment, staying with the inquiry, and able to observe more of themselves. There were periodic moments in which a group member struggled or

grappled with an assumption or reaction they had had but did not explore the underlying belief. Mezirow (1990) required the testing of one's beliefs and values as an essential element of reflection. The developmental maturity (Kegan and Lahey, 2009; Kegan, 1994) of the group members varied. A few may be described as seeking confirming data for their points of view; they did not yet demonstrate the capacity to reflect; they were not good at observing themselves or understanding their stories. For example, a coach brought forward a case, and we raised with him a possible conflict of interest. Upon conclusion of the inquiry the coach had, at least with his words, and in his journaling, appreciated the confirming comments and did not reference the potential conflict. I don't know if he subsequently re-considered, or if there were unspoken elements in the situation that eliminated what we saw as a conflict. My experience of him was he could not (yet) stand outside the story and observe himself.

The coach who raised through the year that she noticed her difference with the other group members; she did not "get" the questions as they did. Through the sessions, she repeated her noticing that she approached the inquiries very differently; she could identify her actions as a familiar pattern of "self-sabotage," but did not demonstrate an ability to experiment with a different way of engaging. I don't know what learning she took from the sessions; I do know that she attended most of them, participated, and did not have strong bonds with the others. Perhaps these two coaches had not yet arrived at a developmental stage that enabled them to question actions in the context of their stories. These individuals had many of the characteristics of the development maturity phase of the socialized mind (Kegan and Lahey, 2009, p.52), immersed in their stories and not yet able to see "through" them to consider why they took those actions; there was no design of different actions (Mezirow, 1990).

Another possibility is evoked by Dunning (2005), writing about self-insight, the lower one's level of competencies, as one is early on the learning curve, the more likely one is unable to see one's shortfalls; one did not know enough about what was required, one could not accurately identify what was missing. This is another perspective for considering the coaches described above who did not see what others saw—they were relatively newer coaches, who had had a few coaching clients, and occasionally coached

in addition to their other endeavors. They were nearer the beginning of the learning curve.

Obstacles to Learning –Vulnerability and self as the instrument

Vulnerability to hold one's self and the others is described by Yanow and Tsoukas (2009, p.1356) as "permeability of self". The surrender of one's need to appear to others as competent, capable and knowing; to allow others to see one's struggle. *It is what we ask of our coaching clients; in supervision we ask it of ourselves.*

It can take a great deal of courage to be vulnerable with others, and to admit one does not know. Vulnerability is defined by Brené Brown as "uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure" (2012, p.34), the risk that when we share, we will lose our connection with others. To be vulnerable in the group was influenced by the safe container; it was also influenced by courage —the ability to risk judgment from colleagues. The noticing in the moment, the "looking in" described in my definition of reflective practice (described in Chapter 9) is the tuning to one's feelings, sensations, thoughts and urges. There were coaches without the capacities for vulnerability in the group. Was there insufficient safety for them, insufficient courage to be vulnerable, or was there not an opportunity; the "truth" in each situation could not be clearly discerned.

The executive coach works in relationship with others, most typically in a one-on-one setting. The coach's ability to forge a working relationship with the client is essential; the relationship between the coach and client is often characterized as the most important determinant of successful outcomes (Stober, 2006, pp.20-21); the application of technical skills and the competencies established for coaches is insufficient (McLean, 2019; Bachkirova, 2016). The coach is the instrument in the interactions with the clients, with the potential to use their experience, their intelligence, training and learning in service to the work. The interplay of these capacities and one's ways of being need care and tending. The more awake one is to what is driving, the more one can shape one's self in service to the client. Reflective practice is the field for cultivation of awake-ness.

Vigilant inquiry into one's practice is challenging. It requires a balancing of curiosity, courage to explore, opening one's self to feedback, to puzzle about, to notice, to challenge one's beliefs and ways of being, to steadily excavate one's stories, to cultivate self-compassion, self-kindness, and perspective. The opportunity for growth requires more than anything an acceptance that we will never arrive at a final level of competence, that one does not arrive at mastery which allows one to rest. The commitment to shape and re-shape one's self and one's practice is the key to move toward mastery (Mezirow, 1991; Kegan and Lahey, 2009; Dweck, 2016). It requires bringing the self as the instrument to the foreground; self-awareness becomes the focus of inquiry. McLean (2019) challenges us to this work: "to know one's self requires a fierce and courageous willingness to explore the many layers of one's inner landscape, a territory that can be elusive and enigmatic, confusing and paradoxical" (p.3).

As I reflect on all of the above, in summary, the multiplicity of factors and their interactions within a person and within a group provided rich textures, disparate weavings and a variety of learning outcomes. The primary influences for whether a coach learned and developed through engagement in a supervision group were unique to each coach and supervisor and are set out below in Table 7. The elements are necessary, and each coach or supervisor would rank the list based on their own needs.

Primary Influences on Coach Learning and Development
1. Their developmental maturity (Kegan and Lahey, 2009; Kegan, 1994)
2. Their relationship with their life narratives and inner critics
3. Their engagement in actively coaching which provided a richness of situations to consider and learn from as well as practice opportunities for experimenting with what they had discovered in supervision
4. The experience level of the coaches as coaches (Dunning, 2005)
5. The bonds within the group among the members and the supervisor
6. How the supervisor structured the process and contracted with them
7. The mutual regard that co-created a space which invited and held their vulnerability

8. The capabilities and capacities of the supervisor to work within a group setting
9. The group development stage (Heron, 1999)
10. Their engagement with the process and commitment to their learning
11. What other circumstances and situations were occurring in their lives, e.g., workload, health of a family member, major transition.

Table 7: Primary Influences on Learning and Development

Creating the virtual room

Role(s) at forefront: Supervisor, utilizing all three roles: supervisory relationships, guardian of reflective practice and facilitator of the dynamics of the group setting.

The challenges with the technology continued throughout the year. These were primarily about the participants' experience with Zoom. Examples included their Wi-Fi had insufficient capacity in the room they had chosen to join the session and they had to change rooms; they did not have the Zoom link; a family member had changed a setting and they could no longer activate the camera; their laptop had died so they were on a brand new one not yet configured for Zoom. There were Zoom system issues, with frozen screens, dropped calls, or difficult audio. It was common, I accepted it.

There were other shortcomings related to, but not caused by, the technology in the creation of a shared room as each of us joined from our individual space. Examples included inadequate lighting when a window was behind where a coach was sitting, creating back lighting so their face was not visible; a coach participating in the session from her car while she was driving; and something in one of our spaces that created distraction for others.

I contrasted these experiences with the control I would have had if I had been working face to face. I would have selected the location, arranged the chairs, ensured good lighting, brought refreshments and goodies, and a bouquet of flowers. This would create a sense of welcome, fun and warmth. Coyle (2018) and Block (2009) describe these

elements as essential to creation of safety and connection and urged careful, thoughtful attention to the planning, the setting, the arriving, the greeting, and the starting.

What I did instinctively was feel the frustration internally, but externally shared a lightness and acceptance of the technology glitches. I briefly considered providing a Zoom tutorial or connecting with each coach individually to discuss their individual situation or raising with the group that they needed to recognize and honor their responsibility to all of us in the co-creation of the space. I did not do any of those things. My assumption and hopes were that they would see their part in the challenges and adjust. My instinct was that calm energy would transmit acceptance to the messiness of our coaching and our lives. This was my translation from the face-to-face setting to the virtual world. Calm energy virtually was the same as arranging the setting in the physical setting.

In our discussions of our process, the container we were co-creating, and the action learning meetings, none of us raised these glitches. I believe my acceptance of them, consistently calm and non-judgmental, enabled us to work virtually with more ease. We never discussed it.

Reflection – possibilities for attunement

I was struck by how often the inner critics, the harsh judges of self, would be heard from the coaches; and within me. The parallel needs for unconditional positive regard for one's self and for others that enables one to hear the fullness of another. I practiced, imperfectly, in my more resourceful moments, moving toward Carl Rogers' (1980) offering:

> *"So I have learned to ask myself, can I hear the sounds and sense of*
> *shape of this other person's inner world? Can I resonate to what he is*
> *saying so deeply that I sense the meanings he is afraid of yet would like*
> *to communicate, as well as those he knows?" (p.8)*

I hold this near as I share the developments within these sessions. How might I have attuned myself, to create more possibilities of resonance with each coach and within the

group; to create more spaciousness for others to listen to themselves, to hear their own inner landscape and see how they are shaped; and to excavate when they have attuned to their clients, separate and distinct from themselves.

In the next Chapter, with my researcher hat on, I share the vignettes from the colleague groups, noting the comparisons, contrasts and similarities of the experiences.

Chapter 7: Groups Supervised by Colleagues

"Insight, I believe, refers to that depth of understanding that comes by setting experiences, yours and mine, familiar and exotic, new and old, side by side, learning by letting them speak to one another".

(Bateson, 1994, p.14)

Utilizing the limited field texts of the colleague groups to compare and contrast with my groups

In this chapter I share reflections and summaries from the three groups supervised by my colleagues ("colleague groups"). I describe the groups briefly, and use "coach" or "supervisor" instead of giving the participants pseudonyms for the reader's ease. I write these from the researcher role at the forefront, and occasionally share how it influenced me as a supervisor. The field texts for these groups consist of the journal entries and the three to four focus groups I conducted with each throughout the 14-18 months they were engaged in the research. More typical of research on supervision, these are reflections on what happened in the room; they are not written from the recordings of the actual supervision sessions as these were not collected. I could not write vignettes of what happened in the room; I could write summaries and share participants' perspectives. In these ways I could compare and contrast all five groups, mine and my colleagues. This Chapter provides the reader with an organization that illustrates contrasts, comparisons, similarities and distinctions within topical groupings.

The journaling entries were provided by many of the coaches and supervisors in these three groups. There were four types of journal entries from the coaches—none as some coaches did not journal or if they did, did not share with me, coaches that occasionally submitted reflections of a handful of sentences, coaches that thoughtfully journaled and one coach that utilized the journaling to reflect, connect and reflect critically on the supervision experience with a reconsideration of events and stories across her life. The coaches in my two groups consistently submitted thoughtful journal entries; it appears the journaling may have been spurred as much from their relationship with me and desires to be in service to the research as it was about their own learning. A review of

who journaled in these groups is somewhat consistent with similar motivations; most of the coaches who regularly submitted thoughtful written reflections were the coaches I had personal relationships with and who had initiated asking their groups to participate in the research. There were exceptions to this as well.

As referenced in Chapter 3, I realized during the research process that my relationships with these groups was different than I imagined as I had designed the project. I have put the findings about my positionality, as less than the insider-researcher I imagined, and the implemented design of the debriefing sessions as focus groups in Appendix 2.

My inquiries were: What are the qualities and conditions that create enough safety in the supervision relationships within a group to enable self-disclosure, reflection and learning? How are these qualities designed and brought forth?

I introduce each group and write about their experiences based on the major themes that emerged in the Daring Group and the Creating Community Group. These themes are the supervisory relationships, the contracts for structure and process, the stewardship of the safe and trusted space for reflective practice, the facilitation of group dynamics, the inhibitors of that space, reflective practice and learning and development over time.

Introduction to the three groups

Most Tenured Group

Most Tenured Group Demographics					
Group	**Years following certification**	**Prior Supervision Experience**	**Actively coaching**	**Other roles**	**Gender**
Supervisor 2	Coach: 20+ Supervisor: 3	20+ years		Supervisor Faculty Organizational role	F
Coach 9	10+	5-7[17] years	Yes		F
Coach 10	10+	5-7 years	Yes		F
Coach 11	10+	5-7 years	No	organizational, doctoral candidate	M
Coach 12	10+	5-7 years	Yes	organizational	F
Coach 13	10+	5-7 years	No	In transition	M
Coach 14	10+	5-7 years	No	In transition	F

Table 7: Most Tenured Group Demographics

This was a group of seven coaches, three actively coaching and four primarily engaged in other endeavors including retirement. The group, and their supervisor, had been together for 5-6 years. The supervisor was professorial in the sense of drawing on academic theories across knowledge areas of human development and psychology. The group elevated her status in recognition of her mastery, knowledge and long-term relationships. They revered her. The group had originally conducted their sessions via telephone, and embraced Zoom, with its video capabilities with a strong preference over voice only. They had met each other in person through attendance at conferences, and other activities through the years. Six of the seven agreed to participate in the research; these six and the supervisor were based in North America.

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[17] Memories varied

Newest Together Group

Newest Together Group Demographics					
Group	**Years following certification**	**Prior Supervision Experience**	**Actively coaching**	**Other roles**	**Gender**
Supervisor 3	Coach: 20+ Supervisor: 3			Supervisor External Mentor Coach	F
Coach 15	5-10 years	2 years	Yes	organizational	F
Coach 16	10+ years	none	Yes	In transition	F
Coach 17	10+ years	3 years	Yes		M
Coach 18	10+ years	3 years	Yes		F

Table 8: Newest Together Group Demographics

This was a group of four coaches, all actively coaching, three with vibrant practices and one with a full-time leadership position and coaching primarily outside of her organization. The group and their supervisor came together for the first time at the start of this research. The supervisor was earnest, wanting to get it right with an active inner critic. Three of the coaches had previously been in supervision, one had not. All had been coaching more than 5 years. They had not met each other in person. The coaches and the supervisor were based in North America.

Trio in Transition Group

Trio in Transition Group Demographics					
Group	**Years following certification**	**Prior Supervision Experience**	**Actively coaching**	**Other roles**	**Gender**
Supervisor 4	Coach: 20+ Supervisor: 3			Faculty Supervisor	F
Coach 19	5-10 years	2 years	Yes		F
Coach 20	5-10 years	3 years	Yes	In transition	F
Coach 21	5-10 years	3 years	No	In transition	F

Table 9: Trio in Transition Group Demographics

This was a group of three coaches, all of whom had been actively coaching in the past; they had been in supervision together with their supervisor in prior years. During the time of their participation in the research, one was actively coaching and two were in

transition to other endeavors (career, retirement). The supervisor was a lover, not in the romantic sense, but in the sense of an abundance of unconditional regard and enthusiasm for the coaches and their work together. Two coaches and the supervisor were based in North America. This group joined the research about midway through their supervision year.

Supervisory Relationships

The groups brought to my attention many times the special bond they had with their supervisor and with each other; the supervisors shared the same feelings about their bonds with the coaches and the group. These opportunities included our first meetings to discuss the research requirements and enlist them as participants, within their journaling, and in each of the subsequent focus groups.

In the Most Tenured Group the main discussion about participating focused on the risks of whether it could potentially disrupt or negatively shift their relationships with the supervisor. They placed paramount importance on that relationship. In the subsequent meetings with them, the supervisor and the coaches reiterated the appreciation they had for their working relationships, highlighting contributions, supportive ways of challenge, encouragement, compassion and the deep commitment they shared for learning and development. The fullness of life had been experienced by this group over the years which contributed to the deep connections they had with each other. One coach described a mandala that represented them:

Figure 18: Mandala - compassion

In the Newest Together Group the supervisor asked the coaches what they wanted in their relationships with her and with each other. The group asked for her to show up as a peer with them by sharing her own struggles and challenges as a coach; to be vulnerable and self-disclosive just as they would; to share her expertise and wisdom; while retaining her facilitation responsibilities. The supervisor's realness, her vulnerability, was cited as being determinative in the relationships that enabled the reflection and learning space. Serendipitously everyone had a sense of humor, good nature and commitment to each other's development which contributed to the working alliance. The group identified the peer learning meetings as instrumental in their cultivation of relationships with each other.

The supervisor, in reflecting on the relationships within this group noticed a few themes. The first, that the group came eager, motivated and committed to their own growth and development, and that of their peers. They were engaged and prepared. Second, having supervised groups of six in the prior years, the smaller size of this group contributed to having the space for her to share more of her perspectives and experiences. She described her participation as she got things going, kept things going and added richness.

Third there was a special bond that emerged which she attributed to how the coaches were each unique in personality, style and presence.

The participants pointed to three important aspects in their relationships with the supervisor. First, her quality of naming and appreciating the specialness of the group. One member observed that the supervisor and the coaches savored and drew upon how "freaking different" each of them were from the others. Second, her all-in response to their invitation to show up both as a peer and a facilitator. Third, her consistent use of two quotes that resonated and inspired the group: "Don't you see its all perfect?" (Dass and Das, 2013) and "We work on ourselves in order to help others, but also we help others in order to work on ourselves" (Chödrön, 2008, p.56). These three attributes were about acceptance and positive regard.

In the Trio in Transition Group, the relationships among the coaches and supervisor were nourished by humor, playfulness, self-disclosure, and shared accountability. The supervisor brought her own cases for the group to supervise her and brought a recording to the group to review before they committed to the research. The coaches planned the agendas for the supervision sessions in their peer learning calls; they were co-facilitators and co-inquirers with the supervisor. This group described the most collaborative approach, not quite a peer learning group, but closer to that (Heron, 1999) than the other groups.

The consistent themes within the groups were respect and gratitude for the contributions of the others, shared commitment to each other's development, actively coaching coaches who brought rich coaching dilemmas, enthusiasm for the supervisor, and a culture of expansive acceptance. Shared vulnerability, through bringing one's work for reflection, varied within the groups. In the Most Tenured Group, as in the Creating Community group, there were members who did not bring their work because they were not actively coaching. There was a distinction, which may have been meaningful in the potential contributions to the personal and professional development of the presenting coaches. In the Creating Community Group, the coaches were emerging, they were certified but not yet actively coaching. This limited their ability to contribute based on

coaching experiences. In the Most Tenured Group, they had been actively coaching and had moved onto other endeavors (retirement, further education, shifts in career). The non-coaching group members may have had prior experiences to draw on in inquiring and reflecting with the presenting coach with levels of discernment that the emerging coaches did not yet possess.

The supervisors had distinctly different styles. All three had deep and long experience as coaches, and in mentoring developing coaches. They shared personal qualities of warmth, care for others, finely developed emotional intelligence skills (Goleman, 2013), interpersonal relationship capacities, attention to individual and group relationships, extensive experience with group dynamics, courage, empathy, compassion and ethical maturity. Each of the supervisors knew about the coaches' personal lives, major challenges, victories and disappointments; they were interested in the group members as people, not merely as clients.

They were committed to their own ongoing development; they read widely, practiced and reflected, and were in regular supervision of their supervision.

Contracting: Structure and Process

The personalities of the groups with their supervisors showed up in the co-creation of the structure and process. The first level of contracting was the same for all five groups. As was set out in the earlier chapters, the structure consisted of the 10 supervision sessions, 10 peer learning calls, on Zoom, over approximately 12 months. All of the coaches paid for the supervision, each of the supervisors were paid by the Sponsor.

The second level of the contracting, the ways that the groups would work together, had both similarities and unique elements. In each group there was a beginning ritual of getting everyone's voice in the room. In the Newest Together Group the supervisor asked a reflection question at the start of each session; in the Most Tenured Group they shared how they were coming to the session; and in the Trio in Transition Group, they shared what was on their minds.

In the Most Tenured Group two coaches consistently brought the cases, with one additional coach bringing cases sometimes. Write-ups were expected in advance of the session. The other members of the group, who were not actively coaching, did not bring cases. The agenda for the session was set based on what was in the room. In the Trio in Transition Group, as noted above, the coaches set the agenda, and write-ups were optional. In the Newest Together Group, each coach was assigned a month in which to bring the lead case; the coaches could trade off months with each other; write-ups were encouraged yet optional. The presenting coach negotiated the agenda with the supervisor as it was their month. In all three groups, the supervisor contracted with the presenting coach about their inquiry, and the group members, to varying extents, were co-inquirers with the supervisor.

The groups responded differently to the research request to experiment with observational experiences. The Most Tenured Group actively utilized live-action coaching and experimented with a number of formats; they did not experiment with recordings. In the Trio in Transition Group, every coach brought a recording. In the Newest Together group, one coach experimented with bringing a recording; they did not do live-action coaching. These differences reflected the many variables across the groups including their levels of willingness to experiment with new and unfamiliar processes which required a willingness to step into different types of vulnerabilities and required larger time commitments.

In all three groups, just as with my two groups, there were agreements to protect the confidentiality of clients, and the content of the sessions; the sessions were recorded and made available to those coaches who requested it, or to those who had missed the session, or to all the coaches; while video was preferred, coaches who needed to be audio-only were accepted; coaches participating from an environment with high distractions, e.g., a coffee house, were welcomed. In the two groups that had been in supervision together in prior years, the process had been attuned to their preferences and experiences in reflection and learning. In the Newest Together Group the process was more iterative as the group experimented and explored what would work for them.

The third level of contracting, what happened in each session, was tailored collaboratively among the group members and supervisor.

Experimentation was brought into each group; it provided learning and energy even when imperfectly executed. For example, in the Newest Together Group, a presenting coach had asked to explore four cases, the supervisor agreed, and the session was facilitated in that way. The supervisor reflected in her journaling that at the end of the session the other group members expressed dissatisfaction with the process and she had missed getting agreement for this process change. Interestingly in the coaches journaling entries the presenting coach was pleased, two of the other coaches appreciated the experimentation to try something differently and one coach had not found it an effective process. The supervisor concluded in her reflections that she would ensure going forward that shifts in the process were with explicit permission.

As an experiment in the Most Tenured Group, the supervisor invited the group to consider and inquire about the cases brought by two presenting coaches simultaneously. The group found unexpected themes and learning from this process and utilized it again. They also experimented with the concept of live-action coaching and developed a handful of formats for it: one coach coaching another and debriefing that experience; one coach bringing an inquiry and then role-playing the client while coached by another coach; one coach role-playing a stakeholder in the client's system while coached by another coach or the supervisor; and having the group members coach the presenting coach. These approaches are set out below.

INTERPRETATIONS OF "LIVE ACTION COACHING" IN A GROUP SUPERVISION SESSION

SUPERVISION EQUALS COACHING
Group members believed that coaching and supervision were one and the same, and that receiving and providing coaching were intrinsic to the sharing and reflecting process.

LEARNING LABS FORMAT
Group members coach each other and are observed by other group members, and then assessed against coaching competencies as outlined by the ICF.

COACHING DEMO
Like Learning Labs Format, except group debrief is based on reflection as pertains to coach's case instead of assessed against external competencies.

TRIAD COACHING
Utilizing one group member as coach, one as client, and a third as observer. Following coaching demo, triad debriefs followed by group reflections and observations.

ROLE PLAY
Group member plays role of a client they are coaching, or stakeholder in client system, with another group member playing the role of coach. Group then debriefs on coaching session observations.

Figure 19: Ways to use Live-action Coaching

The two existing groups noted the experimentation as having brought new energy, had stimulated more learning and they found it inspiring. The Newest Together Group shared that the whole year was experimentation as they got to know each other and work together in the messiness of their coaching.

The coaches brought cases, issues, sticky situations and themes to the sessions. They did not note that they had brought successful moments to debrief and articulate what they were doing well. On a few occasions, a coach journaled that they had become aware of their development; they had caught up with their development. Examples from one coach are illustrative and include listening more intently, greater curiosity, willing to coach within the group, and increased comfort with not taking notes in her coaching sessions.

The appreciations they expressed were about opening of possibilities, of seeing more perspectives, of feeling held within the group without negative judgment. This was not perfectly enacted. There were a handful of times in each group when one or more coaches lost a sense of safe and trusted space. These are described later in this chapter. The following figure sets out examples of process flow within a session. Elements of the flow were established at each level of the contracting, and in-the-moment in the session with permission-based interventions. The intent was an ever-present commitment to contracting throughout each of the sessions.

CONSIDERATION OF CASES IN SUPERVISION SESSION

CASE PRESENTATION FORMAT:

Write-Up   Recording   Storytelling   Live Action Coaching

CONTRACTING

What does the coach want to explore with this case?

✓ Advice
✓ Examples
✓ Going on for coach
✓ Going on for client
✓ Client system
✓ Theories and models

GROUP DISCUSSION

What did group members and coach notice?

✓ Images
✓ Feelings
✓ Questions
✓ Observations
✓ Subtext
✓ Context

AWARENESS IN DIALOGUE

✓ System of group
✓ Roles of group members
✓ Balance of time and airtime

✓ Coach's learning
✓ Group's learning
✓ Adequate reflection

Figure 20: Examples of process within a session

Stewardship of the safe and trusted space

"We're dealing with an amazing group in how unselfish and willing everyone in this group was to give of themselves to each other".

(Supervisor, Newest Together Group)

"When we come together…it's a safe landing…it creates a space that almost feels over time like a sacred space. Anybody can show up here in whatever form they're in and it's good enough".

(Supervisor, Longest Tenured Group)

There was a focus and attention to attending to the qualities of the collective space. While the styles, practices and experiences of the supervisors and coaches varied widely, there were similarities. The first was that perfection was not required of the supervisor or the coaches. When there were small disruptions in each of the groups, from either the supervisor or coach advising, telling, judging, or distracted or any of a variety of human moments, they could be addressed, a small repair made, and the group moved forward.

There were themes about how the coaches and supervisors interacted in the group setting. There were comments in two of the groups about the importance of group membership in the context of relationships. In the Most Tenured Group, they recalled a group member who had been "toxic" which had inhibited the learning even with the good relationships with the supervisor. They noted it was only when that coach left the group, and another coach, with strong interpersonal skills, joined that the group was effective. The positive approach of empathy, compassion, regard, and kindness mattered. In the Newest Together Group, one coach shared that "I finally found a group that resonates well".

Group members reported attributes in others of gratitude, appreciation, respect, positive regard, challenge, empathic responses, and acceptance. As a coach noted "it is a group of trusted, generous peers". This theme, of the competence of the others in the group was referenced consistently, but not by every coach. As one wrote "…the group talks about

how great it is and I don't feel the same way. I like it but it seems less important to me".
The three groups had seasoned and experienced coaches. They reflected on their
learning from the diversity of perspectives and experiences, from differing approaches
and from new ideas.

The supervisors embodied an expansive acceptance of the group and its interactions. The
accountability was held by the coaches; the supervisors welcomed however the coaches
showed up—depleted, overwhelmed, in a noisy space, with cases or with no cases,
having prepared and sent write-ups, or not. This was the role-modeling of unconditional
positive regard (Rogers, C.R., 1980) that is a foundational principle of coaching, and
supervision. It did not preclude the holding of the ethical and normative guardrails of the
professions; rather it co-created, with the coaches, an environment that was safe enough
to bring one's struggles. The supervisor of the Most Tenured Group wrote "I also noticed
(and commented on it) in our check in the enormous amount of challenges coaches can
be handling on the personal front while doing good coaching work. Self-care and building
resilience regularly [are] so darn important to keep front of mind in supervision". One
coach wrote of the supervisor of the Newest Together group noting "the incredibly
beautiful, caring way [she] shares her insights".

One hallmark of the Newest Together and the Trio in Transition Groups were their
experiences of mutual vulnerability. The coaches brought cases and issues to share,
focused on where they were stuck, or in doubt, or not feeling effective. In the Trio in
Transition Group each coach brought a recording for the group to review and reflect.
They were the only group to do so and attributed it to being inspired by their supervisor
who had brought a recording of one of her sessions to the group before asking them to
commit to the research. In the focus group discussions, they noted this mutual
vulnerability, the intimacy it created and the richness of the inquiries and learning.

In the Most Tenured Group it was different. As mentioned above, three coaches primarily
brought the cases to the group and exposed the messiness of their work. They found
value in the inquiries and reflections of the others. They appreciated the long-term
relationships and space. They did not comment on the lack of cases, issues or themes

from the coaches who were no longer actively coaching until our final focus group session. I was curious about the lack of mutual vulnerability and noticed it felt similar to my feelings about the Creating Community Group interactions. Was something missing in the potential learning when there was not the shared vulnerability of everyone bringing their work, their stuckness, their challenges? In that final focus group, the group disclosed that they had started an experiment to introduce shared vulnerability by asking those who were not bringing cases, to bring an issue or struggle within their current lives to reflect on with the group. They had done this with one member at that point. As one coach observed "we learned a lot more about xx and xx said it was really helpful to share".

The groups were facilitated in different ways. As an example, the Most Tenured Group paused at the end of the consideration of the issues brought by the presenting coach for individual inquires of self. Each coach in the group, beginning with the presenting coach, shared what they were noticing, sitting with, "the big high-level learning or theme". Then the next presenting coaching would proceed. In the Newest Together Group, at the end of the full session the supervisor asked for closing comments which included "what did each of us get as coach and self as a coach?" In the Trio in Transition Group the closing ritual was not described within the field texts.

The supervisors' actions were seen as role-modeling interpersonal relationships and coaching competencies. The supervisor, in the Most Tenured Group, participated as the coach in a live-action coaching session, in contrast to many of the live-action sessions which had the coaches assume the roles. The group shared the significant learning from observing her coaching and in particular, two coaches mentioned one of her interventions in reflecting on their own level of courage to challenge a client. As mentioned earlier, the supervisor of the Trio in Transition Group brought a recording of her client coaching session to the group, role-modeling vulnerability and use of recordings for reflection.

Bumps in the container

One of the coaches in the Most Tenured Group brought a written from memory transcript of a segment of a coaching session. She acknowledged her vulnerability in doing this—it

"took courage on my part to share". She went on to write "The comments from the other coaches stung a tad...is this how I want to coach or is it how I am coaching?" Here were vulnerability and feeling judgment in the same moments. Did the sting cause her to feel less safe or diminish her trust in the moment? Or was it about her vulnerability in exposing her work to observation of her peers? Perhaps her relationship with feedback or the sense of judgment from the others? Or was this reflection about her feelings without any change in her sense of trust and safety?

This same coach had originally anticipated she would bring a recording to the group. A few months into the research, she and I had a conversation[18] where she shared, she had come to realize she could not bring one. What she had noticed was that she was still "traumatized" from experiences two years before in which she had submitted two recordings for assessment by a certifying professional association. The two coaching sessions had been deemed not sufficient and the transcripts were returned to her filled with negative comments in red pen. She still felt the shame of that endeavor and could not bring herself to risk a repeat experience.

The supervisor of the Newest Together Group journaled that she was reflecting on whether she had held back some feedback in a session. She was noticing that the group responded to the coach with positive comments and that she thought "I held back some, not wanting to rain on the parade...". This felt familiar to me; it was very similar to my not providing feedback to the coach in the Creating Community Group albeit for a different reason. I wonder to what extent we were exercising good judgment about the capacity of the group for additional feedback, or if we were not courageous enough, or what other factors might be at play?

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[18] This coach had been unable to participate in a focus group. The supervisor encouraged me to reach out to see if she would have a one-on-one conversation so I would have the benefit of her perspectives. The coach agreed.

Settling into the group at the start of the session was not a given, even with the time the groups had been together. In the Most Tenured Group, two of the coaches shared that it was not automatic. One noticed she needed time, 15 minutes, to arrive with intentionality; she would, moving forward, bring her practice of preparing for her coaching sessions, to her preparation for the supervision sessions. She would use the time to "get centered…review the cases…reflect on what I most want to learn from and contribute…". Another coach wrote "It takes a while for me to become less self-conscious on the call". In the Trio in Transition Group one coach reflected that she was observing herself in the sessions to notice if she was willing to be vulnerable and sometimes, she was not.

Repair

Interestingly there were few reports of the loss of feeling in a safe and trusted space. There was one explicit reflection and a breach and the subsequent repair. In the Most Tenured Group, one of the coaches, after a focus group session, shared with the supervisor that she felt underappreciated, and her contributions had not been recognized. The supervisor "artfully" raised the topic in the next supervision session, and the breach was repaired through a discussion. The coach journaled "That made me feel much better! It made me happy to get positive feedback and reinforces how good it feels for our coaching clients to get positive feedback…I was glad I made myself vulnerable".

Reflective Practice and Learning

"I really enjoyed learning how other coaches thought about things and the questions they asked, the way they asked the questions… you're just sort of always learning from each other...you're just experimenting and trying different things in our supervision. Then, you know I think that made me kind of explore and try and do things differently with my clients as well". (Coach)

"We bring cases to each other and coach each other and try to learn and develop our coaching skills while having a third-party point of view giving input to that as well, both from our peers and from our supervising coach". (Coach)

Collective wisdom

One coach used the "collective wisdom" phrase to describe one of the key attributes of participating in a supervision group. This phrase resonated with me as an appropriate descriptor of a key advantage of small group reflective practice. She went on to write "it's a blessing and a gift to have access to other wise practitioners, who don't tell me what to do and what not to do, but just through questions or through bringing things forward for me to consider, had me do what we do as coaches, help people see what they do not see…"

Reflections and learning before, during, and after supervision were described in the focus group settings and in the journaling. Not every coach experienced each aspect that I describe below although there was a congruence that the coaches who reflected more deeply in their journaling expressed most of these reflective and learning elements. That does not mean the others did not, only that there is nothing in the field texts; the coaches were deriving sufficient value to devote dollars and time to supervision.

Reflective Practice

Reflecting and preparing for the supervision sessions was an opportunity for the coaches and supervisors. The use of case write-ups in the Most Tenured Group provided a process for pre-session reflection. The discussion in their peer learning session as to who would bring the cases for the upcoming supervision session had the potential for the coaches to reflect ahead of the session in the Trio in Transition Group.

Observing one's self, both in client settings and in the supervision sessions was often referenced. Coaches and supervisors would comment on what they noticed about themselves in the session. Examples include "more calm and centered than I used to be", "got frustrated when someone in the group…", "noticed I was completely focused…able to view each case from the balcony more readily", "I am action-oriented and want clients to…" One coach caught herself in her own story "I caught myself looking for confirmation of what I believe, I refocused my attention to expanding my learning and deepening my

understanding". One coach shared that although she took different approaches than her colleagues, she was trusting her instincts more than before, her confidence in her own style was strengthening.

Reflecting on what the presenting coach had brought and on their own similar cases or clients happened as a matter of course. It felt like a natural shift that the coach would consider their own work, as they co-inquired with a colleague. Coaches wrote often about this— "I realize one of the cases reminded me of one of my clients…", "Noticed empathy and emotion…particularly connections to my own experiences...", listening to the presenting case and imagining "how I would coach that client". One coach noted that not being actively coaching enabled her to listen more deeply to the case being presented as she did not move to also consider her coaching.

Reflecting on future actions and designing experiments for future interactions with clients was described. There is no way to generalize to all the coaches, however for those who journaled they identified ways they were going to work with clients in the future. One coach specified a series of questions that were on her mind for a particular client, other coaches talked more generally, such as noticing they were in the client's story and needed to step out, or that they had ways to approach challenging clients, or delivering feedback.

Learning

Many of the journal entries describe the learning; almost always these entries were written by actively coaching group members. Sometimes that learning came with noticing how practicing it with a client could be challenging. "I am taking my learning and working to apply it in my coaching sessions…leads to times when I am less present because I am reflecting on my coaching in the session". One coach noticed her frustration with a group member for getting "off track" which led to her wondering if she had that response to clients who get off track and realizing she did, she identified a shift in her approach going forward. Consistently, the coaches were learning. A sample of reflections— "It is amazing to me how much I learn from presenting cases, my own and others'…", "the most useful was the role-play as I learned by doing and the discussion afterwards…". There were

reflections on the increase in one's self-awareness as a coach through watching colleagues and the collective dialogue which led to shifts in how one engaged in relationship with clients and the clients' systems.

The coaches talked and wrote about practicing the coaching competencies within the supervision sessions. Coaches wrote about practicing boundaries, staying in deep listening, staying out of other's stories, not moving to judgment, inquiring rather than advising, and a variety of other interpersonal relationships and coaching capacities. One coach noted that she was able to trust herself and be authentic; she wanted to remember that as she was coaching. Another coach noticed she could see her learning edges up close in the group both as she saw them in herself and in others. Learning how to reflect and learn about her coaching in the group was enabling another coach to reflect and learn on her own in between sessions.

The value of supervision was sufficient that coaches in the Most Tenured and the Newest Together Group renewed for the coming year, although one coach did not. The Trio in Transition Group had two of the three coaches moving onto different endeavors and therefore did not renew.

Time together

In the focus groups with the Most Tenured Group there was a strong and unanimous sense that the group had deepened their relationships and the depth of their work together over time. As the supervisor shared "This group has been together for 6 or 7 years and they have just asked to renew for another year. They reflected on how their work has changed, how their approaches have deepened and how the nature and quality of the group's connectedness has fostered development of one another".

In the final focus group with the Newest Together, which was about mid-way through their second year of supervision together, they shared they could feel the difference that the first year had made in how they approached the second year. They pointed to knowing each other better, which led to greater comfort, understanding of each other's styles, coaching practices, and developmental edges. As one coach noted "we're able to

go deeper and challenge each other in a way that I think we didn't at the beginning of last year".

In summary

In this chapter I have shared observations about the three colleague groups, each of which had unique elements and elements that were consistent across the five groups. I focused the chapter on the themes that were pertinent to describing the qualities and conditions that created a safe and trusting place for self-disclosure, reflection and learning. The living nature of the groups, and the space within which they came together, the co-creation among the groups, the opportunities to develop personally and professionally, are incorporated into my findings and conclusions which are set forth in the next 3 chapters.

In the next Chapter, Chapter 8, I use the metaphor of the garden to share my findings about the interwoven nature of the tenets of cultivating and stewarding the safe and trusted space.

In Chapter 9, I focus on the findings about reflective practice and learning. I offer a model of how these were experienced in the groups.

In Chapter 10, I articulate the high-level conclusions about the art of supervising small groups of coaches, coming together virtually, and engaging in reflective practice.

Chapter 8: Findings—Co-creation and stewardship of the garden

"Gardening is learning, learning, learning. That's the fun of them. You're always learning".

Dame Helen Mirren (Bang Showbiz N.Z., 2020)

The Garden of Supervision

My inquiry:

What are the qualities and conditions that create enough safety in the supervision relationships within a group to enable self-disclosure, reflection and learning? How are these qualities and conditions designed and brought forth?

It is a complex, multi-faceted, and challenging endeavor to supervise virtual small groups. To convey what happened in the room; to open the doors and windows of the virtual rooms requires articulation of the relationships, processes, structures, and dynamics. Clandinin (2016, p.51) wrote "Final research texts do not have final answers…These texts are intended to engage audiences to rethink and reimagine the ways in which they practice and the ways in which they relate to others". I describe my findings and conclusions, in three Chapters, as a starting point for others to inquire about their own practices, and as contribution to the knowledge base of the lived experiences of the coaches and supervisors in virtual small group coaching supervision.

Introducing the garden metaphor

I have two inspirations for this metaphor. The first is that I am a gardener. There are feelings of satisfaction and joy in cultivating and tending the garden, the bountiful blossoms, thriving shrubs and trees, and the number of living creatures who come to share the space. There are the disappointments when pests or weather decimate parts of it, when plants die from over pruning or lack of rain. All that happens in the garden is intertwined and many elements are outside the control of the gardener. This is a useful metaphor as the elements of the supervisory space are intertwined, and many are outside the control of the supervisor. The supervisor can provide structure, process and

possibilities for the container; she cannot create it on her own. I have walked the Royal Botanic Kew Gardens in London as a supervisee, with my supervisor, integrating reflections on my supervision work with my gardener's knowledge, senses, and heart.

The second inspiration is the book *A Princess and her Garden* (Adson, 1999). Using the garden metaphor, Adson writes a fable of a Princess who is raised to take care of the gardens of others, but not her own, and discovers, through the disappointments of life, that it is not rewarding or satisfying. She seeks out the "Wise Woman Wizard" (ibid., p.22). From her, she learned to take care of her own garden and maintain its boundaries so that she and the garden flourished. She no longer cares for the gardens of others; nor did she seek others to care for her garden. Adson used the fable as a metaphor for cultivating one's growth and surroundings in life while maintaining appropriate boundaries, both around one's endeavors and with others by neither trampling nor caretaking their gardens. These themes—tending to our own development as coaches by cultivating our gardens, and seeing our clients as fully competent, capable and able to take care of their gardens is work that is addressed in the gardens of supervision. I have invited the "Wise Woman Wizard" to join us in this chapter.

Adson (1999) has "Wise Woman Wizard"; all of the supervisors in this research are women. Therefore, throughout the findings and conclusions I use "she". My intent is not to exclude others; I use "she" for convenience.

The Principles of Good Practice in the garden

The living container, the community garden, was co-created by the supervisor and the coaches through development of their relationships and connections, supervisor-led contracting for the structures and processes, and the actions and interactions of each member of the group. It was not created and held solely by the supervisor. Imagine the supervisor was the soil— for the plants to take root in solid ground, for nutrients and water to gather and nourish the garden. The supervisor was also the Wise Woman Wizard who was more omniscient, noticing and adapting to whatever happens in any given moment, seeing-all so that she can help guide the group through it. And as the master gardener, the supervisor was the guardian who ensured that the sessions were in

service to reflective practice and the learning and development of the group members. The coaches were visiting gardeners, who actively tended the collective garden while sharing stories of their own gardens. Their action and agency were pulling weeds, pruning, harvesting fruit, changing the irrigation rhythm, offering shifts in the garden design or the plantings, learning about pests, pollinators, composts, native and invasive species. Their levels of active engagement in the garden enabled reflection and learning about their own gardens. The vitality and vibrancy of the garden, as the metaphor for the space which held the supervision sessions, ebbed and flowed moment to moment in the sessions.

I first describe the location and structural components of the garden. Next, I write about the discovery of the five Principles of Good Practice, four that contributed to the development, health and beauty of the garden; and a fifth that recognized there were circumstances or occurrences that negatively impacted the garden; some were lasting, and some were momentary. None of these had to be implemented with perfection. There needed to be an overall consistency, and repair when implementation was insufficient in the moment.

It begins at the very beginning – location and structural components of the garden

Our shared background as supervisors and coaches certified by the Sponsor contributed structural elements to the garden. We had shared methodologies, language and histories. Supervising under the umbrella of the sponsor brought to the garden goodwill emanating from the coaches' prior positive experiences.

The creation of the possibility of the garden began with the first interactions as individuals entered the coach training certification program offered by the Sponsor. The learning and developmental experiences with faculty, administrative staff and selected alumni led to affinity with the organization that continued for many years. As members of the supervision center, my colleagues and I had the benefit of positive feelings for the Sponsor, in addition to any of our previous relationships with the coaches.

This community garden was situated in the virtual space. Many of its characteristics were established in the commercial arrangements for the supervision groups.

We were not starting from scratch—the alumni brought their prior life, educational and work experiences, including their coaching practices, and the culture of the Sponsor. These provided major structural elements in the garden:

- The mature trees: the foundational philosophy of adult development incorporating the recognition of stages and phases of life (McLean, 2012; Hudson, 1999).
- The welcoming of gardeners into the garden: the embracing of andragogy principles (Mezirow, 1991).
- Variety of different areas in the garden, including the fruit orchard, nursery for seedlings, flowers, shrubs, topiary, hedges, and beds, pond and bird bath areas: commitment to experiential and transformational learning (Kolb, 2015; Mezirow, 1990).
- The greenhouse: utilizing the required ICF core competencies as a minimum standard (International Coaching Federation, 2019).
- A viewing platform in the treetops for the group to gather and view one another's stories about their gardens from broader perspectives: focused on the coach as an instrument of the work and challenge to open their inquiries to what was going on for them – their life narratives and internal dialogues (McLean, 2019).
- The stone benches, teak chairs and the multiplicity of paths which provide a contemplative ethos: encouragement of ongoing reflective practices (Schön, 1983).

The coaches committed to visit regularly with their supervisor in service to the cultivation of themselves and their gardens.

The five Principles of Good Practice that were contributors to the creation and stewardship of the garden, were interwoven. They can be grouped in four areas of

positive contribution—the supervisory relationships, contracting, stewardship, and time and a fifth area of tending to circumstances or situations that could eliminate a sense of safety or trust. These were:

1. The supervisory relationships were the most important ingredients that contributed to a meaningful supervision experience. This is the healthy root system.

    a. The qualities, presence and approach of the supervisor was instrumental in the creation and maintenance of the supervisory relationships. This was the soil.

    b. The supervisory relationships were composed of a multiplicity of relationships, each of which needed tending.

    c. Self-disclosures by the supervisor—were a kind of rare blossom that delighted the gardeners and became pivotal stories of the garden.

2. Contracting—the agreements provide the overall landscape design as well as the design of the garden's hardscape – the fences, gates, pathways, and the borders of each section of the garden.

    a. The initial agreements on the commercial and logistical arrangements were the first level of contracting with the group. These were the overall design elements.

    b. Developing the group process was the second level of contracting. It was important to contract with the coaches on their needs, to explore what they knew about how they learned and to explore what that meant for processes that would serve the group. These were the fences, gates, pathways and borders.

    c. Contracting within each session was necessary and continuing; interventions were permission based. This was the third level of contracting. These were the ways the gardeners were agreeing on who would do what in the garden when they gathered.

3. Stewardship was a collaboration among the supervisors and group members. This was the coordination of the tending to the garden, the utilization of the capabilities and skills of each gardener, the rotation of responsibilities, and the attention to the shared purpose of growth and development.

a. The supervisor had multiple roles; she was the soil (supervisory relationships), the Wise Woman Wizard (manager of group dynamics), and the master gardener (guardian of reflective practice).

b. Expansive acceptance—just as gardeners anticipate and accept the changing of the seasons without irritation at the bleakness of winter, or the heat of the summer sun.

c. Shared vulnerability—water is an essential element to the garden; little grows without it.

d. Challenges and possibilities—the fertilizers and composts spread on the garden nourish the plants, shrubs and trees with the hope they contribute to greater growth, health and vigor.

e. Empathy and gratitude—the pollinators make possible the flowers in the garden.

f. Experimentation—many gardens have experimental areas for the introduction of new plants or trees; the gardeners may experiment with different pruning, watering, or fertilizing schemes.

4. Time together as a group—a well-tended garden improves each year, barring catastrophic events, and as the plants, shrubs, and trees grow through the months and years the garden matures.

5. The recognition and tending to the presence of circumstances or occurrences that negatively impacted the qualities and conditions within the garden. Most of these were outside the control of the supervisor or the full group.

a. Topics that were socially or culturally taboo—a knowledgeable gardener would not plant invasive species or maintain a lawn in a long-term drought.

b. Our own stories are the pesky pests in the garden—such as the gophers, rabbits, deer.

c. Events proximate to the session could be as destructive as a hailstorm.

d. Events within the session, when an individual reacted as though stung by a wasp or pricked by a thorn.

e. Events within the session, when the group lost trust or safety when there was an unintentional trampling of a section of the garden or of one of the gardeners.

These Principles of Good Practice were instrumental. Not everyone was present in every session; yet, over the course of the year their existence became visible. In the balance of the Chapter I describe these Principles based on the findings from the five groups.

Principle of Good Practice #1 Supervisory relationships —a healthy root system

The supervisor: soil, "Wise Woman Wizard", master gardener

The supervisor had three primary roles: cultivating relationships which created the soil; leading the group as the "Wise Woman Wizard"; and enabling reflective practice and learning as the master gardener. The qualities, presence and approach of the supervisor was instrumental in the creation and maintenance of the supervisory relationships. It was essential, but insufficient, as will be discussed in the sections on contracting and stewardship.

There were requisite skills, presence and ways of being that the supervisor possessed that provided enough that the group was able to engage in the consideration of their coaching practice. The supervisors took on a variety of roles, including the primary relationship with the coaches which was the soil; the leader of the group as the "Wise Woman Wizard"; and as the master gardener who enabled reflective practice and learning. I was also the researcher. The roles were explicitly named in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. In these two findings Chapters I write about the three supervisor roles as researcher.

Cultivating the soil: presence

The supervisor's presence, an openhearted, intentional attention to the group, was an essential component. It was being with the group without her own agenda, to embrace what came, to explore, consider, inquire without moving to solution or persuasion. It was

a tangible quality that one could feel. *"Each individual has a spark that is amplified by presence. This presence transforms our experience of our self and others. It removes preconceived limits and opens our minds and hearts to new possibilities"* (Dorsey, 2017).

The supervisors cultivated presence throughout their personal and professional development which included mindfulness, reflective practice, intentionality, supervision and, at least for one of us, therapy. We had sufficient emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy and capacities to be in relationship with others (Goleman, 2013). We created empathic resonance chambers for the groups (Whitehead, 2015). Our presence was nourishing minerals within the soil of the garden.

Cultivating the soil: supervisor's warmth, care, grace, and positive energy

The supervisors' ways of being contributed to the fertility of the relationships. These qualities of warmth, care, grace and positive energy were identified by various supervisees as a contribution to the relationships and their sense of safe and trusted space. These were identified as facial expressions, smiles, the warmth conveyed, lightness in tone and tenor when challenging, the number of times permission was sought from a group member to pause, to inquire, to notice, or to shift. Our relatively consistent calm. These observations echoed consistently across the groups.

Wise Woman Wizard: group facilitation

The supervisor needed well developed emotional intelligence and facilitation skills and capabilities. These qualities were identified by various supervisees as a contribution to the relationships and their sense of safety in the sessions. Examples included keeping the session within purpose, developing good relationships with and among the coaches, facilitating so that every voice was in the room, and honoring the contract with the presenting coach. It included taking actions to repair when there was some disruption in the group. These skills were represented by the Wise Woman Wizard in Adson's (1999) fable.

Certified and in supervision for supervision

Each of the supervisors was in supervision of her supervision. The nurturing, care and tending of the supervisor was as important as the nurturing, care and tending of the garden.

As noted in the opening Chapter, the four supervisors were certified as coaches and supervisors. We engaged in supervision of our supervision throughout the research. Three of us were in group supervision and experienced group dynamics as supervisees. These contributed to our wisdom.

Many relationships

The supervisory relationship was composed of a multiplicity of relationships, each of which needed tending.

The supervisory relationships were more complex than the dyadic relationship between the supervisor and the group. The *supervisory relationship* emerged as including the individual relationships among the group members and the supervisor – the supervisor with each coach, the supervisor with the group, and the coaches with each other. The calculation of dyadic relationships is 22 relationships[19] in the group of six coaches; four relationships within the group of two coaches. There were more relationships possible than just the dyadic ones in the larger groups, as other relationships across more than two individuals could exist. In the figures below, the blue lines represent the dyadic relationships, and the gold lines conceptually represent the container.

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[19]Dyadic relationships equation: $((S*C1)+(S*C2)+(S*C3)+(S*C4)+(S*C5)+(S*C6)) + (group*S) +((C1*C2)+(C1*C3)+(C1*C4)+(C1*C5)+(C1*C6)+(C2*C3)+(C2*C4)+(C2*C5)+(C2*C6)+(C3*C4)+(C3*C5)+(C3*C6)+(C4*C5)+(C4*C6)+(C5*C6)=22$ supervisory relationships
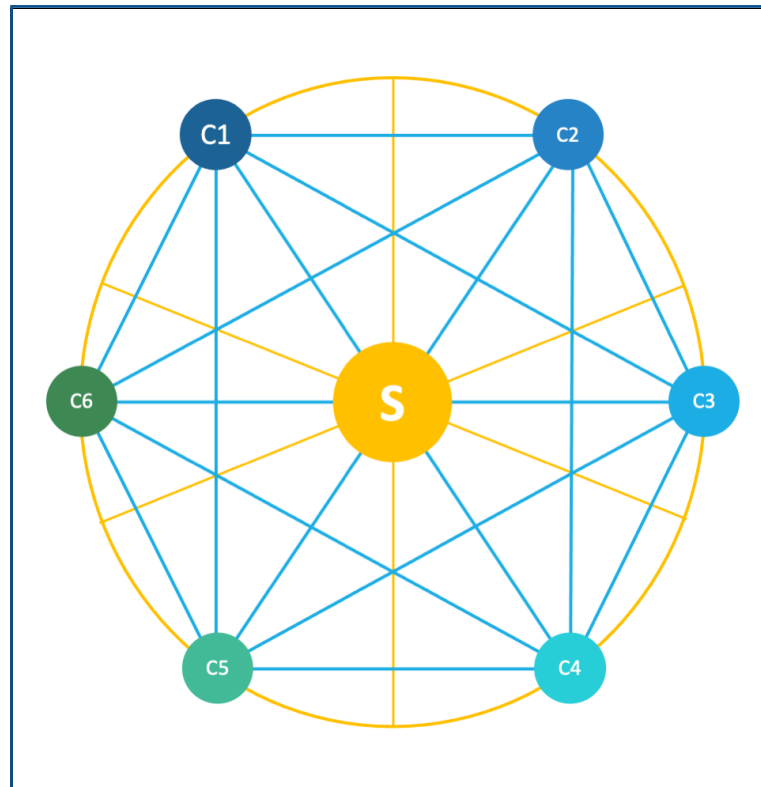
Figure 21: Relationship Diagram II

Relationships nourished by small acts

The supervisor attended to the relationships through many small actions and gestures; she ensured the voice of each coach was in the room.

The connections with each group member were variable; they differed based on prior relationships and the interactions within the group. I was very intentional and aware of my desire to welcome and attend to them with an evenness. I welcomed each coach, in each session, and through the email correspondence with positive regard. I attended to them in small ways such as remembering details of their lives, their aspirations for the supervision experience, their life stories, and prior interactions within the group. When a coach let the group know they could not make a session, I typically sent an email, reply to all, with appreciation for the notice and said they would be missed. If a coach let the group know about developments, personal or professional, in between sessions, a reply to all was often appropriate. These micro connections nourished the bonds among the group. These examples were not specifically in the field texts for the three colleague groups, however, the tone, tenor and interactions within the focus group meetings suggested similarly careful attention to the smallest of interactions.

The supervisors ensured each voice was in the room through facilitation which conveyed equal opportunity for each coach's experience and views, although members' responses were valued and weighted based on other factors. Expansive acceptance and empathy, appreciation and gratitude, explored in later sections, were integral to the relationships among the coaches and the supervisors.

Relationships served by shared purpose

Our shared purposes were participating in a learning community, in service to our individual and collective learning and development, and to contribute to our profession by volunteering to participate in formal research.

We had a shared purpose to show up together in the community garden and contribute to its care and both individual and collective learning and development. The commitment from the coaches to their personal and professional growth, to a specific group, and to engage with a designated supervisor were the initial declarations of shared purpose. The willingness to volunteer to participate in the research was the second declaration. Preparing for and participating within the sessions, the research debriefing meetings and the peer learning sessions were continuing commitments, as were the submissions of monthly journaling. This shared purpose continued over time; it was a full year's commitment with additional contributions several months later.

Normalizing relationships with parallel process

The identifying and naming possible parallel process (Tracey, Bludworth, and Glidden-Tracey, 2012) strengthened the container. In the community garden, a coach may have noticed aphids had invaded the roses in the client's garden; in return to their own gardens, the coaches may have gone looking for aphids on their roses. In discussing this situation in supervision, the supervisor may have gone looking for aphids as well. The idea of parallel process is that what the coach feels in the client coaching session may be in parallel to what the client is feeling in their system; in supervision, the supervisor may feel or act in a way that is in parallel to the struggle of the coach with the client.

Parallel process was referenced as a positive in four of the five groups. It was likely present in the fifth group, but there is nothing in the field texts that reference it. The coaches talked about how it normalized their behavior and feelings. It reassured them that they had not been doing something wrong, and that the noticing of their behavior and feelings had the potential to inform their work with the client.

Self-disclosure by supervisor was a catalyst

Appropriate self-disclosure by the supervisor of their struggles or work with a coaching client was a catalyst that significantly strengthened the dimensions, flexibility and vitality of the container.

Self-disclosure was through a variety of actions, including the sharing by a supervisor of her own struggles, of a client case that she was challenged by, of a recording of a client session, and of her coaching capabilities by coaching as part of live-action coaching.

Principle of Good Practice #2 Contracting - multiple levels required

Contracting—the articulation of the logistics, structures, processes and agendas—was a requisite part of the co-creation of the container. At different levels, there were varying amounts of negotiation; deviations in implementation were mostly permission-based. There were three levels of contracting: the initial level of logistics; the second level of the overall process and structure for the group; the third level, what happened in a session. The contracting for the research requirements occurred within all three levels.

Level one: the initial contract

The initial contract, of logistical matters, included the overall landscape design carried through in the design of the garden's hardscape. There was no negotiation of these; they were established by the Sponsor and accepted by the coaches who registered. The research asks were set out in the Informed Consents; there was no negotiation of these provisions either.

The essential elements of the initial contract were logistical: group membership, selected supervisor, number of sessions over a predetermined time period, technology platform, length of sessions, dates and times, fees payable in full in advance, and the registration process.

Level two: the group operating agreements

The master gardener, the third role of the supervisor, was to enable reflective practice and learning, came to the forefront in contracting, and as discussed later in this Chapter, stewardship of the garden.

The process and structure were co-created and invited coaches to bring their work into the sessions, either a particular client case, an issue or theme, or whatever was on their mind or in their heart. The self-exploration provided space for them to bring issues of stress, depletion, burn-out, and other concerns.

The agreements for process and structure included rules of engagement, expectations for working, playing and learning together, and respective roles and responsibilities of the supervisor and the coaches. There was a dichotomy in needing granularity and allowing for emergence in the process.

The second level, the group operating agreements, included both hardscape features— e.g., the fences, gates, pathways, fountains, and bird baths—as well as the rules of engagement. How would the visiting gardeners engage with each other, with the garden, and with the master gardener? The agreements were how they anticipated working, playing and learning together, what their respective roles and responsibilities would be, and what the rules were for their work in the garden.

The essential elements of the group's processes and structure were contracted collaboratively and are set forth in Table 11 below. The full list of these elements, broken into 12 categories is included as Appendix 11.

Twelve Categories for Contracting Processes and Structure
1. Perspectives on supervision and articulating shared purpose
2. Confidentialities
3. Recording of the supervision sessions
4. Zoom (technology platform)
5. The process and structure
6. Reflection questions
7. Rituals
8. Ethics: what codes of ethics would we reference
9. One on one communications outside the group
10. Resources
11. Rescheduling
12. Supervisor's supervision

Table 10: Categories for Contracting Level 2 Processes and Structure

We crafted the structure and processes based on the coaches' prior experiences. We periodically revisited many of these provisions and amended or revised them as we learned about how we interacted as a group and how each of us learned.

While I used the phrase "contracted collaboratively" at the beginning of this section, the level of collaboration depended on the strength of the container at this early point in the year. If the coaches were relatively new to supervision, their confidence could be less in the contracting, which then was more supervisor led. If the coaches had more confidence in knowing what they needed in groups, and in the supervision process, there was more collaboration. The re-contracting through the year was increasingly collaborative as the coaches had experience with what was working for them and what was getting in the way of their participation.

Level three: the session contracting

Contracting within each session was necessary and continuing; interventions were permission-based.

The third level of contracting had to do with what was to happen in a session—what was on the agenda and how those items would be organized; what inquiries the presenting coach wanted to explore; how the inquiries would be conducted; and whether we would experiment. This happened throughout the session; the process was mutually agreed. In the garden setting this would be about what the tasks were—e.g., would we focus on planting, pruning, harvesting, fertilizing or pest control?

Proctor (2008) identified five levels of contracting; my first and second levels align with her first two levels. Where we diverge is that I utilize one level for contracting within the session and Proctor delineates what happens in the session into 3 levels of contracting: the agenda for the session, the moment-to-moment management of session which she identifies as the "shadow" side, and the contract with the presenting group member for reflective practice (Proctor, 2008, pp.55-56). I elaborate the moment-to-moment management within the frameworks of the supervisory relationships and the ebb and flow of the container, beyond the contracting. Her fifth level of contracting for the reflective practice is explicated in my reflective and learning practices model, which is articulated in the following chapter.

Contracting tailored to each group

Each group designed the container uniquely to meet their individual and collective needs. The contracting had distinct attributes. Each group specifically developed their process; a variety of processes were utilized. The supervisors considered the opportunities that arose for contracting, what contracting actually happened, how it influenced the reported sense of a trusting space within the group, and the shifts in their approaches as supervisor throughout this project. "Every garden is unique, each with its own micro-habitat and micro-climate" (Avis-Riordan and Robinson, 2020, n.p.).

Principle of Good Practice #3 Stewardship

A master gardener surveys the garden, keeping tabs on the larger architecture, as well as noticing the smallest of details such as a new pest in the garden. She holds a super view of the garden – from a microscopic bacterium to the overall scheme, design, weather and

season. The supervisor has similar responsibilities – to notice the abundance of nuance, complexity, multi-dimensionality and emergence within the field and tend to them in the service of reflective practice and the personal and professional development of the coaches. Stewardship calls on the other two roles of the supervisor: cultivating the soil to ensure healthy root growth in the relationships, and as the Wise Woman Wizard facilitating the group. The three roles are interwoven.

Expansive acceptance

"We know the truth, not only by reason, but also by the heart".

(Pascal, 2016, p.118)

Expansive acceptance invited and encouraged coaches to cross a threshold into a place of showing up just as they are.

Gardens change through the seasons, subject to the weather that comes, whether it is destructive freezing temperatures, or fierce winds and heat, or the gentle spring breezes and light rain. The gardener can prepare the plants and trees for the seasons. As a supervisor, it was important to greet how the coaches arrived, and interacted within sessions, with similar equanimity.

When a group was uniquely depleted, the structure and process needed to be adapted. The adaptation was the movement of acceptance; it accepted them just as they were. The move stayed true to our shared purpose and offered bountiful learning. It mirrors the gardener who wraps roses in straw, burlap and twine to prepare them for winter frosts.

 Another example of expansive acceptance is the use of the phrase: "Don't you see it's all perfect" (Dass and Das, 2013, p.104). I consistently, but not perfectly, embodied the phrase in the acceptance of how the supervisees arrived, the acceptance of the human condition when there were work challenges, health and family issues, fatigue and overwhelm, as well as coaches feeling good, resourceful, happy, and expressing appreciation within the groups. As I held a calm inner peace, an acceptance that

whatever came into the room was just what we needed, holding lightly the group. The coaches noticed, and it felt as though it made the space safer for them to bring the messiness of their coaching.

What place is there for accountability in expansive acceptance? I inquired of Sally, in the last Action Learning meeting, how she might have responded if I had required, in some way, she bring a recording. She replied she may have moved to compliance, but more likely her "3-year-old toddler" self would have emerged and said, "you are not my boss". The line between offering and inviting as a supervisor and requiring is an important discernment. It was important to be mindful of the power held by supervisors within the contextual nuances of the group.

Shared vulnerability

Shared vulnerability strengthened the dimensions, flexibility and vitality of the container. It lessened the sense of isolation experienced by several of the coaches. The opportunities for shared vulnerability were diminished when members of the group were not yet or no longer actively coaching.

All organisms in the garden need water. The water in the groups was vulnerability – the courage and willingness for the coaches to share their stuckness, their struggles, their fears. Vulnerability invited vulnerability. When coaches shared their concerns and self-judgment, the group responded with empathy, and the space within the container for vulnerability increased. The increase resulted in large part from the recognition that the struggle was common to most of us; it was very normal. The coaches often noticed how reassuring it was to have learned in the group they were not alone with the client dilemmas; it lessened their sense of isolation that was often a part of having a solo practice.

Vigilant inquiry into one's practice was challenging. This self-inquiry required a balancing of curiosity, courage to explore, opening one's self to feedback, to puzzle about, to notice, to challenge one's beliefs and ways of being, to steadily excavate one's stories, to cultivate self- compassion, self-kindness, and perspective. The opportunity for growth

required an acceptance that with curiosity and inquiry one may choose to continue to deepen their understandings of the profession. The commitment to shape and re-shape one's self and one's practice was the key to move toward mastery (Dweck, 2016; Kegan and Lahey, 2009; Mezirow, 1991). It required bringing the self as the instrument to the foreground; self-awareness was a frequent focus of inquiry. McLean (2019) challenged us to this work: "to know one's self requires a fierce and courageous willingness to explore the many layers of one's inner landscape, a territory that can be elusive and enigmatic, confusing and paradoxical" (p.3).

There was a continuum of vulnerability with several factors in the equations of where a coach landed on that continuum. One factor in these dynamics was whether the coach viewed themselves as worthy of contributing, worthy of sharing. If they did not, they were less vulnerable. Another factor was whether the coach was actively coaching. If they were not, they did not have the opportunities to step into vulnerability by sharing their work. Another factor was when the coach lacked insight or courage and did not self-disclose any failings. Another was the type of intervention being utilized. For example, with respect to bringing part or all of a recording to the group, some coaches readily did so; some coaches did; many coaches did not or could not. Some of the coaches were able to be consistently vulnerable; for some the level of vulnerability shifted.

Water is essential; vulnerability is essential. Inviting and role modeling vulnerability within the group was a key responsibility of the coaches and the supervisor. The boldest role modeling of vulnerability by a supervisor was through self-disclosure of their coaching practice.

Challenges and possibilities

The container was healthy enough that in the inquiry with the presenting coach, there were challenges, and the offering of different perspectives and possibilities. The amount of challenge varied with the strength of the relationships between the presenting coach and the others.

"Use compost. Compost is great for making healthy, nutrient-rich soil, perfect for plants and wildlife. Make your own compost with your garden waste to naturally recycle nutrients" (Avis-Riordan and Robinson, 2020, n.p.). The challenges and explorations of possibilities with the presenting coaches were the compost for their reflections and learning. The shared purpose of individual and collective learning necessitated challenge, differing perspectives, and opening of possibilities. The amount and directness of the challenges were dependent on the group members' relationships with each other, and with the supervisor. When the group member was committed to the growth of the other, there were more challenges, and the challenges went beyond facts, to who the coach was and how was that potentially impacting the work with the client. To the extent the relationships were more distant, and weaker, there were fewer times of challenge. It took a good working alliance for challenges.

I held a question about when and how often to challenge in every session, and across the arc of the year with each group. The elements that went into my analysis were my intuition, the strength of the working alliance of the presenting coach with me, and within the group, whether there were potential ethical issues, the level of shame, if any, that was in the space, and the fuller context that formal assessment was not part of my role. Often, I felt the degree of challenge was appropriate; on occasion I felt it was too much or too little. As with each of these principles, I was never perfect, yet I was good enough; the group interactions were never perfect; they were good enough.

Empathy, appreciation and gratitude

> *"Belonging feels like it happens from the inside out, but in fact it happens from the outside in. Our social brains light up when they receive a steady accumulation of almost invisible cues: We are close, we are safe, we share a future".*
>
> *(Coyle, 2018, pp.25-26)*

The interactions among the group members were abundant with appreciations, gratitude and empathic resonance which nurtured vulnerability, self-disclosure, experimentation

and reflection. Imagine the gardeners walking together to admire the pruning by one, the arrangement of plantings by another, the newly constructed stone border or the abundant summer blossoms.

There was consistent courtesy and acknowledgment among the coaches for the sharing they did collaboratively and in service to the group's learning. These actions were the pollinators, the bees, butterflies and hummingbirds of the garden. These elements were not explicitly contracted; they were cultural and social assumptions of our community, as alumni of the Sponsor. My actions and interactions rested unconsciously in these assumptions; they became conscious during this project.

The empathic responses, expressions of appreciation and gratitude started in the how are you arriving session and continued throughout the session. A presenting coach would thank the group, often by name, for what they had offered during the inquiry. When the coaches were responding to my inquiry about what they had learned about themselves from the other coach's case, they would appreciate particular elements of the case that resonated with them. In concluding the session, the ending reflections were frequently of appreciation for the relationships and the learning.

The interactions and engagements within the groups during the focus groups had these qualities and characteristics. They appreciated each other, built upon what the others were sharing, disagreed or distinguished their own experiences with care and honesty. The empathic connections among the group and the supervisor were apparent.

These are the experiences Ferrucci (1990) writes as the power of empathic connections "In addition to being a vehicle for awareness, empathy is also an instrument for transformation. It temporarily changes the structure of our being by taking us to an entirely different wavelength… empathy frees us from our private maze and shows us new and unenvisaged modes of being, greatly enhancing our imaginative and creative abilities'' (p.30).

Experimentation – the introduction of something new

Experimenting with the process in-the-moment in a session, with the permission of the group, brought fresh energy, and often fun, which strengthened the root system within the soil.

The supervisors invited experimentation in the supervision process. A requisite step was seeking permission from the full group for the deviation. The groups expressed the appreciation for the mix of how they worked together. One coach described this as "there's value in disrupting and disorganizing, just changing it up…it was fun." Just as in the garden, one can experiment with planting new flowers, shrubs or trees, or strengthen the roots with different watering or fertilizing schemes.

Principle of Good Practice #4 Time together as a group

> *"A garden requires patient labor and attention. Plants do not grow merely to satisfy ambitions or to fulfill good intentions. They thrive because someone expended effort on them [sic]".*
>
> *Liberty Hyde Bailey, Country Life in America, 1903 (Michigan State University, 2017)*

The groups developed the capacities for the cultivation and stewardship of more vibrant and vital gardens over the course of the year. They knew each other better; there was more vulnerability, more sharing, and more challenge.

Just as it takes time for the garden to develop, and its development cannot be rushed, such was the situation in small group supervision. The groups learned and developed through the year together; they claimed the significance of that time. They articulated that with the laughter, learning, exposure, and creativity came stronger relationships. They knew more about each other, about the life challenges, and the coaching challenges, they knew more about the supervisor and had a stronger relationship with her.

Each of the five groups remarked on the benefit of time together for deepening the strength of the relationships, the appreciation for what each other contributed to the experience and to their bonds.

As we considered the yearlong engagements, there was an awareness in many of us of the fragility of the space we had cultivated session by session. We remembered moments of discomfort, and of repair. We held on to the arc of the feelings of being together with the wisdom to know it was not a given. Yet we could feel it was stronger in our final sessions than in the beginning; it had developed over the seasons of our time together.

The virtual garden

It is of note that all of the interactions, the cultivation and stewardship of the supervision garden was done virtually; these groups successfully engaged in the virtual environment. Actual gardens can be visited virtually, gardening courses may be offered virtually, yet the cultivation and stewardship of the gardens cannot be done virtually. The metaphor is not quite perfect in this sense.

The authors I have looked to throughout this thesis have described three qualities in the in-person groups that were significant: in-person connections, physical touch and hospitality. How does one visit and tend to a virtual garden?

Coyle (2018) points out the importance of the physical settings for the teams, creating close proximity, and the role of touch e.g., a hand on the arm. Block (2009) devotes significant attention to the physical set-up, including room design, light, nature, and the seating arrangement. Both authors include "hospitality" in their discussions, the importance of food and beverages. These are in service to the bonding of the team or group, to the creation of the necessary conditions for dialogue.

I explored ways in the virtual realm to convey hospitality without the benefits of room design, light, physical touch or refreshments; the welcoming and hosting of the group is more collaborative. I have a number of very specific findings that may be useful to

supervisors and supervisees who may be engaging virtually for the first time. These are in Appendix 12 Key Findings: Use of Technology.

The use of a virtual technology platform, Zoom, raises the question of what the impacts and comparisons are of working face-to-face and virtually. These are not addressed in this thesis.

Principle of Good Practice #5 Recognition and Tending to the contributors to decreasing safety and trust.

> *"This idea—that belonging needs to be continually refreshed and reinforced—is worth dwelling on…"*
>
> *(Coyle, 2018, p.24)*

There were five kinds of matters that negatively impacted the safe space for at least one group member. The first was societal and cultural norms that inhibited coaches from bringing certain parts of themselves or their experiences into the group because they were socially inappropriate. Second, a coach's life narrative impacted, and sometimes kept them, from bringing something into the space. Third, the coach had an experience proximate to the session that negatively impacted his or her sense of safety. Fourth, the coach was triggered by content, an intervention or the process within the session and was unable to regain a centered stance and be present within the session. Fifth, the supervisor or one of the group members said something that triggered the group, which lessened the contours of the container.

Cultural and social norms – what we keep hidden

There were a range of topics that did not arise in the sessions. I have a sense that the container was, as yet, insufficient to hold situations that were culturally or socially considered inappropriate or uncomfortable to discuss. In an organic garden, the discussion of pesticides, insecticides and fungicides would be limited to only those consistent with organic growing.

There are cultural and social norms that govern what we are willing to share with colleagues. Those did not come into the supervision sessions; I cannot describe what they were, although typically the harder to discuss issues are likely candidates on this list. In early 2018 when the research groups were underway, we had a new President in the White House. The impacts of his approaches had reverberations across many coaches and clients; yet these were not discussions brought to supervision. Politics were often avoided; the topics were typically quite triggering of anger, angst, anxiety and outrage. I wonder if a coach had found themselves attracted to a client, if this would have been a safe enough space for them to reflect and inquire about that? What other kinds of issues were not coming into the group?

Our own stories

Our inner critics and life experiences impacted our relationships, what we brought into the sessions and the ebb and flow of the trust within the garden.

Our life narratives influenced the trust and safety one had with one's self which carried into the sessions. If a coach felt he or she was not enough, we often knew and experienced it in the session; it was visible. In the garden metaphor these would be the pests: gophers, rabbits, or deer that show up uninvited, that we need to make peace with and manage.

The request in the research to bring observational experiences brought the life narratives into the bright light of day. There were coaches for whom it was an impossible request; and there were coaches, brand new to their groups, who brought recordings. Another coach discovered it was safer to reflect on recordings with the group than on her own. The contrasts in these reactions highlighted the distinctively individual nature of who and how we were and the influence of our own stories on our perceptions of the safety within the garden.

Events proximate to the session

Events proximate to the session can disturb presence and participation.

A sudden storm can damage a part of the garden or keep the gardeners indoors. Incidences around the time of the session influenced how one came into the session and whether it was possible to recover enough to be present, participate and reflect. "Proximate" means near enough in time to the session to impact the emotional well-being of the coach or supervisor as they were arriving for the session. Often the impacts were increased anxiety, fears or shame. There were many kinds of events that had this impact, including awaiting medical results, arriving late, not feeling prepared enough, being forced into retirement or overwhelmed. The outcome was that the coach was not fully with the group; he or she was not a full participant.

Within the session – individual diminished

Individuals, on occasion, reacted negatively to the process, interventions or the content in a session, which lessened their sense of safety or trust.

There were a handful of micro-moments, when an individual in a session reacted, sensing a loss of fullness of acceptance or worthiness; stung by a wasp, or pricked by thorns while pruning. It happened unexpectedly, with an intervention, content or process that caused them discomfort. It happened when the coach felt the supervisor inquired from a place of judgment. It happened when the coach recognized their response to the process was very different than the other group members and wondered if they "were not getting it?" It happened to the presenting coach when a colleague moved from inquiry to problem solving their case. The impact remained for different lengths of time; some were significant enough to need repair, some dissipated on their own.

Container impacted by actions of supervisor or coach

The robustness of the container could be lost for a moment, a session, or longer, by an action of the supervisor or a coach.

Continuous partial attention (Stone, 2009) is the concept that in our technology filled lives, we are seldom fully paying attention to what we are engaged in. In one of the

sessions, in mid-inquiry, a coach said, essentially, she knew just the model that needed to be used with the client and she had just found it and sent it to us in an email. My internal response was to move to judgment—I experienced her reactivity and move to action to be disruptive of the flow; I reacted and my move to action was a facial expression. My judgment flowed into the collective field by my grimace. Who noticed? Who felt similar feelings? Did my reactivity to her reactivity impact any one's sense of safety except my own? My internal dialogue was that I had trampled her and her part of the garden, unintentionally and in the moment. I believe it was felt by the group and it made the container momentarily less safe for all.

Concluding reflection

This chapter was a deep dive into the complexities of virtual small group supervision. My goal was to address the two questions in my inquiry: What are the qualities and conditions that create enough safety and trust in the supervision relationships within a group to enable self-disclosure, reflection and learning? How are these qualities and conditions designed and brought forth? The supervisor, and the group, were challenged by the interconnectedness of the significant aspects that were necessary for coaches to bring their work into a small community for inquiry. Supervision is an organic and emergent process of being in relationship with one's self, one's supervisor, one's group, one's clients and the client systems, with one's life in the context of the world. The gardening metaphor, the referencing of the many facets that contribute to the design, planting, cultivation, care and tending of a garden that is likely to thrive was useful in conveying the difficulties and opportunities. In Figure 22 I have captured the stewardship elements that the supervisor is holding.
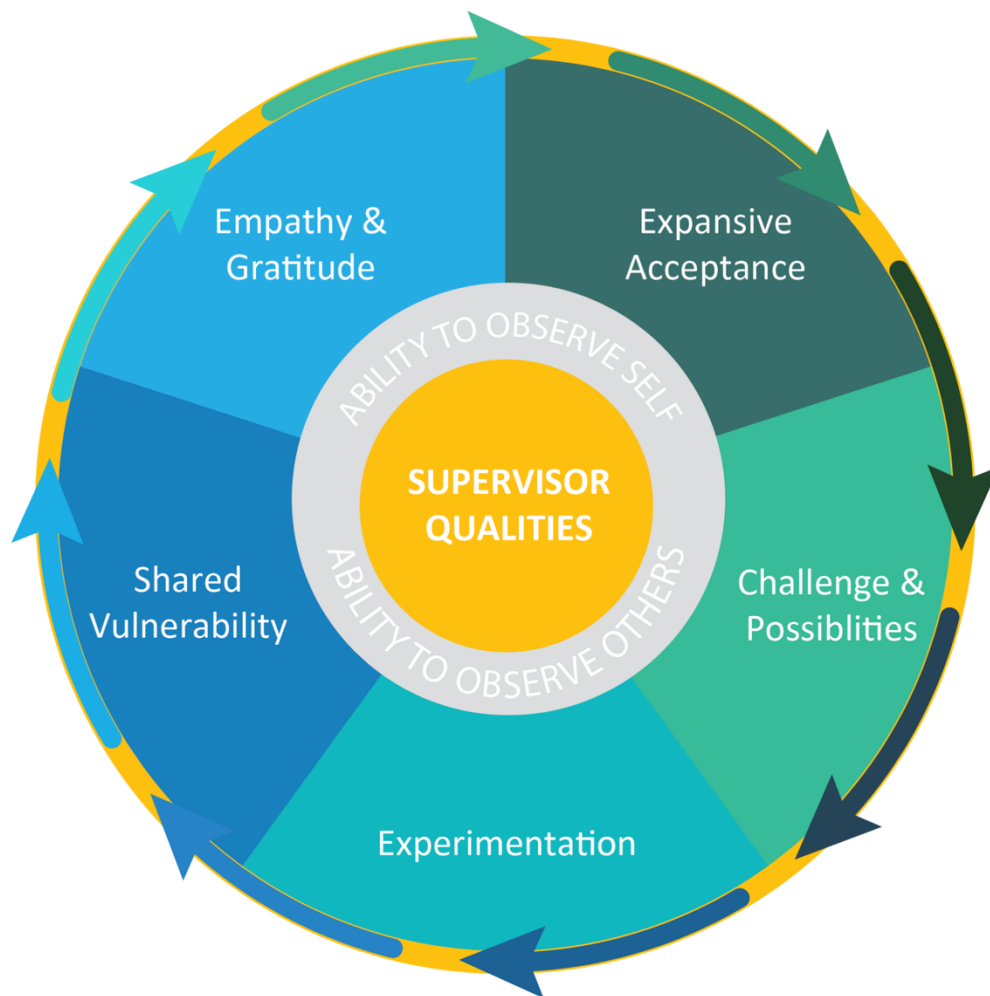
Figure 22: Stewardship Elements that Supervisor is holding

In the next figure, I capture the supervisor's process views and areas of attentive awareness.
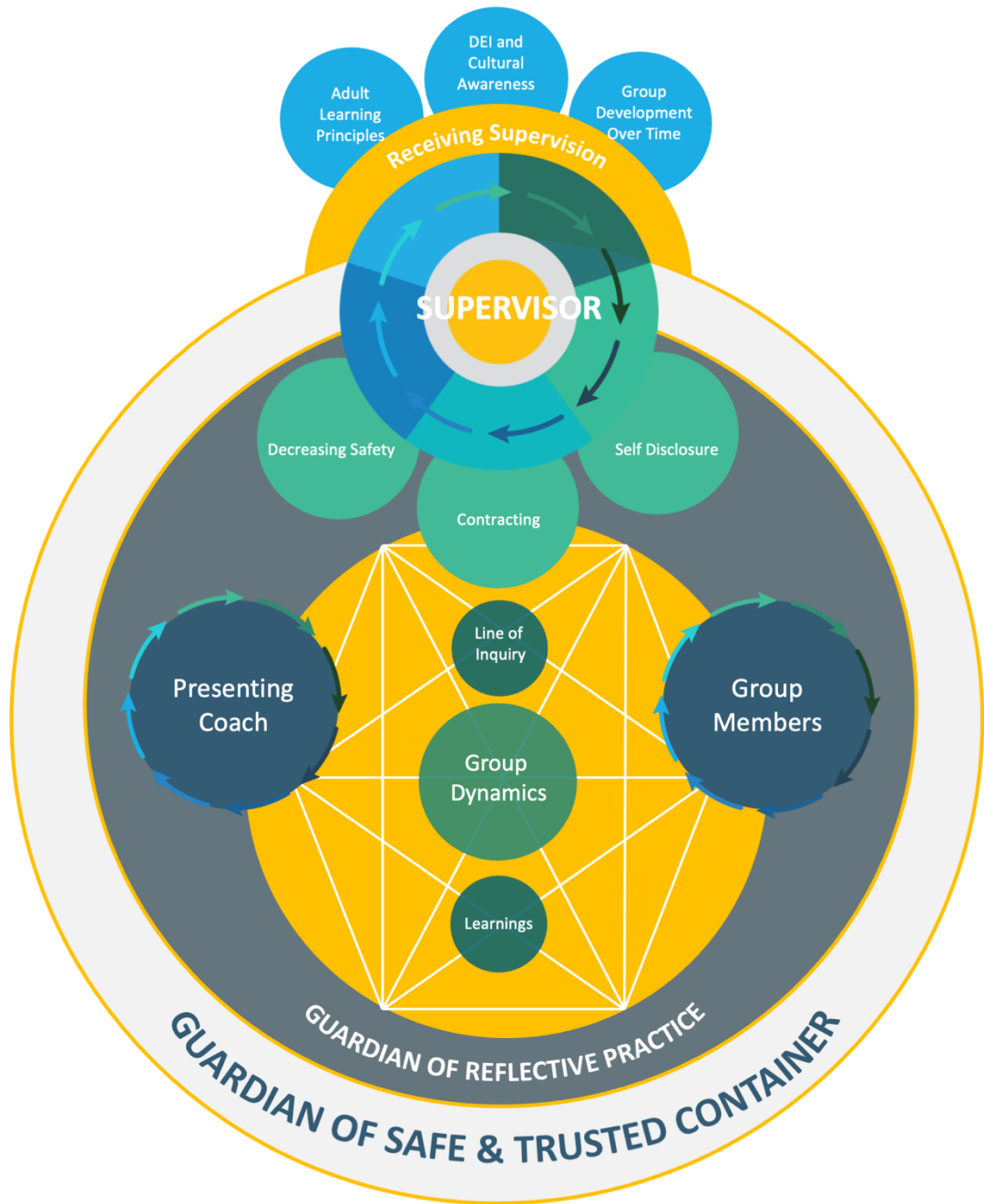
Figure 23: Supervisor's Process Views

The participants' reactions to my thinking

I shared my early thinking on the co-creation and stewardship of the container with participants and other supervision groups. In my final meetings with the five groups, I shared my beginning thinking of the creation and stewardship of the safe container, and I shared an earlier version of the reflective practice model. I asked the groups to listen for whether there was sufficient confidentiality and anonymity in what I presented and if it felt true to their experiences, to the extent they had had that experience. They confirmed that the three were true: confidential, anonymized and true to their experiences; no participant raised an issue or concern. I did not share any of the selected vignettes as I had not yet arrived at narrative inquiry.

The comments about the container included affirmations of the relationships with the supervisor, the strengthening over months and years of engaging together in supervision, the shared experiences of training, language and methodology, the experimentation in the sessions and shared vulnerabilities. Comments included:

- "When people own their accountability, they say I really want to do this and they do it as opposed to being told what to do, it's a very different experience".
- "The accountability is directly proportional to the depth of the relationship".
- "It's like any relationship, the disrupt happens, and it's how you work through it that can be the key learning and take you to whole different depth or intimacy".
- "The value of this collective wisdom…the connections are extraordinary as human being to human being".
- "Each of us takes others out of their comfort zone by dealing with us. Each of us is just individual and different".
- "It's the beauty of trusting that it's a blessing and a gift to have access to other wise practitioners, who don't tell me what to do and what not to do, but just through questions or through bringing things forward for me to consider…"

Potential Learning for Supervisors

A supervisor considering the qualities and conditions of the safe and trusted container may develop new thinking or reflection that inform supervisor development goals. These areas are

1. The significance of the relationships within and among the group and focus beyond the relationship with the group to include the relationships with each coach, and the coaches with each other.

2. The idea of self-disclosure, when and in what circumstances is it appropriate in contributing to the learning and development.

3. The ebbs and flows of the safe and trusted space, with greater awareness as to what is outside the control and influence of the supervisor.

4. Additional or alternative ways for structuring and contracting the process of the group.

5. Consider experimentation in service to lightness, fun and increased energy within supervision groups.

In the next chapter, Chapter 9, I explore the reflective practice and learning that was possible, introduce a reflective practice and learning model and address ethical issues. In Chapter 10, I state my conclusions and my current theory of practice, pulling together the models in Chapter 8 and 9, into an overall process model representative of the supervision process. In the final chapter, Chapter 11, I reflect on this part of my life's journey and its contributions to me as a human being, a coach, a supervisor, and in my many life roles.

Chapter 9: Findings—Reflection and Learning

> *"This waking up goes hand in hand with what we might call 'wisdom,' a seeing more deeply into cause and effect and the interconnectedness of things, so that we are no longer caught up in a dream-dictated reality of our own creation. To find our way, we will need to pay more attention to this moment. It is the only time that we have to live, grow, feel and change".*
>
> *(Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p.xv)*

My inquiry:

What are the qualities and conditions that create enough safety in the supervision relationships within a group to enable self-disclosure, reflection and learning? How are these qualities and conditions designed and brought forth?

The garden is necessary for reflective practice and reflective practice is essential for personal and professional development. In the previous chapter I set out the co-creation and stewardship of the garden—the qualities and conditions and how they were designed and brought forth. In this chapter I set out the reflective and learning practices that occurred and were necessary parts of the personal and professional development process, and five ethical considerations. In Chapter 10, I state my conclusions and articulate my current theory of practice.

Reflective and learning practices in supervision

In the supervision groups, the learning was as much about one's self as it was about tools, methods, and processes. It included the whole person of the coach—emotions and feelings, narratives, stories, interpersonal relationships, emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2004), and coaching methodologies. It was important to expand the definition of reflection and reflective practice to be more than learning how to be a coach, beyond the professional competencies to embrace the fullness of one's self as the instrument of the work (McLean, 2019; Bachkirova, 2016, p.144).

As discussed in the last Chapter, the garden was alive, and vibrant, it required tending and care as its elements varied moment to moment, and it was almost always in service to reflective practice which utilized what happened in the session as fertilizer for growth. The coaches' abilities to integrate their experiences over time, contributed to the possibilities of learning and ultimately personal and professional development.

The six elements of reflective and learning practices

Enabled by the five Principles of Good Practice, there were six elements of reflective and learning practices that occurred over the year—before, during, and after the sessions as well as in the time between. These were cultivating observing self, reflecting on what had happened, reflecting on what was happening in the moment, considering and challenging one's beliefs, values and stories, imagining future actions, and cultivating one's coaching capabilities, competencies and capacities within the session. The group was a community of inquirers who assisted each other in developing and deepening these practices through their collaborative exploration, challenge and diverse perspectives as a situation was considered.

There was wide variability in what was experienced, by each coach, in any single session and over the course of the year; no two had the same experiences. They are not listed in sequential order as any one or more of the six could have been going on for one or more of the coaches. My definitions of these elements are:

1. The ability to observe one's self in the past, and in the present moment, with increasing discernment.
2. Looking back at past situations with inquiry, thoughtfulness and curiosity.
3. Looking inward and noticing our feelings, body sensations, and inner dialogue in the moment.
4. Inquiring about or challenging our habits, stories, beliefs and values.
5. Looking forward and imagining how we might experiment being or observing ourselves differently with a client, or each other.

6. Practicing core coaching competencies including presence, being in relationship, curiosity, inquiry, listening, challenge and dialogue.

Supervision was a space for discovering more about our capabilities and skills as a person and as a coach when we used the opportunities for reflection, and for experimenting with what was stirred, discovered or learned through the reflections in preparation for the sessions, in the journaling following the session, individually, in experimentation with clients in coaching sessions, and as each of us engaged in our lives. Reflective practice is the field for cultivation of awake-ness.

One: The ability to observe one's self

Coaches in supervision had many opportunities to learn, cultivate and deepen their ability to observe their self. This ability was an essential capacity to engage in considering our work; one could not reflect unless one could see one's self in the prior interactions. This was cultivating the subject/object distinction (Kegan, 1994). The reflection questions and journal prompts were designed to invite our noticing. In the sessions we practiced and deepened our abilities to observe ourselves through the inquiries of what we were noticing about ourselves and our self as a coach. We learned how to notice what we were doing, feeling, avoiding and how we were experiencing others—what moved us to curiosity or judgment, triggered us or activated us to move out of coaching stance.

Two: Looking back at past situations

Supervision provided opportunities to practice reflection on action (Schön, 1983). We looked back at the past, in three different ways. The presenting coach was looking back to describe what happened. As we listened, we were looking back in inquiry with them and often looking back at our own client work that was similar, e.g., "that reminds me of a client and this is what I did there", or "I remember being stuck with a client", or "I've been with a client in the doldrums", and with judgment, potentially assessing the other coach, the other client, ourselves, the group interactions, or noticing our judgment and suspending it.

Three: Looking inward in-the-moment

Supervision provided the opportunities for coaches to notice how they were in their mind, heart and body, in the moments of the session and utilize that noticing in their practicing and learning. This was the aspect of looking in; looking inward to how we were feeling, or noticing sensations in our body, or our inner dialogue. For example, sometimes I said, "Let's do a drawing of what comes up for us when the coach is presenting". That was going inward, within us, to find an image that we drew. Or I asked, "What did you notice when the case was shared?" A request to go within and name what were we feeling as we heard the coach present the case or the theme. Similarly sharing our reflections on the reflection question, was a practice of noticing within.

There was evidence that we were editing how we participated in the group by noticing in the moment what the others were saying or how they were interacting, when our judgment came to the forefront. This was noticing in-the-moment and doing something differently.

Four: Inquiring about or challenging our habits, stories, beliefs and values

Supervision, through the inquiry process, included opportunities to challenge the habits, stories, beliefs and values of the coaches. If the coach had sufficient developmental maturity, the challenges created the possibility of critical self-reflection (Mezirow, 1990).

These inquiries and challenges to our views of the world, and how we made meaning from what happened was less evident across the group members than reflecting in the past or into the future. There was an interplay between one's ability to observe one's self and the willingness to reflect beyond one's actions, to one's life stories. For the coaches who could see themselves within their stories, e.g., "performance anxieties", "need to please", "deference", "deliver value", they caught themselves being just who they were and could see their role in what was going on. Many times, the coach arrived with an inquiry about the client, their lack of resourcefulness, their transactional responses, or their lack of commitment and realized, as they explored what had been going on for

them, that it was their need to drive the client to deliver value or prove their worth. It was more about who they were as a coach. The reflections from the challenges did not necessarily land the first time they arose, nor in the session; sometimes the coach discovered them through subsequent experiences and reflection.

Five: Generativity – looking forward

The fifth element of reflection was looking forward. Supervision provided space for looking forward, to consider, design, experiment and develop new practices and ways of being. These were the design and experiment steps in Kolb's (2015) experiential learning cycle. I asked a coach, "what might you do going forward?" "How might you work differently with this client?" "How might you be more present and let the value-added piece go?" I inquired, almost always, of the presenting coach following the group interactions— "what are you sitting with?" or "What are you taking away?" Then going around the circle, I asked each coach to share what was learned or stirred about their self as a coach or their practice. Often, it was, "I noticed this, and I might want to do something slightly different going forward".

The opposite reaction, when the coach could not move beyond what they already knew, resulted in no new learning. There are examples within the groups where a coach was unable to move beyond their downloading (Scharmer, 2009). They came into the session describing a situation with a client, their inquiry was in service to confirming they had "done the right thing" and they allowed nothing in their perspectives to come into question or be shifted.

Six: Practicing being a coach

Participation in the group offered a place to practice many competencies of a coach, including presence, being in relationship, curiosity, inquiry, listening, challenge and dialogue. By engaging in reflection on our work together, we called on and practiced many of the competencies required of executive coaches (McLean, 2019; International Coaching Federation, 2019; Rogers, J., 2008) including building trust and intimacy with others, being present, listening actively and deeply, holding unconditional positive regard

(Rogers, C.R., 1980), staying in curiosity, challenging or supporting as appropriate, observing one's self in the moment, self-regulating, demonstrating empathy, inquiring and contracting.

We used the group setting to practice being in relationship with others. In our practicing, through participation, each of us had the opportunity to witness these in the others' actions. Practice observing others. Could we be present with each other? Could we stay in unconditional positive regard or when did we move to judgment? Could we stay curious or did we go to problem solver? Were we listening or were we distracted? Were we triggered by something that came up? Or not? Did we jump into our story or stay with the other's story? There was practice space, for the varied ways of being what we wanted to be as a coach.

We utilized live-action coaching in the sessions to practice and to use the mini coaching session for reflection for the coach as their client case. This method opened up possibilities for the group members in other ways to work with a client and in their noticing their reactions while observing the coach and client work together. There were a handful of ways to do live-action coaching.

We reflected on self-as-coach (McLean, 2019) and our coaching practices, with as much vulnerability as we could in those moments; utilizing our ability to observe our interactions in the past (Schön, 1983; reflection-on-action), to share with the group, reflect critically, on occasion, and practice these crucial skills which led to a deepening awareness and insight by the participants, discoveries of blind spots, strengths and development edges, the impact of their own stories on their client relationships and coaching stance, toward personal and professional development in service to their clients.

Opportunities for reflection

Pre-session Reflection

Some coaches found receiving an email with a reflection question a few days in advance of the session very useful, others found case write-ups in advance to be useful. It reminded them of the session, it invited them to reflect, and to prepare for the session.

There were at least 5 kinds of opportunities for pre-session reflection for both the coaches and the supervisors:

1. A reflection question sent in advance which was either questions, quotes, or very short videos (See Appendix 14).

2. The supervisees who prepared for the session reflected on their practice to decide what case, issue or theme they might bring to the group; the supervisor preparing for the session reflected on the group.

3. The presenting coach sent a write-up of their case, issue or theme to the group in advance.

4. The presenting coach sent a recording and transcript in advance to the group with a request to listen or watch.

5. The coaches and supervisors reflected on something that had happened in earlier sessions, or earlier times of learning, and brought it forward for this session.

These are illustrated in the figure below.
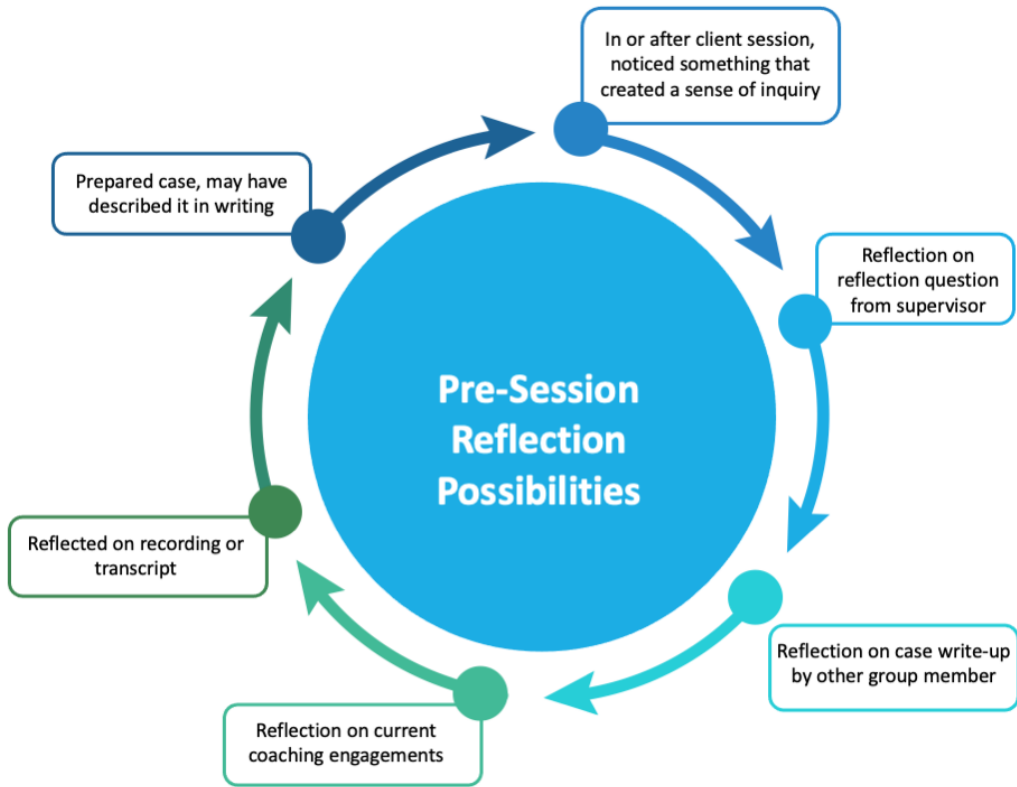
Figure 24: Pre-session reflection possibilities

The circular diagram titled "Pre-Session Reflection Possibilities" contains the following labels arranged around the center:

- In or after client session, noticed something that created a sense of inquiry
- Reflection on reflection question from supervisor
- Reflection on case write-up by other group member
- Reflection on current coaching engagements
- Reflected on recording or transcript
- Prepared case, may have described it in writing

In session reflections—presenting coach

The presenting coach would bring their voice into the room through describing the case, issue or theme. They shared their story, in a few minutes, of what had happened, often with a description of the client and the client's system, the overall contract, the relationship with the client, and what was stirring for them that resulted in their bringing this situation to the group. The supervisor would inquire with them about their inquiry with the group – what did they want to focus on. The group would co-inquire with them opening possibilities in new ways to see or consider what had happened. They often noticed what was coming up for them in the group and how that in-the-moment awareness sometimes informed their understanding or provided new insights about the situation. There were times when the dialogue led to the coach identifying new approaches or ways to be with the client or with his-or-her-self as the coach. Focusing on in-the-session reflection cycles possible for the presenting coach are illustrated below.
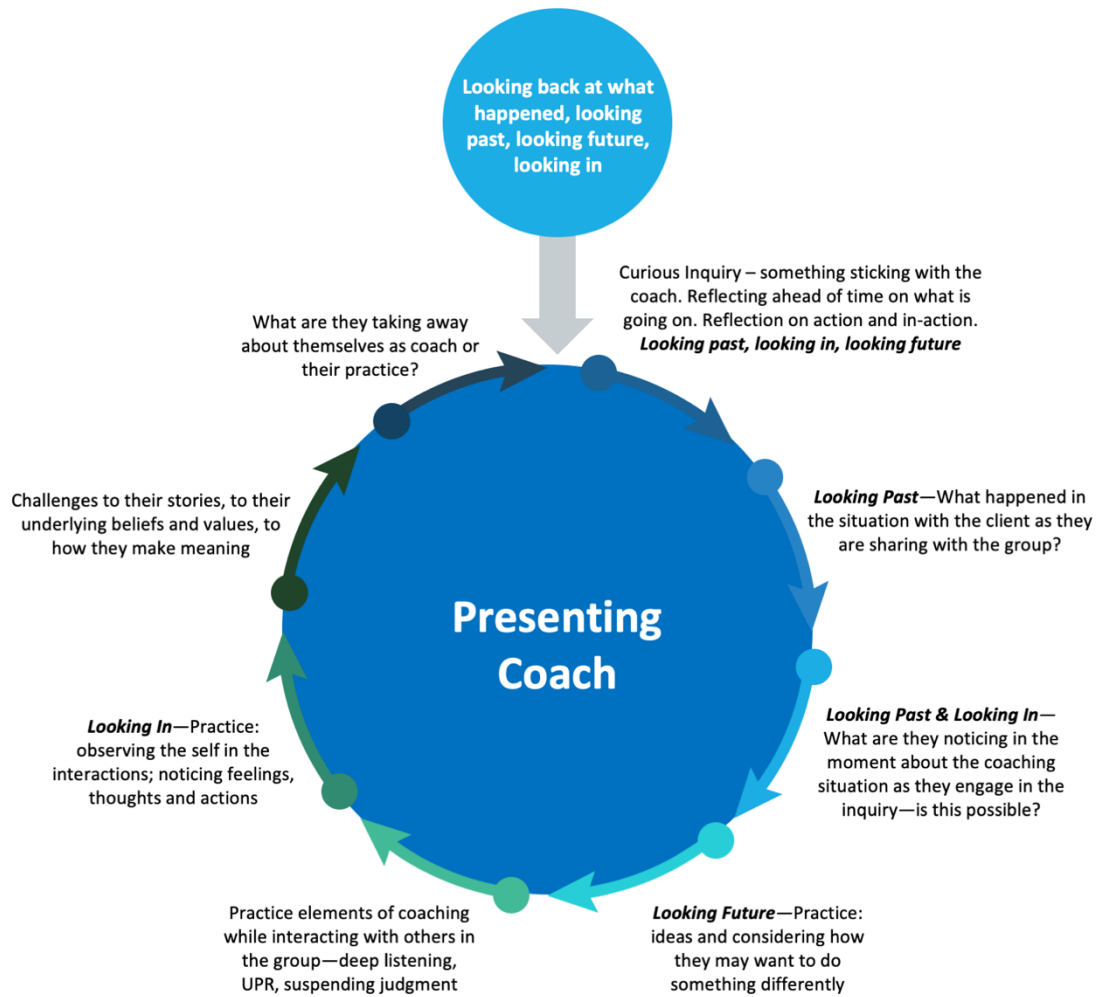
Figure 25: In-Session Reflection Cycles: Presenting Coach

In session reflections—group members

Another way of visualizing the reflective practice and the practice opportunities is to consider the other members of the group – they have similar opportunities for both reflection and practice.

Looking back at what happened, looking past, looking future, looking in

What are they taking away about themselves as coach or their practice from the case presented?

Curious Inquiry - Reflecting ahead of time on what is stirred for them as they reflect on the case or reflection question. If it raises one of their cases it is *looking past*, and if it is stirring something in them it is *looking in*. Either or both happen.

Challenges to their stories, to their underlying beliefs and values, to how they make meaning

Looking Past—As the coach is presenting, are they reflecting on other cases this coach has brought or are they thinking of their past client work?

Group Members

Looking In (in the moment)— Continuing to practice observing self in the interactions: notice feelings, thoughts & actions as others share.

Looking In—What are they noticing in the moment about their feelings, thoughts or desires to take action as they engage in the inquiry?

Practice elements of coaching while interacting with others in the group - e.g. holding a mirror for the coach to see their resourcefulness, or challenging the coach, using immediacy, transparency, empathic stance.

Practice: coming back to presence, e.g. suspending judgment; not moving to advise, solve or rescue; not getting distracted; staying curious

Figure 26: In Session Reflection Cycles Group Members

If we were to diagram this, using Kolb's (2015) experiential learning cycle, we would see that there are learning cycles for each person, including the supervisor, some of these overlap in some content areas, and some are discreet. One of the key elements of the

circle was that after review of what happened, one could identify what they wanted to do differently, and seek out opportunities to practice. The group sessions offered practice space as well as reflection space.
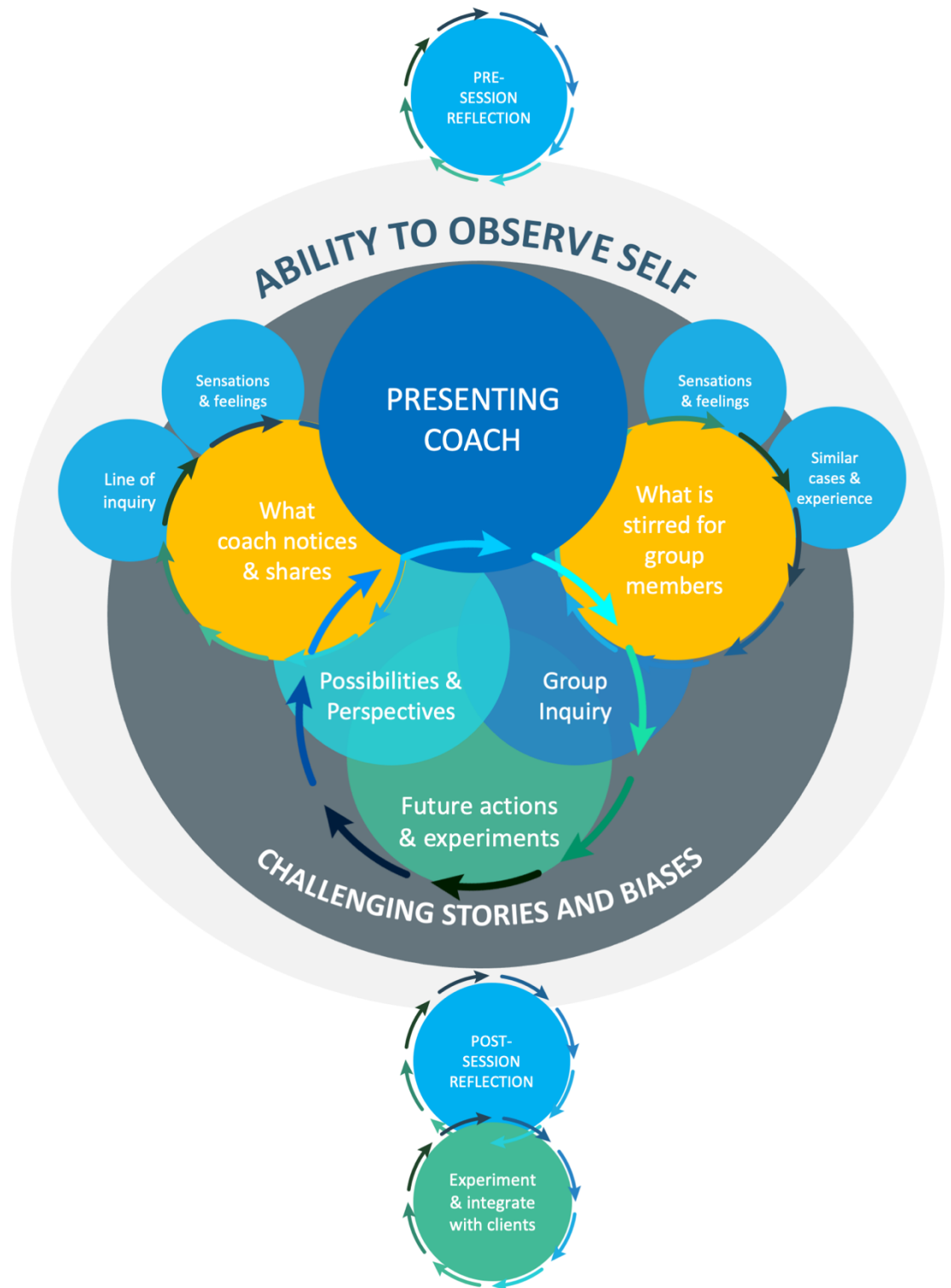
Figure 27: In-session Reflection Cycles

Our learning did not map to the calendar. The coaches articulated their learning in 3 moments each month: reflections coming into the session, within the session and in the journaling. This does not reflect the totality of what may have been learned or continues to be learned by each participant; it reflects what was disclosed or observed. The learning cycle is "a continuous recursive spiral of learning" (Kolb, 2015, p.61). The figure below illustrates the potential for continuous learning and reflection.
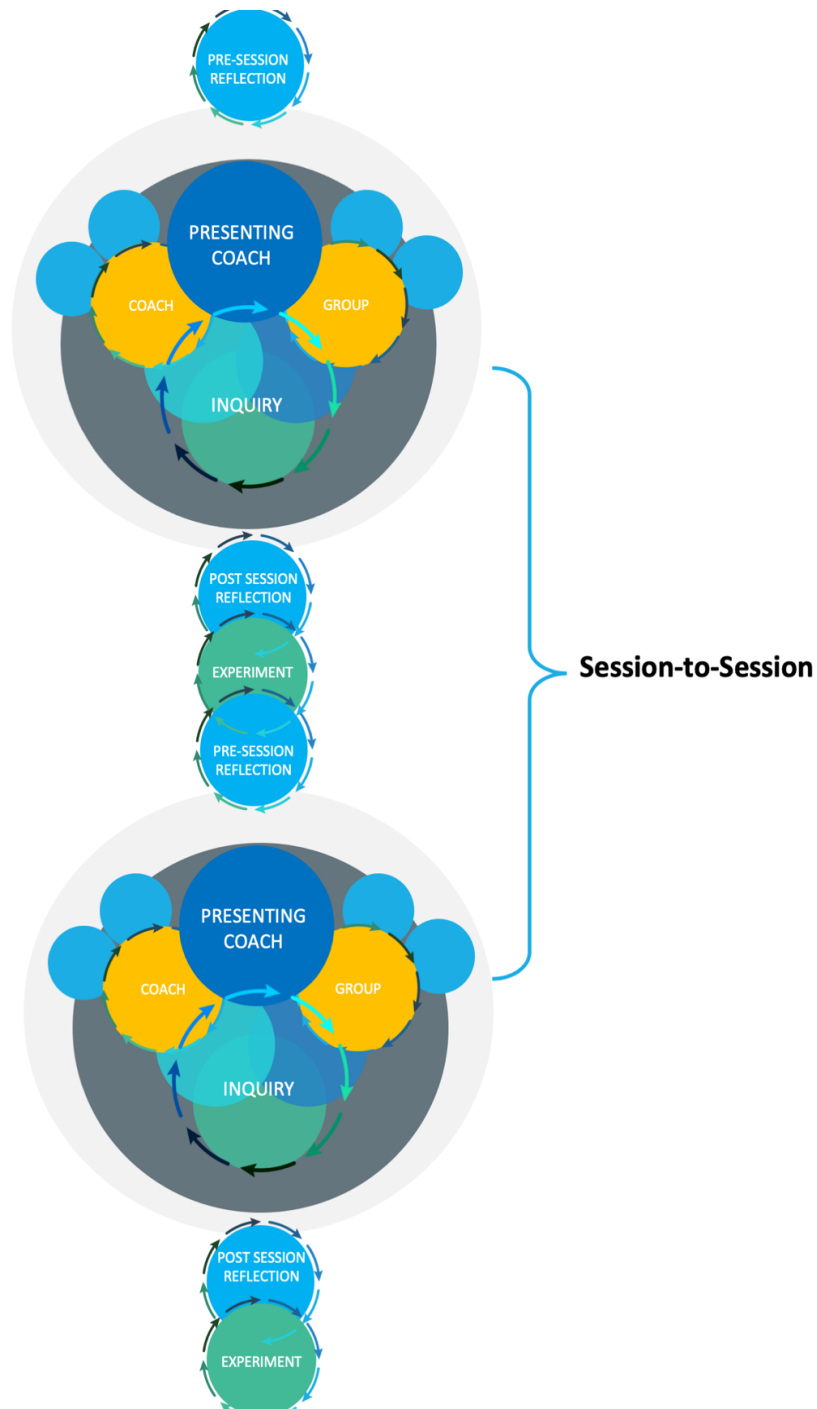
Figure 28: The Reflection and Learning Cycles

Influence and impact: Sharing the reflective practice model with participants and other supervision groups

In my final meetings with the five groups, as I described in the last chapter, I shared an earlier version of the reflective practice model. I asked the groups to listen for whether it felt true to their experiences. They confirmed that it did represent their experiences. No participant raised an issue or concern.

The supervisors' and coaches' responses to the reflective practice model was one of enthusiasm for a new articulation of what was going on in the supervision sessions. They had grasped aspects of what I described but had not understood it as I presented it. Their experiences felt more disjointed than the model. Two consistent responses were that cultivating one's ability to observe one's self was crucial, and they appreciated understanding for the first time all that was possible in reflective practice within the sessions. Comments included:

- "in awe of the distillation of these reflection practices and while it seems sort of emergent in the moment…there is really a purpose and thoughtfulness put into the questions you are asking us…"
- "biggest benefit…is that this is practice space…becoming more self-aware and how we show up"
- "as you talk through this, yes, yes and yes…often reflection is an individual practice and supervision makes it collective"
- "value adds for us as we figure out how to maximize this supervision experience"

I have integrated the reflective practice model into my ongoing supervision. I have introduced it to my longer-term groups, and with new groups, I introduced it about 6-8 sessions into the year when they have had enough supervision experiences to be able to consider what connects with them. Each time, there are insights, curiosities and resonance. It often broadens the coaches' perspectives of what is actually possible within supervision. On occasion I can sense the "settling into" a greater ease of the experience; or an overwhelm at all of the possible moving parts. A list of webinars where I have shared my findings is set out in Appendix 13.

Outcomes: The coaches learning

Coaches learned and developed in supervision, in small, experiential or transformative ways in service to the continuing personal and professional growth.

The reasons for coaching supervision are personal and professional growth. Was this accomplished in these sessions? What were the learning outcomes of these year-long engagements in supervision? Are these the questions to start with? We joined the participants for several months out of their several decades of life experience. We stayed with them only for this limited period and they continued on their journeys (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). It was their declarations, in the sessions, in the journaling, in the action learning meetings or focus groups that enabled me to write about the learning they claimed at those moments in time. I brought my own observational skills to frame what other learning may have occurred— and I offer those instances— as well as what I perceived as obstacles to potential learning.

Group composition impact on learning

Group composition had an impact on the learning and development that occurred; actively coaching coaches appeared to have learned more in a group with others with robust coaching practices than with emerging coaches; whether this was true with groups with coaches who had been active and had moved on to other endeavors is not clear.

In the Creating Community Group, the most experienced coach explicitly claimed experiential and transformational learning in her coaching practice. The other members articulated that their significant learning was about how to be in relationship and create a "safe harbor" to be with others with the fullness of their personal lives. They learned about showing up, being more authentic, and being in relationship. They took what they learned into their current context of work and life, rather than implementation in the coaching context. "Taking action itself involves the significant and distinctive process of instrumental learning, which can become decisive for successful transformational learning" (Mezirow, 1991, p.197).

Their participation created the space for them to learn how to observe themselves and begin to practice reflection; they were on the journey to becoming reflective practitioners.

However, the actively coaching coach had an experience in coaching supervision that was less substantive than if she had been in a group of similarly situated coaches. I hold three tension points as a supervisor about the culture within the supervision center that had supervisee-led group membership which came from our respect and honoring of adult learning principles (Knowles, Holton, and Swanson, 2015).

1. How were we, as supervisors, considering the membership composition in each group?
2. Was there a lack of appropriate boundaries around enrolment in the supervision groups?
3. Was the community so cohesive that the actively coaching coaches were reluctant to exclude existing members based on life transitions?

Coyle (2018) advocates that team members be chosen carefully, and weeded out (p.81), in the context of teams working together in organizations toward shared goals. Here the stated shared collective goal was the personal and professional development of the group members; yet was this true for those who had moved away from the coaching profession to other endeavors, including retirement? What was the collective accountability for the coaches who were seeking this development; if there was not accountability to the non-coaching group members for their own development, were there any ways for them to be accountable for contributing to the growth and development of the coaches actively coaching? Block (2009) states that "an invitation at its best must contain a hurdle or demand if accepted" which suggests the actively coaching demand would be appropriate in his approach (p.118); merely showing up would be insufficient.

Reflective practice for emerging coaches

There is learning for emerging coaches in coaching supervision.

Clutterbuck and Megginson, (2011) developed a coaching maturity model, Hawkins and Shohet (2012) and Sheppard (2016) have proposed maturity models for coaching supervisees, identifying the different inquiries and focus the relatively newer coaches may have in supervision as contrasted with more experienced coaches. Sheppard (2016) observed 3 levels of supervisee's development— the novice, the experienced and the very experienced, intended to be useful to both the supervisor's approach and to the supervisee's self-understanding. In these models, it is assumed the coach is actively coaching.

I propose there is an earlier stage—one of "emerging coaches" that includes coaches who have completed their certification, were engaged in other endeavors (full time work, transitioning into retirement from full time employment, pausing for health reasons) and intended to coach in the future. These coaches sought coaching supervision, invested their time and money, for the learning community, to keep their familiarity with the coaching methodology and to have opportunities to think through client situations. The demand for this exists, whether it is coaching supervision or reflective practice for emerging coaches.

Ethical Considerations and Findings

One-on-one interactions outside the group

It was useful, in limited circumstances, for the supervisor to engage one on one with a group member, outside the full group setting.

The context in which one-on-one interactions occurred with a group member outside of the group fell generally into two buckets. The first was when there was a possible relationship breach between the supervisor and one of the coaches. For example, I responded if they had reached out to discuss and I initiated when I was feeling there might be an issue. If the breach was apparent to the group, I asked the coach to share the

resolution in the next group session. The second was when the coach personally initiated communication with the supervisor about a personal matter, e.g., a shame storm, not feeling valued by the group. I did not specifically contract for this with these groups and I think it should have been. I do know that the other supervisors had one-on-one conversations when it felt appropriate to them; I do not know if they explicitly contracted for this.

In my community of supervisors, the supervision engagement is structured for multiple interactions: the supervisor and full group in the monthly supervision sessions, the group without the supervisor in the monthly peer learning calls, emails continuing discussions or raising issues for on-the-spot supervision by email, leaving it up to the coach which emails go to the full group and which to the peer learning group. In addition, the coaches sometimes have interconnected relationships outside of the group. We had discussed the issues that might arise within the group dynamics where there is one-on-one communication and as a group of supervisors concluded this practice was more useful to the supervisory relationships than harmful.

Protecting confidentialities

The use of video recordings of clients requires precise contracting to ensure confidentiality and the appropriate deletion of the recordings. The distribution of client session video recordings to the group for advance listening raised greater confidentiality concerns. I contracted with the group about retention only for the few days before the session and deletion of the recordings following the session.

My project proposal, as approved, contained the commitments to protect the confidentialities of the participants and the identities of clients in any recorded coaching session; the Informed Consents incorporated these commitments. The recordings of the supervision sessions, in which we listened or watched a portion of the client coaching session were edited, and the transcripts were redacted, to remove the client session.

Adult learning – balance of accountability and acceptance

In my researcher role, I acted ethically in accepting the decisions of the participants on what they would experiment with in their supervision sessions.

I was puzzling over whether the role of researcher, as compared with the supervisor role, required more accountability with participants. The research agreements, in the Informed Consent, stated "You will be asked, as a group, to experiment at least once with each of three observational approaches: the use of live-action coaching, transcripts and recordings of actual client sessions." In the first meetings I had with each group, I stated that I hoped they would experiment. One group, supervised by a colleague, had decided not to proceed with the use of recordings. I wondered about my role as researcher and about my relationships with them. My initial stance was to accept what they decided; I could not imagine how to "require" this in any event.

I was learning how to be a researcher and noticed my worry and frustration about getting it approximately correct. A critical friend in academia in the US had advised me that I had a responsibility to ensure all the participants engaged as asked. I returned to living the principles of adult learning—that if the process was going to be meaningful for them, it would have to be their decision, when they were ready, in recognition of the value the learning could provide and motivated by the service to the profession and to their own development (Knowles, Holton, and Swanson, 2015, pp.43-47).

As an insider-researcher, one element of designing the research was to "give a say to all participants" (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010, p.6). What they were saying was no recordings. They did not see a need to learn a new method; they had been engaged in meaningful and supportive supervision for 5-6 years. They did not see any value in experimenting and the group reported a variety of barriers both in time and client relationships. They articulated the fears of disrupting their patterns within the group and of negative feedback. At the same time, they were innovating their ways of using live-action coaching methods, and they used the transcript brought by one coach. The most

important consideration for insider-practitioners is the duty of care, of approaching the research with a caring approach in each relationship and interaction (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010, p.43). I accepted their decisions.

Potential harm to participants

There was no harm incurred by the participants through the research process. In the second and third meetings with the groups I inquired if the participation in the research was having any impact on them. Some of the responses were that they had forgotten about it as it wasn't something they talked about. More of the responses were that it had not had any impact. A few coaches said that it had a positive impact as they were more awake to their practice because of the opportunity to contribute to the profession.

The research happened within a commercial arrangement

As the researcher in my relationships with the participants I prioritized that they were engaged in a commercial arrangement for supervision. As noted earlier, my agreement with the sponsoring organization was that the research would take place within the standard commercial relationship. The coaches would pay the standard rates for supervision; the supervisors would be paid the standard rates for supervising; I was being paid to supervise the Creating Community Group. The only group that was excepted from this arrangement was the pilot group (which was renamed the Daring Group) as it was expected to only be a three-session pilot.

I have been mindful to ensure the supervision purposes were primary; that the commercial arrangements between the sponsoring organization and the participants were not negatively impacted by the research asks, and that the brand of the organization was appropriately represented. One measure that this was successfully accomplished is that coaches in four of the groups renewed for another year, although some individual participants, for personal reasons (e.g., retirement, pursuing a Ph.D., running a company) did not. In the fifth group, two of the three coaches had transitioned out of coaching, so they did not renew, independent of their participation in the research.

This concludes my findings. In the next chapter I share my conclusions and my evolving theory of practice.

Chapter 10: Conclusions

"There is another sense in which learning can be coming home, for the process of learning turns a strange context into a familiar one, and finally into a habituation of mind and heart. The world we live in is the one we are able to perceive; it becomes gradually more intelligible and more accessible with the building up of coherent mental models. Learning to know a community or a landscape is a homecoming".

(Bateson, 1994, p.213)

In this Chapter, I set out the conclusions, discuss their contributions to the theory, their contributions to the knowledge of practice, their integration into my theory of practice, the limitations of the study and additional research opportunities. It is my homecoming as a supervisor. As I have shared, my ultimate inquiry emerged from the experiences of the combined roles of researcher and participating supervisor. These provided the unique perspectives to consider the theoretical, and the practice implications for myself as well as for the profession.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p.189) developed a four-part description of the narrative inquiry space, that begins with "living" and "telling" our stories. We began with "living" in supervision, in the actual sessions. This distinguishes the research – this is not based on interviews or stories after the fact. This is based on being in the room while the supervision happened. The "telling" was in our actions throughout the year and in our reflections and was enhanced with the telling of the stories of the three colleague groups.

In the discussions within the action learning meetings, the actions we took to modify how we worked going forward, and in designing the next year of supervision we were "retelling" the stories; "we see that we are changed as we retell our lived and told stories" (Clandinin, 2016, p.34). The colleague groups shared their retelling in the focus groups. The retelling continued through multiple drafts of writing the field texts and research texts, including the Chapter in the book on coaching supervision about the use of observational data (Downing, 2019). It has continued in the writing of this thesis. The fourth position is one of "reliving", as I have relived the project, I have retold what

happened and have shifted my narratives of "the institutional, social and cultural narratives" in which I am a part (Clandinin, 2016, p.34). These broader shifts are represented in this Chapter as I set out the conclusions, the identification of the contributions to theory and practice, and in the changes to how I supervise.

Contributions to knowledge of practice and theory

The research makes two contributions to the knowledge of practice. The first is the effectiveness of virtual small group supervision—when a supervisor and coaches come together virtually in a small group, they learn and develop in their own unique ways, personally and professionally, through integration of inquiry, reflection and action. The second is a number of practitioner accounts which enables practitioners to contrast and compare with how they engage in their work. These stories are instrumental in inviting coaches with little or no supervision experience to consider how they might utilize supervision in small groups to deepen their reflective practices. This is the invitation to North American coaches. More experienced practitioners are able to engage in multi-dimensional conversations to explore and enrich the practice of small group supervision.

The contributions to theory are to the understanding of the dimensions of the supervisory relationship within the small group context, as the primacy of the supervisory relationships in the group setting were identified. The supervisory relationships included the individual relationships among the group members and the supervisor: the supervisor with each individual coach, the supervisor with the group as a whole, and the coaches with each other. This research contributes to the knowledge of the qualities required for the creation and stewardship of a safe and trusted container with a small group engaged in reflective practice. Key findings include the articulation of the process for the supervision engagement, a model of the elements the supervisor is holding, a model of reflective practice and learning opportunities, and a model of the overall supervision session.

I propose a process for the supervision engagement, a model for the elements the supervisor is holding, a model for reflective practice and learning opportunities, and a model of the overall movements within the session. These demonstrate processes and methods to respond to the challenge to supervisors by Michael Carroll (2009, p.50) to work with their supervisees to learn how to be reflective practitioners.

The research addressed five theoretical gaps in the coaching supervision literature on small group supervision in the lack of stories of the lived experiences of:

1. coaches and supervisors in small groups
2. the primary importance and complexity of supervisory relationships and the elements that contribute to relationships
3. the creation of the container, how it ebbs and flows, and the stewardship required
4. how supervision happens in the virtual world
5. the reflective and learning practices in virtual small groups.

Set out in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 are the retelling of the living we did in the groups; in Chapter 8 are the five Principles of Good Practice for creating the safe and trusted, living and vibrant garden, including tending the circumstances and situations that negatively impacted part of the garden. In Chapter 9 are the six reflective and learning practices enabled by the Principles of Good Practice, a few elements specific to group dynamics and ethical considerations.

Original Purposes and Aims Achieved

My overall purpose was to favorably influence the adoption of coaching supervision within North America by sharing the opportunities and possibilities for growth and development through small group reflective practice with a certified supervisor. I wanted to make contributions to the practice of virtual small group coaching supervision by elucidating what actually happened in the groups; and to contribute to addressing the gap in research-based literature.

My personal motivations were to engage in a higher level of challenge in my personal and professional development; and to articulate my theory of practice through intentional exploration, in a formal research setting, of who I was, how I was and what I did as a supervisor.

My aims were to utilize the research experience to

- enhance my capacities as a supervisor
- to become an inquiring practitioner, to embody the interplay of academia and knowledge areas with my practice experiences
- to influence how supervision is conducted in my community
- to share with the global supervisor communities what was learned; and
- as a platform to invite North American coaches to consider supervision as part of their development

As shared in this Chapter, and in the final Chapter, my capabilities and capacities as a supervisor have been enhanced and continue to develop through my inquiring practitioner stance. As I share the results of my research, and undertake faculty positions within certification programmes, I am enriching the dialogues and thinking about group supervision. I am beginning to engage as a supervisor and supervision trainer in North America and will do so robustly with the publication of my first book which explores how inquiries happen in small groups. This is the focus for my invitation for North American coaches to learn more about supervision and the benefits of group co-inquiry.

With respect to changes within the Sponsor's Supervision Center through dialogue and discussion with my colleagues, the following themes emerged:

- some of the supervisors are using the recordings of their sessions to review, reflect and learn
- several of us are now inviting coaches to bring moments of sessions when they feel in flow to identify what shifts they notice in the journey toward mastery
- we have agreement that there are times when-one to-one communication outside of the full group are appropriate and we contract for that with the group

- some of the supervisors are experimenting in the sessions, with the permission of the group

Aims

Over the year of research with the supervision groups, the aims of this project evolved to these two inquiries: What are the qualities and conditions that create enough safety in the supervision relationships within a group to enable self-disclosure, reflection and learning? How are these qualities and conditions designed and brought forth?

These two inquiries have been robustly answered. Figure 29 below sets out the full process.
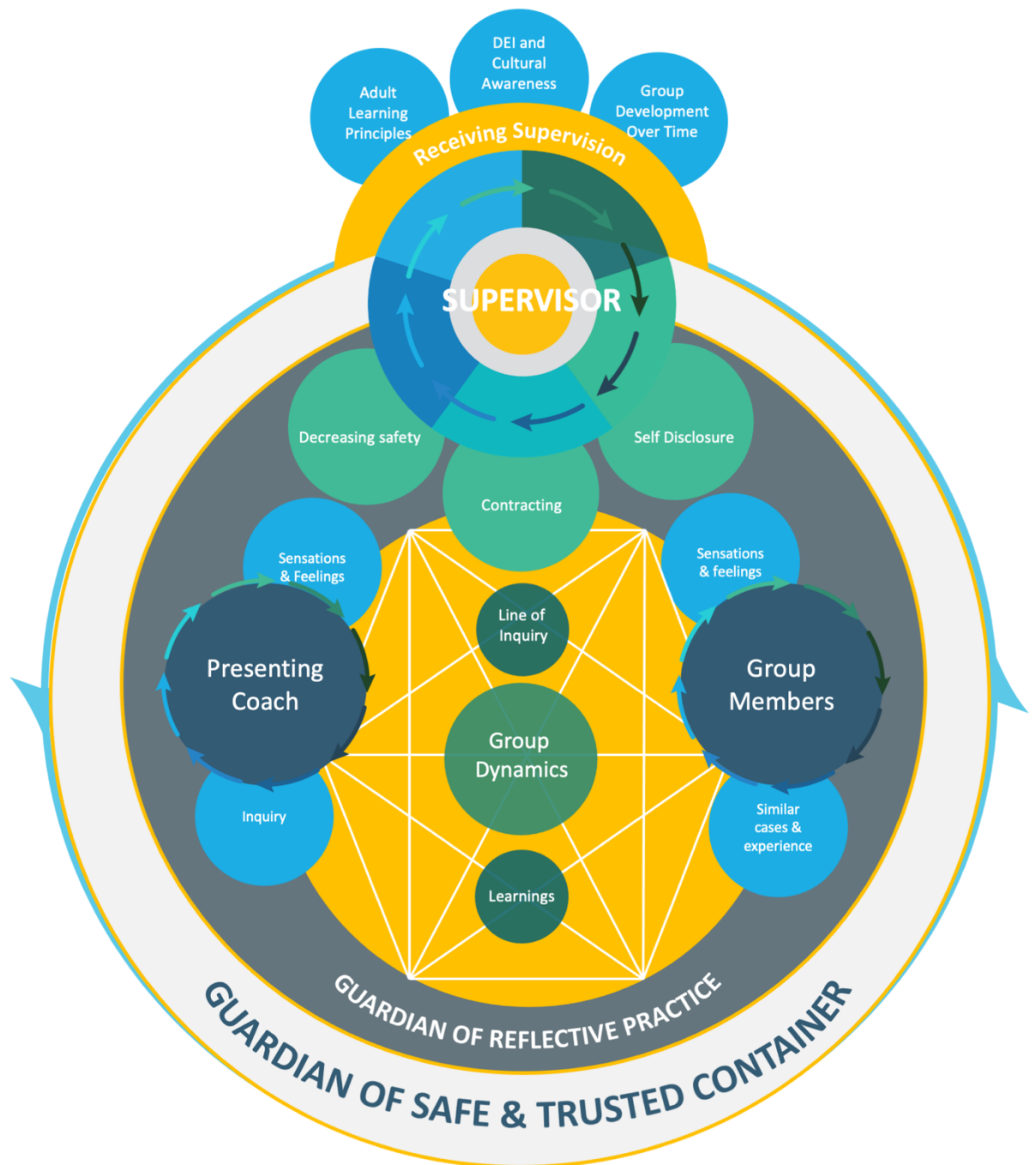
Figure 29: Full Process View of Group Supervision

Supervisor and coaches came together virtually, in a small group, and learned and developed personally and professionally through integration of inquiry, reflection, experimentation, and action.

The supervisor invited the collaborative co-creation of the qualities and conditions of the container for self-disclosure, reflection and learning based on their relationships, contracting, shared purpose, and interactions. That invitation was the beginning of the creation of the container. The responsive moves by each member contributed to the design and were early glimpses into their needs and expectations.

The supervisory relationships were the most important element in the co-creation of the garden. They were complex and variable, requiring artful facilitation and navigation of inter-relational dynamics among each group member, the group and the supervisor. Artful meant attention and awareness of what was in play. The supervisor was an in-the-moment observer, witness and participant in the shaping and reshaping of the garden. The supervisees had important roles and responsibilities as co-inquirers and were ultimately learning to be co-supervisors.

It was a living container over the course of the 18 months of research. The structures and processes were crafted through initial and continuous contracting. The container was shaped and reshaped by experiences: individual narratives and circumstances prior to and within the group; interactions, content and processes within the session; length of time together and the influence of societal, national and global developments. In the reshaping, one or more coaches or the supervisor experienced a change in the level of trust or safety. The felt sense of safety could shift in distinct ways, e.g., one coach could feel safer, another could feel unsafe, and another could have no sense of a change.

As part of the overall findings and conclusions on the co-creation and stewardship of the container, I offered six theoretical concepts, set out in Chapters 8 and 9, that were developed from the experiences of the participants:

1. the supervisory relationships in small groups
2. the elements the supervisor is holding within the groups
3. multiple levels of contracting required
4. process and structure of small group supervision
5. the reflective and learning practices model
6. The full process model

Contrast and Comparison for Supervisors and Coaches

Our hope is to create research texts that allow audiences to engage in resonant remembering as they lay their experiences alongside the inquiry experiences, to wonder alongside participants and researchers…" (Clandinin, 2016, p.51)

There are four groups of coaching supervision practitioners who may be enriched in thoughts, ideas and reflections, by this research.

First, for supervisors. Experienced supervisors will have the opportunity to be in the room with these two groups and consider their practices, how they view supervisory relationships, facilitate group dynamics, structure the sessions, or explain what is happening in the sessions. By comparing and contrasting with all five groups, they are able to see more about how they supervise and consider a reflective inquiry into their theories of practice.

Supervisors who have not supervised in the small group setting will have the opportunity to experience the rich details of the vignettes, consider the findings and take ideas and approaches to consider, to evaluate in the context of their supervision models and to experiment within their setting.

Second, for coaches who are considering or already in small group supervision, this research may open up possibilities for them to engage differently, perhaps more robustly as they consider the co-creation of the container, the relationships within the group and with the supervisor. They may select a practice, such as having a reflection question ahead of the session, or experimenting with live-action coaching, or journaling following the session to explore the impact on their reflection and learning.

Third, for both supervisors and coaches who are new to virtual small group work, this provides an approach to virtual supervision that can be tailored to the learning needs of the participants.

Fourth, for supervisor training programs. In my role as faculty at a supervisor certification program in the UK I have been asked to incorporate my research into teaching the module and the webinar on group supervision. Others, with supervisor training responsibilities may find useful theories and practice ideas.

I hope that this may also provide useful food for thought to supervisors working in small groups in other professions.

My theory of practice

In setting out my theory of practice I am "reliving" the full inquiry of the project, taking in all of the living, telling and retelling (Clandinin, 2016, p.34). I am living fully into "Who you are is how you supervise" (Murdoch and Arnold, 2013). My new ways of being are infusing my stance as supervisor with more aliveness, vitality, playfulness, lightness, humor, and courage. When I started at Middlesex, I was a new supervisor and a new researcher. Today, almost five years later, I am settled into the journey.

I am emerging as a very different lifelong learner, one who is integrating practice and research. I am awake in different ways than ever before. My gifts, as a supervisor, have become more visible, more integrated, more embodied. They are grace, gratitude, attentiveness, awake- ness, finely tuned empathy, ability to be in relationship, lifelong learner and curious inquirer of my professional and personal endeavors. Still in my shadow are deference, performance, self-doubt, and a quieter inner critic. These continue to be my development edges; I hold them with affection as I move forward. I know that as long as I practice, I will be in supervision of my work.

Explication of the process of supervision—my theory of practice

I know how to co-create, with the coaches, a flexible, robust, and living container. My definition is that it includes collaboration, meaningful dialogue and robust inquiry into the coaches' practices, while providing ethical guardrails, and assisting coaches who need resourcing. Here is what I do in supervision. I take the time to contract with the coaches

on their needs, I use experimentation and exploration about how we learn together, what processes serve our learning, and facilitating how the coaches interact with each other.

I believe in the importance of how long we have been together, our past and current relationships and our commitment to our own participation. My preference is to constitute groups that are comprised of coaches with approximately equivalent engagement in coaching.

The process invited coaches to bring their work into the sessions. The self-exploration provided space for them to bring issues of stress, depletion, burn-out, and other concerns. Since the research groups concluded the year, I have increasingly invited coaches to bring their good work into the sessions.

As another way of presenting who I am as a supervisor, I have written the stories of my current theory of practice, using the metaphor of a play "Acts of Love". It is set out in Appendix 15.

Limitations

This is small scale qualitative research.

All of the coaches had only experienced supervision virtually; the four supervisors had only supervised virtually. There may be distinctions that could be made by those who have worked in person.

All of the participants were trained and certified as coaches by the same organization. There may be limitations because we shared one collective approach to coaching.

Potential research

There are a number of other field texts analyses that are possible. A few examples—what were the categories of inquiries brought by the coaches and how did they change or

evolve during the inquiry, what might be discovered if the experiences were interpreted through the lens of other models such as the 7 eyed model (Hawkins, 2011), the coaching maturity model (Clutterbuck and Megginson, 2011), a comparative analysis of the approaches, structures and processes across the four supervisors; the self as coach domains (McLean, 2019).

There is a need for additional research on small group coaching supervision that could include:

- Studies of in-person small group coaching supervision
- Studies of virtual small group coaching supervision with coaches who were trained and certified by other organizations
- Studies from the perspectives of coaching supervisors – what are their challenges, training, key issues with small groups
- Studies from the perspectives of the clients of the coaches – did they perceive shifts in the coach's approach or relationship with them

In the next and final Chapter, I reflect on this journey.

Chapter 11: Reflections on this journey

"I have begun to wonder if the secret of living well is not in having all the answers but in pursuing unanswerable questions in good company".

Rachel Naomi Remen (2000, p.337)

It's all perfect

I imagined this inquiry would encompass my professional life; I would understand more about who and how I am as a supervisor. I do; the journey touched every facet of my life, enabling personal and professional growth. The drive to become an inquiring practitioner, over the last almost five years, has resulted in being awake to the many layers of complexity in my practice. I have become adept at moving in and out of academic literature, curious about what may be going on, energetically using my felt sense, intellect and heart, able to pause and reflect in the moment, experiment, observe and assess, embrace what emerges and integrate the learning into my ways of supervising. Writing this thesis provided the process for catching up with my own development.

I developed a depth of self-acceptance that was unexpected. My relationship with learning shifted in meaningful ways. I shared in Chapter 5 that I had been a life-long learner, driven by perfectionism, and wondering if I was enough as I constantly sought additional knowledge and experience to be in service to others and soothe my performance anxieties. I am now a learner for the sake of curiosity and inquiry, wonder and enchantment. I have moved into that space which Clutterbuck and Megginson (2011) describe as having the "ability to savor where you are, to contextualize it and to be able to look both forward and backward along the path" (p. 313). My internal narratives have been reshaped; I am enough.

This found sense of myself as whole, sufficient and worthy has influenced many aspects of my life. Here are the four most important ways. First, cultivating my voice. The

completion of this thesis required I trust my voice, my perceptions, and my meaning making. Second, self-acceptance. Who I am as a supervisor has been transformed by the shift from having a critical eye on my actions to an appreciation that there is learning in whatever happens in the room. Bringing the mantra "Don't you see it's all perfect?" (Dass and Das, 2013, p.104) to my own stance has minimized my negative ruminations and made room for seeking excellence while letting go of striving for perfection. Third, pursuing my goals to influence the adoption of supervision in North America. I have two new appointments, to co-lead a global Community of Practice on Coaching Supervision, and to co-lead a coaching supervisor training programme in North America. I have also accepted new opportunities to teach about group supervision in two coaching supervision programmes. Fourth, I have made major changes in my personal life. Each of these, and a myriad of other facets of my ways of being, have brought me across the threshold to a new phase of life.

My learning

Requires articulation

When I contrast how I have learned through the programme with other learning throughout my adult life, two things stand out. First, learning within formal programmes, whether a certification program, a course, or supervision of my practice, with opportunities to practice, experiment, assess, reflect, redesign and integrate, have been effective. I have developed as a leader, as an executive coach, and coaching supervisor with these approaches. Second, and more importantly for my continuing development, I have learned, in this endeavor, that I advance as a practitioner and as a human, when there are compelling reasons to synthesize and articulate what I have experienced and learned. It was in the retelling and reliving (Clandinin, 2016) that deeper transformation happened within me.

Is inhibited by deference

I knew at the outset, as I explained in Chapter 1, that I learn in community. The dialogue, the differing voices, the opening of perspectives, the challenges and encouragement all contributed. I have had a healthy amount of deference, particularly to those I respected and admired, and who were my elders, not necessarily by age, but by my perceptions of their wisdom and knowledge. Deference was to leaders, teachers, authors, colleagues and practitioners. Deference was the other half of the fierce inner critic who faulted my own performance; deference was putting others on pedestals of perfection. I trusted what they knew, often more than I trusted myself.

A fascinating conundrum is that while this was true in the worlds of coaching and coaching supervision, it was never true in my corporate career where I was almost always trusting of myself over others. I found those parts of me that trust myself in my present endeavors through this project.

Requires balanced inner voices

My fierce inner critic was a traveling companion for much of this journey. It had taken up residence with me very early in my life. I had less balance within my inner voices – the critic, the encourager, the learner, the young student, the seasoned human. I was often 150% critical of my actions as a newer supervisor and first-time researcher, compelled by the passion for improvement. I failed to acknowledge many of my attributes. Fortunately, through the years I had cultivated reservoirs of resilience necessary to sustain the determination to complete what I had undertaken. It made the learning more challenging; the performance anxieties inhibited the process. What I understand and have internalized, as mentioned above, is the balance of voices within me, the inner critic wanting excellence, the encourager being kind, the voices of self-acceptance, which will facilitate more ease, fun and lightness in the learning going forward.

Requires reflective spaces

The quote that captures my commitment to reflective practice:

*The range of what we think and do is limited by what we fail to notice.
And because we fail to notice that we fail to notice, there is little we can
do to change; until we notice how failing to notice shapes our thoughts
and deeds.*

(R.D. Laing, cited in Seymour, Crain & Crockett. 1993, p.53)

I had consistently engaged in reflective practice with myself, with a psychoanalyst, and through engaging in supervision of my coaching and supervision practices. Those practices deepened with the applications of my learning through this project. I have added to these practices. I used two written reflective practices through journaling and writing meditations; the meditations were a process I developed while in the research. I used watercolors – taking paintbrush to paper with a simple set of paints, to see what images emerged in contemplation. Through the course of the research, images came to me in this way and opened up new perspectives on the field texts. Each of these practices enabled me to access different parts of myself – my mind, my body, my heart and my spirit. No single one would have been sufficient. I did not engage in any one method every day; I listened for what was calling me, and what was in my diary (e.g., supervision).

The shift to appreciating myself opened up panoramas of new reflections and learning.

Requires communities

As I have mentioned throughout this thesis, I learn in community. As I consider the landscape of communities of practice (Wenger-Trayner, *et.al.,* 2015), I appreciate the ones that I was part of as I came into this program, and those that have developed.

There were over the last five years important ones that included supervision of my supervision; the faculty at the supervisor training academy; my colleagues within the supervision center; my supervision clients and the laboratory we co-created in our engagements, and the ones that will emerge with my new appointments. I know how to

engage in these as they are similar to other communities of practice that comprised work colleagues, clients, and non-profit sector colleagues. What I did not know how to do was to engage with the academic literature as an equal.

One of the purposes of undertaking this project, as with most doctoral research projects, was to learn about, and work with the academic literature. To transition from a reader, to a stance of being in dialogue with the authors, comparing and contrasting my thoughts, ways of being, practice and knowledge with theirs. My deference tendencies showed up strongly as I was studying in the certification programme to become a supervisor, and again as I engaged in the research, dipping into a variety of academic fields to read widely. I was in the grip of deference, initially, as I read about concepts such as ontologies and epistemologies. Terminologies and conceptual framing that were new to me that did not feel related to my practice. I came to realize they were inherent and embedded in my theories of practice, in my approach to the research, in my approach to the field texts, and interwoven in my writing. I could, over time and then quite suddenly, visualize myself at a round table of the authors, engaged in dialogue, appreciating what they brought as well as what I was contributing to the collective knowledge.

Interestingly I find it important to state that visualizing myself at the table means that I am able to deeply listen, question, and add what I have experienced and learned; to assess and evaluate; to pull pieces to experiment with; to challenge, rather than accept on face value as "truth".

Requires play and laughter

Finishing this thesis in the times of COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement have reminded me of the importance play and laughter as I am sheltering in place, locked in by governmental orders, holding the convictions that taking care of my community and myself requires adherence to the rules and guidelines. Play and laughter are required and have been throughout. Of course, the avenues for such were much easier pre-COVID. Yet, we know that all mammals play (Brown and Vaughan, 2009). The integration of theatre, music, movies, books, travel, adventures, friends and family have never been as

important as they are in this moment, when none of these can be done in person with others.

In conclusion

"…writing is a human and a living art, the beginning being the motive and the end the object of the work, each inspires it; each runs through organically, and the two between them give life to what you do".

(Belloc, 1908, location 16359)

I am a traveler along the path toward mastery. It has been a privilege, a delight, and a joy to engage in learning and becoming a doctoral level researcher. I feel incredible gratitude. I have become a different supervisor, a different human being. This is a contribution to the field of coaching, supervision and reflective practice; it will open potential and possibilities, and perhaps more importantly, be a call toward new lines of inquiry, curiosity, and the wonder of our practice.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Sponsor Agreement and Relationships

███████████████

December 9, 2016

Kathryn M. Downing
Galileo Coaching
121 Via Alicia
Santa Barbara, CA 93108

Dear Kathryn,

I am personally delighted and pleased to support your research proposal titled "Bringing one's self fully into supervision: Moving beyond storytelling in developing our self as the instrument of our coaching ". I am providing you this letter of support to be submitted as part of your full research proposal to The Programme Approval Panel and Research Ethics Sub-Committee of the Institute for Work Based Learning at Middlesex University, London.

We will support your research with selected resources within the ███████████████ and our community of coaches because this will be unique research that contributes to the small but growing evidence base for coaching supervision. Our participation will allow us to support your research. It may provide participants experience with potential new approaches and knowledge. This will be one of the first qualitative research projects to focus on coaching supervision in the North American context and certainly the first to specifically conduct research on coaching supervision within the ███████████████ Coaching community.

I agree completely with the two reasons you shared when you inquired about ███████████████ ███████████ supporting your research.

- First, ██████ is on the forefront of integrating supervision into its culture. It is the only coach certification organization in the US to interweave concepts of supervision into the coach training program and to offer supervision to its graduates through the ███████████████
- Second, we are your practice community. You are a ██████ certified coach, an External Mentor Coach for our coach certification program, a supervisor within our Supervision Center, a member of the leadership team and you work with us in a variety of subcontracting roles. In as much as you are conducting research from the perspective of a practitioner researcher which is one who does the research within their organizational and practice context, it is appropriate for us to support you.

I would add that I am eager for the development of research into executive coaching and coaching supervision and welcome the opportunity to support new research.

I know you well and trust your integrity, intellect and commitment to the development of the executive coaching and coaching supervision professions. In my own experience with research, ethical issues sometimes arise during the project and if they do, we will work collaboratively with you to resolve them.

In support, we commit to do the following when the research proposal has been presented to and received formal approval to proceed from the Project Approval Panel and Research Ethics Subcommittee of the Institute for Work Based Learning at Middlesex University, London.

███████████████

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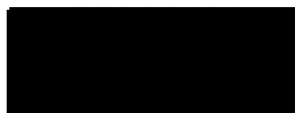
1. Invite members of the ████████████████ community to consider volunteering as research participants in two supervision-research groups in the Fall 2017. This means that both of the supervisors, and each of the supervisees would volunteer to participate in the research as well as the supervision.
2. Provide information about the opportunity to participate to the community through email, newsletters, information on our website, and informational calls. You will provide the text and context for each of these communications, you will conduct the informational calls and we will provide the distribution through email and the links on our website.
3. We will develop, and you will reimburse us for the costs incurred, in setting up a "microsite" on our website, or the incremental costs of using Coach Logix as a "microsite" for the research participants. The content will be discussions initiated by participants and you will be responsible for managing their comments and responding as appropriate.
4. We will organize, invoice and send the standard pre-work to all supervisee-participants, collect the fees and pay the supervisor-participants at our standard commercial rates. We will provide the Zoom technology for each of the supervision groups, standard calendaring and logistical support.
5. We will collaborate on the selection of participants, and I will provide the Informed Consent to each participant, collect and store them. You will notify us when each of the two supervision research groups is ready to begin.
6. You plan to meet with each supervision group 4 times during the year of research.
7. We will provide you with the research participants' names and contact information. You will utilize this information only for purposes of the research project. You agree not to provide the names and contact information to any others, to keep them confidential and to delete them following the conclusion of your research.
8. We agree that you may disclose that the research was conducted within the ████████████ ██████ community in sharing your research, the research process, the results, in your dissertation, publications, in workshops and other communications. You must state that this does not imply concurrence, approval or endorsement by us.
9. All research results and the corresponding intellectual property rights will be owned solely by you. You agree to respect, and give proper reference, to all intellectual property and assets of the ████████████████████████████████████.
10. We will sign the appropriate confidentiality and operational agreement consistent with the provisions in this letter.

Kathryn, all of us at █████ look forward to supporting you on this journey.

Warm regards,

████████████████ .

████████████

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Relationships with the Sponsor 2017-present
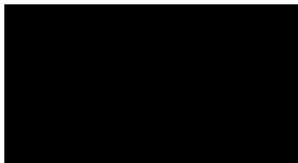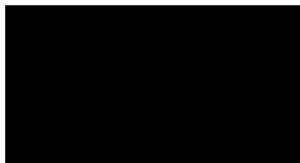
Activity	Compensation	Contract With Sponsor	Paid by
External Mentor Coach - Coach certification program - ongoing	Yes	Yes - verbal	Sponsor
Supervisor – Supervision Center- ongoing	Yes	Yes - verbal	Sponsor
Participate in monthly group supervision of my supervision with other members of the Supervision Center.	No	Yes- verbal	Sponsor pays the supervisor who supervises the group
Leadership Team - ongoing	In kind	No	Sponsor
Subcontractor – executive coaching - ongoing	Yes	Yes- written	Sponsor
Subcontractor – supervisor - ongoing	Yes	Yes- written	Sponsor
Coaching – participants in coaching certification program - ongoing	Yes	No	Participants
Pre-conference workshop – one time	Yes	Yes, written	Sponsor

Appendix 2: Positionality and Focus Groups

<u>Findings about research process</u>

In addition to the findings set out in the thesis, about the supervision experiences, I discovered two additional findings, both about the research process. The first was that I was not in an insider position with respect to the three groups supervised by my colleagues. The second was that my meetings with those groups, were not action learning meetings; rather they were focus groups. I explain both of these findings in the following sections.

My positionality – am I an insider-researcher?

A qualitative researcher's positionality, her relationship to the participants and whether they have shared experiences or communities is an important disclosure in order to identify and articulate bias, prejudices, mingling of our own stories, etc. (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010; Gray, 2018). "It is critical to articulate a researcher's positionality as an 'insider' by looking at 'others' (participants) similar to oneself" (Qin, 2016, p.2).

I was in relationship with my own supervision groups where I was an insider as a member of the group, and as the facilitator and supervisor. Where I was with the other groups was less clear—it increasingly felt that I was outside the groups, yet not a complete outsider. I went to the literature on insider-researcher to explore.

While the discussions in the literature are often framed with the dichotomy of insider vs outsider (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010; Coghlan and Brannick, 2014; Gray, 2018, p 321), Dwyer and Buckle (2009) building on the work of Acker (2001) and Banks (1998, cited in Dwyer and Buckle, 2009) make the case for "the space in between" (p.60). They identified a number of perspectives on the researcher's status as inside, outside, and on the continuum between those two points. The ability to build rapport with the participants, to understand their language and professional context and to be doing the research in service to their groups are important indicators of where the researcher inhabits the continuum (Acker, 2001). Considering those elements, I am closer to the

insider end of the scale as I have shared language, familiarity with the supervision context, with the practices of executive coaches and am motivated to explore the process of supervision. Yet I could also put myself closer to the outsider end of the scale as my enthusiasm for the use of recordings and transcripts in supervision had me taking "a different view than those fully encapsulated within the category" with the participants potentially viewing me as a "partial outsider" (ibid., p.11). Qualitative researchers may be part of the community of the participants, but because we are not homogeneous, we will not share all the characteristics of the participants, and similarly while we may be on the outside, we have the capacity through our research to understand and comprehend the experiences of others (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009).

My relationship to the three groups was in-between
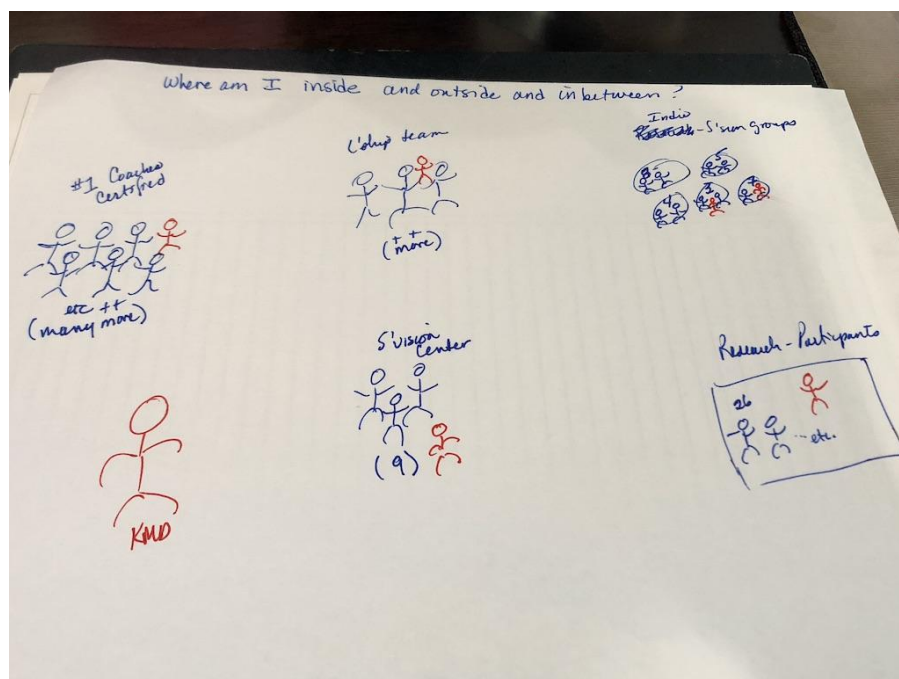
Illustration 1 Doodle in 2018

What I discovered was that the definition of my insider status was defined by my relationship with the participants in their respective groups. It was only several months into the data collection that I realized the inquiry of my positionality as insider, outsider, or other places on the continuum needed to be modified. The relationships among us as

participants in the research, in my two groups, and as researcher with all the participants throughout the data collection process must be made explicit to the reader (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, pp.94-95). The three supervisors and I are colleagues and have an insider relationship as described above. However, they were participating as the supervisors of the research groups, not as individual participants. The coaches in the groups were coaches participating in supervision of their own coaching practices. They came to the research as a group member, and the group function was for each of them to personally and professionally develop their practices. Their focus was on their relationships and work with their clients; while this work was informed by our shared training as coaches that was not their focus. They had unique practices, many as executive coaches providing services to organizations, and some as executive coaches internal to an organization. They agreed to participate to consider their processes in their group whose purpose was supervision; to consider if the use of observational experiences would be useful.

I discovered two important perspectives I had not anticipated in my relationships with participants. The first is that I would be interacting with them in groups they belonged to—my inquiries would be with each of the supervision groups; it would not be with them individually. Secondly, the literature on insider and outsider has a particular focus on the culture, issues and desire for improvement (Coghlan and Shani, 2015) and on the relationship between the researcher and the individual participants (Qin, 2016; Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Acker, 2001). Whereas our shared training and experiences were useful in my building rapport, and understanding a bit about their context, I had no familiarity with the sponsors and individuals with whom they engaged. I was interacting with them individually in their journaling, and with them as a group in the debriefing meetings. This impacted my locations on the continuum between insider and outsider.

The participants were more focused and interested in their own group than on the research I was conducting. Using this lens, as the supervisor-participant, I was an insider-researcher in the Daring Group and the Creating Community Group because I belonged. I was on the continuum toward being an outsider-researcher in the other groups.

#5 Individual supervision group

#4 The five research-supervision groups

#3 Supervision Center

#2 The Sponsor

#1 The greater community of coaches certified by The sponsor
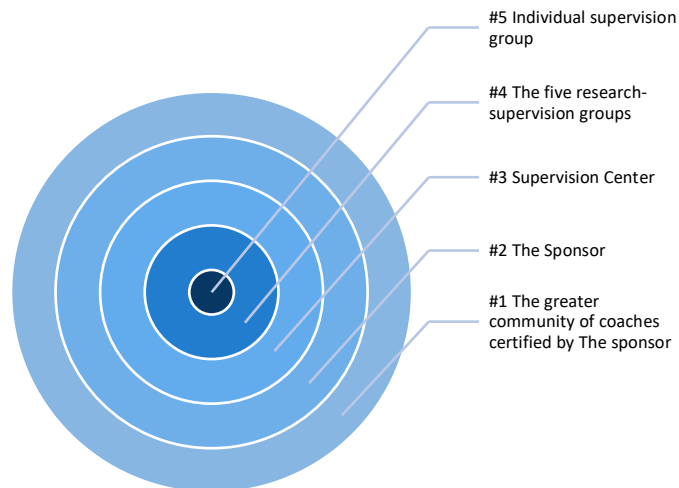
What makes an insider as contrasted with outsider, per Dwyer and Buckle (2009), is a shared set of experiences. In their case, being an insider as an adoptive parent and doing research with adoptive parents; and an outsider - doing research with parents who had lost a child, and not having experienced that tragedy. I could frame myself as an insider under this analysis as I have been a supervisee, and a supervisor and I am within the supervision center. An insider without the exact same experiences as they have had, yet with a shared learning community all trained through the same coaching certification program and therefore sharing common models, methods, approaches, language and colleagues. I could also frame myself as an outsider in that I am not in their group and have not experienced the ways, approaches, relationships and process they use. Or perhaps, as Dwyer and Buckle (2009, p.60) propose there is the "space in between". We have some commonality, and some distinctions and those vary depending on the group, the coaches and the supervisors. My "space in between" is as an insider who was not a member of their supervision group and not fully an outsider.

The implications of this positionality are woven throughout and influenced my choice of the primary case study that I write about. In this group I was the supervisor, I was the insider-researcher. The data from the three groups supervised by colleagues provided different perspectives for challenging my own stories as an insider. By standing as more of an outsider of those groups, I could see more of my assumptions, beliefs, projections and values as an insider.

Positionality in participants' communities of practice

Another view of insider, outsider or in-between is to consider which communities of practice (Wenger-Trayner, 2014) I was a member. In writing my research proposal I was using the phrase "practice community" in its common usage – to represent that I am most engaged, as an executive coach and coaching supervisor, with the institute where I trained and was certified, and other coaches and supervisors also certified by them. We come together in a number of configurations, for a variety of purposes, throughout the years. I consider these my practice communities. I was unaware of the academic literature on "communities of practice" (Wenger, 1998) until a deeper dive into Theory U (Scharmer, 2009, p.107) referenced Wenger (1998) and Lave's (1991, cited in Scharmer, 2009) "concepts of situated learning".

Wenger-Trayner *et.al.,* (2015) describes a landscape of learners having multiple communities of practice, providing opportunities to learn across a variety of knowledge areas. My relationships within the Sponsor include working toward a common objective or result, e.g., as a mentor coach for the coach training program and in group supervision as supervisees. Across the landscape, we have many practice communities that do not include each other, e.g., as a supervisor, each of us is in a community of practice with each of our supervision groups. I discerned the sanctity of the individual supervision groups only mid-way through the research.

These distinctions are important to the context of the research. Which ones was I included in? I was in a community of practice with my two groups where I was invitational, inclusive and open. We had come together to learn about ourselves as coaches, about ourselves in supervision and in service to the research. We created two overlapping communities of practice – one focused on learning about ourselves as people and as coaches and one focused on learning about the process of our supervision in service to the research. We danced between these communities.

With respect to the other three groups the context was different. They were engaged in their mutual learning in service to their coaching, and to their processes of supervision.

The requirements of experimenting with observational experiences were not as consistent with a core principle of action research as I had not invited them to "co-define" the inquiry and offered only limited ability to "co-design" (Bradbury, 2015, p.2). With my initial proscriptive stance, set out in the Informed Consent, was I researching "on" them, not with them? Did this start preclude me as a member of their community of practice? Was I the observer collecting data? Was I invited in to the "social process of negotiating competence" in their process of supervision (Farnsworth, Kleanthous, and Wenger-Trayner, 2016)? I came to see we were not in a community of practice.

Critical reflections – "action learning" meetings or focus groups?

What was I engaging in as I met with them to consider what was transpiring in their groups? Were we in action learning cycles? Was it less? Was it actually action research? Fundamentally, was our collective stance "with" each other, was it a "democratic partnership" (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014) or was I more of the facilitator of a focus group?

Focus groups are significantly different from action learning sets— focus groups are used to collect views, values, viewpoints of the attendees (Gray, 2018, p.460). The format is typically one or more facilitators, in a group setting, seeking to gain an understanding of the participants' experiences, opinions and perspectives.

Action learning sets are defined as small groups meeting to put into action Revans' (2011) learning formula: L=P+Q, where the "L" represents learning that happens through the combination of prior learning and Q which represents "questioning insights", the use of inquiry as the "simple device" for tackling problems (ibid., pp.2-3). Revans focused on the inquiring into the task and reflecting, he called for "leaders who must be aware of their own value systems…and of influences of their past personal experiences" (ibid., p.4), and learning with peers in an ongoing quest to learn about themselves through taking actions, evaluating, reflecting, and re-designing (ibid., pp.13-14). He adopts the principles of adult learning (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2015) noting that all learning is voluntary (p.5) and that there must be risk involved to motivate the learning (p.6).

As Pedler and Burgoyne (2015) sampled UK practitioners about action learning, there was the greatest agreement on a number of elements, including that there were "actions on real tasks or problems at work and the tasks/problems were individual rather than collective" (p.180). "Whenever someone speaks, it is important to *listen twice*, once to the content of what was said, and second, to what this content invites or suppresses in terms of the actions that follow" (italics in original) (Gergen, 2015, p.76).

With these principles in mind, I considered my interactions with the groups.

The three groups supervised by others were focus groups

The meetings with the three other research groups did not feel as though we were learning together. Participants were responsive to my questions, but it felt (Gendlin, 1978) more like a series of my questions and their answers, as focus groups would be constructed (Gray, 2018) rather than as mutual collaboration. Statements made in the meetings included:

- "we didn't actually do some of the things that you were hoping that we would do"
- "if it's helpful to you, Kathryn, and we're doing what we're supposed to be doing…
- "I didn't have anything. I mean, I think that I was just thinking of how to be helpful to you, but that's probably it for me".

What was missing?

These were not action learning meetings in the traditional definition; they are more accurately characterized as group interviews, i.e., focus groups for two reasons. The first, I brought the tasks and problems to the group. They were my inquiries, not theirs. Second, in our meetings there may have been an embodiment by some of what Revans (2011) describes as "new ideas suggesting new behaviors may be soberly and deliberately suppressed because they contradict established values and accepted traditions" (p.74). Many of the coaches shared that the use of recordings was extremely challenging, that no clients would agree, or they did not want to shift the relationships with them. They also shared that they were satisfied with their experiences, in the past, with supervision

and did not want to risk any interference with the relationship with their supervisor. One coach asked "Does this kind of possibly take away from what we get from [supervisor] now?" Or perhaps the learning is just what they shared and, for example, that they did not use recordings is important to the understanding of their use in supervision.

The groups I supervised were action learning sets

I held the same inquiry about my two groups – were we engaged in action learning or action research? The distinctions between action research and action learning are muddy, some writers argue they are different (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014, pp.55-56) others wonder if it is a "false dichotomy" (Pedler and Burgoyne, 2015, p. 182) and Rigg and Coghlan (2016) highlight the key distinctions based on the purpose of the learning endeavors.

> *AL [action learning] is principally committed …to learning for those directly involved and not particularly interested in whether such learning goes beyond the specific group or organization, whereas, AR [action research] is concerned that wider knowledge be distilled from the specific issue, to be shared with a wider (third person) audience (p.202).*

More recently, Whitehead (2019) articulated the differences as: "What distinguishes action learning from action research is the requirement of research that the systematic enquiry is made public in the sense of being open to criticism" (p.55).

I find these distinctions strained; I conclude that we engaged in action learning sets. I consider the full arc of the meetings including the supervision sessions and the meetings in-between where we considered what we were experimenting with and our overall processes in supervision were action learning. Our reflective practices were consistent with Revans (2011) formula L=P+Q, where L stands for learning, P stands for our theoretical instruction and Q stands for inquiry:

- Coming together with a shared purpose for our personal and professional development, with agreed upon group processes (L).
- Inquiring together about ourselves and our practices, based on individual's clients, issues and themes (Q).
- Certified coaches considering what they have formally learned with their experience in their day-to-day practice (P)

In our four meetings, we paused our supervision work and moved into a shared inquiry about our purpose and group processes, we explored what we were learning about our processes, from each individual's perspectives, and how we wanted to re-design our work going forward. These meetings were collaborative inquiries, evaluating what had happened in our work since the last process meeting, and exploring how to go forward based on all that we were learning. The setting was distinct from the other three groups because I was both supervisor and researcher; everything we did, we did collaboratively and in service of our individual and group learning. These were action learning sets.

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Appendix 3: Informed Consents

Informed Consent – Supervisor-Participants

The purpose of this document is to set forth the roles and responsibilities of Kathryn M. Downing as the researcher, and you as the research participant in order to ensure that you are aware of and agree to the terms of this arrangement and record your agreement by your signature.

Kathryn is an enrolled student in the Doctorate of Professional Studies (Coaching Supervision) Program at the Work Based Learning Institute of Middlesex University, London, UK. This Informed Consent is required by Middlesex University, the laws and regulations of the US regarding human subject research and the ICF Code of Ethics. This research study has been presented to and received formal approval to proceed from the Project Approval Panel and Research Ethics Subcommittee of the Institute for Work Based Learning at Middlesex University, London.

The purpose of the research: To explore three modalities and the usual practices within supervision groups in service to the supervisee's development as coach.

The research process:
- As a supervisor-participant you agree to engage as a supervisor of a small group, to start in September or October 2017, for 10 supervision sessions over 12 months.
- You agree to engage through the ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ of Coaching Supervision Center with the usual financial and logistical arrangements.
- You agree to use live-action coaching, transcripts and recordings of client sessions in selected supervision sessions. Each modality will be experimented with at least once during the course of the 10 group supervision sessions.
- You agree to participate in four Zoom meetings with Kathryn over 12-18 months, which will be recorded, and submit monthly journal reflections electronically to ▮▮▮▮ which will be shared with Kathryn as part of the research data collection.
- You agree to abide by the ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ Code of Conduct and the ICF Code of Ethics.

Potential Benefits to Participants:
Your participation will give you:
- the opportunity to learn within the supervision and from the approaches being explored,
- the ability to incorporate your learnings into your individual practices, and
- the opportunity to contribute to research for our profession.

Potential Risks to Participants:
Potential harm is anticipated to be generally no more than you would encounter in engaging as a supervisor, or in supervision and/or reflection, and getting together with colleagues to discuss approaches for personal and professional development.

Given your training and practice as a coach and a supervisor, it is recognized that you have significant experiences in dealing with emotions, feelings, reactions, and personal and professional development. This agreement recognizes that you are trained and skilled in creating safe and non-judgmental space for yourself, your colleagues and your clients.

If at any time, you are experiencing difficulties as a <u>research participant</u>, you may reach out to Kathryn who will work with you to resolve or mitigate any difficulties.

Confidentiality, Data Collection and Storage, and Privacy Provisions:
Confidentiality:
- The supervision sessions with your group and the group meetings with Kathryn will be confidential among the supervisor, the supervisees and Kathryn.
  - This requires that no one disclose to others outside the group, what occurs in the

sessions, and

- o provides permission for Kathryn, for research purposes only, to record the group meetings with her, and collect and use the written reflections of the participants.
- o Journal prompts will be sent electronically to participants from the ██████ Supervision Center. Participants are asked to respond electronically to the prompts, which will be confidential among the participant, the Supervision Center administrator (██████) and Kathryn. The Supervision Center administrator will sign an Informed Consent agreement.
- o If the supervision group selects part or all of recordings of the supervision sessions to provide to Kathryn, these may also be used in the research. The recordings submitted to Kathryn will be confidential.
- Any data collected for the study, once it is de-identified, may be reviewed by Kathryn's academic advisors, doctoral research consultants and transcription services as part of the research process for purposes of framing, reviewing, coding, analysis and writing. You will not be identified in any transcript except with a speaker number. Any data shared electronically will be transmitted over secure internet lines.
- You will contract with participants directly for permission to bring your supervision experiences with the research-supervision group to your own supervision.

Privacy:
- Quotes, without attribution, may be used in the study results unless the participant specifically requests otherwise.
- In any publication or presentation of the research, only de-identified information will be included in the data analysis and in the results.
- You, and each participant, agree that you will not disclose you were a participant nor will you disclose the other participants or any client identifying information.
- It is not possible to guarantee anonymity of the participants except to the extent that all group members honor the confidentiality and privacy provisions.

Data Collection and Storage
- Electronically collected data will be stored within a password protected DropBox account, a password protected ICloud account and in a separate password protected thumb drive located at a locked storage facility. Paper data (including Informed Consent agreements, hard-copy notes, printed transcripts, etc.) will be stored in Kathryn's office, and may also be stored in a locked storage facility. Paper data will be shredded.
- The recordings, transcripts and journaling will be kept confidential by Kathryn and destroyed 3 years after the completion of the research. All electronic email and file transfer links will be deleted. Paper data will be shredded.

Voluntary Participation
- Your participation in this study is voluntary and may be withdrawn, in writing, at any time during the research process. Your withdrawal will be effective immediately upon written notification to Kathryn. No approval is required. Your withdrawal would mean the withdrawal of the full supervision group.
- If you withdraw, your data provided up to your withdrawal date will continue to be part of the research. No other data will be collected.
- Supervision of your group, under the ██████ Supervision Center, would continue following your withdrawal.

Intellectual Property Rights
- The research results, conclusions, and content of the dissertation are the intellectual property of Kathryn.
- You will a receive a pdf copy of the final dissertation upon request.
- You may incorporate your experiences into your coaching and supervisor practices, without formally acknowledging your participation in this research.

Concerns, Questions or Complaints Regarding the Research Study

You are encouraged to explore any concerns, questions or complaints regarding the research study with Kathryn. You may also raise any of these with the academic advisor and point of contact for Middlesex University, Dr. David Adams.

By signing below, you are acknowledging that you have reviewed this document, you agree to its provisions and you are voluntarily participating in the research study. Please retain a copy of your signed agreement and return one to Kathryn by email.

I agree that you may use de-identified quotes from me in the dissertation, other publications, presentations or workshops. _____Yes _____ No

_____   _____
Participant Signature   Date

_____   _____
Participant Name   Address

_____   _____
Phone   Email

Principal Investigator:	Her academic advisor is:
Kathryn M. Downing	Dr. David Adams
Researcher, Candidate for Professional Doctoral (Coaching Supervision)	Senior Lecturer, Institute for Work Based Learning
	Middlesex University, London NW4 4BT
805.450.4633	Direct Line: +44 208 411 5559
KathrynGalileo@gmail.com	d.adams@mdx.ac.uk

Informed Consent – Supervisee-Participants

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The research process:
- As a supervisee-participant you agree to engage in supervision in a small group, to start in September or October 2017 for 10 supervision sessions over 12 months.
- You agree to engage through the ██████████████ Coaching Supervision Center with the usual financial and logistical arrangements.
- You will be asked, as a group, to experiment at least once with each of three observational approaches: the use of live-action coaching, transcripts and recordings of actual client sessions. Kathryn will reimburse you for any fees incurred for transcription services.
- You agree to participate in three group meetings with Kathryn over 12-18 months, which will be recorded, and submit monthly journal reflections electronically to ██████ which will be shared with Kathryn as part of the research data collection.
- You agree to abide by the ██████████ Code of Conduct and the ICF Code of Ethics.

Potential Benefits to Participants:
Your participation will give you:
- the opportunity to learn within the supervision and from the approaches being explored,
- the ability to incorporate your learnings into your individual practices, and
- the opportunity to contribute to research for our profession.

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Potential harm is anticipated to be generally no more than you would encounter in engaging in supervision and/or reflection, and getting together with colleagues to discuss approaches for personal and professional development.

Given your training and practice as a coach, it is recognized that you have significant experiences in dealing with emotions, feelings, reactions, and personal and professional development. This agreement recognizes that you are trained and skilled in creating safe and non-judgmental space for yourself, your colleagues and your clients. If at any time, you are experiencing difficulties as a research participant, you may reach out to Kathryn who will work with you to resolve or mitigate any difficulties.

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    Confidentiality:
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- You agree that you will have the permission of your clients for discussion of your work with them
  - o for supervision and for participating in the research, and
  - o for the recording and/or transcription of any actual coaching sessions brought to the supervision group.
- All clients' identifying information, including their organizations, will be masked in the supervision session which means that you will not use their name, position or organizational affiliations.

Privacy:

- Quotes, without attribution, may be used in the study results unless the participant specifically requests otherwise.
- In any publication or presentation of the research, only de-identified information will be included in the data analysis and in the results.
- You, and each participant, agree that you will not disclose you were a participant nor will you disclose the other participants or any client identifying information.
- It is not possible to guarantee anonymity of the participants except to the extent that all group members honor the confidentiality and privacy provisions.

Data Collection and Storage

- Electronically collected data will be stored within a password protected DropBox account, a password protected ICloud account and in a separate password protected thumb drive located at a locked storage facility. Paper data (including Informed Consent agreements, hard-copy notes, printed transcripts, etc.) will be stored in Kathryn's office, and may also be stored in a locked storage facility.
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Voluntary Participation

- Your participation in this study is voluntary and may be withdrawn, in writing, at any time during the research process. Your withdrawal will be effective immediately upon written notification to Kathryn with a copy to your supervisor. No approval is required.
- If you withdraw, your data provided up to your withdrawal date will continue to be part of the research. No other data will be collected.
- Withdrawal will have no negative ramifications within ████. Your participation within the supervision group would continue.

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Voluntary Participation
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I agree that you may use de-identified quotes from me in the dissertation, other publications, presentations or workshops. _____Yes _____ No

_____   _____
Participant Signature   Date

_____   _____
Participant Name   Address

_____   _____
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Principal Investigator:	Her academic advisor is:
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Informed Consent – Supervisor-Participant

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The purpose of the research: To explore three modalities and the usual practices within supervision groups in service to the supervisee's development as coach.

The research process:
- As a supervisor-participant you agree to engage as a supervisor of Kathryn, to start in July 2017, and to continue periodically through the duration of the research project.
- You agree to engage with the usual financial and logistical arrangements.
- You agree to use transcripts and recordings of client sessions in selected supervision sessions. Each modality will be experimented with at least once during the course of the supervision sessions.
- You agree to participate in four Zoom meetings with Kathryn over 12-18 months, which will be recorded, and submit journal reflections electronically following the supervision sessions which use recordings and or transcripts as part of the research data collection.
- You agree to abide by the EMCC or the ICF Code of Ethics.

Potential Benefits to Participants:
Your participation will give you:
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journal reflections.
- Any data collected for the study, once it is de-identified, may be reviewed by Kathryn's academic advisors, doctoral research consultants and transcription services as part of the research process for purposes of framing, reviewing, coding, analysis and writing. You will not be identified in any transcript except with a speaker number. Any data shared electronically will be transmitted over secure internet lines.
- You have Kathryn's permission to bring your supervision experiences with the research-supervision sessions to your own supervision.

Privacy:
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I agree that you may use de-identified quotes from me in the dissertation, other publications, presentations or workshops. _____Yes _____ No

_____   _____
Participant Signature   Date

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Principal Investigator:	**Her academic advisor is:**
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KathrynGalileo@gmail.com	d.adams@mdx.ac.uk

Appendix 4: Original Project Plan

Calendar timeline	Project Stage	Resource Requirements	Control or Access	Contingencies
Dec 14, 2016	Submit written project proposal for DPS 4561	Self, Advisor, Consultants	Have agreements with them to meet this timeline. Need letter of support from Hudson Institute	Later submission date
January 19, 2017	Project proposal presentation to review board. Set up technology needed to support research project including Zoom account and Coach Logix account.	Self, Advisor, Consultants	Need to confirm US supervision-expert as MDX consultant for research process	Request approval subject to confirmation of US Supervision-expert as MDX consultant
March 1, 2017	Project proposal revised per input from review board and review board approves - estimated	Self, Advisor, Consultants and review board	Review board schedule is outside of my control	Later approval date
March-April 2017	Subject Matter Expert interviews. Pilot action learning circles on use of these interventions with volunteer supervisors	Self, subject matter experts, volunteer supervisors	Access through Hudson Institute has been agreed. Responsiveness of potential participants and subject matter experts beyond my control	Run pilot in conjunction with interviews and beginning recruitment of participants.
May-July 2017	Begin recruitment of participants.	Self, Hudson Institute, Potential participants to apply, Responsiveness from subject matter experts on scheduling discussions	Access through Hudson Institute has been agreed. Responsiveness of potential participants beyond my control	Longer time to recruit and select participants
August 2017	Finalize participant selection and contracting. Schedule first meetings and action learning cycle. Record and transcribe notes from action learning meeting. Collect regularly the reflective journals from participants following each monthly supervision session.	Self, participants and Hudson Institute	Participants outside my control. Hudson Institute has agreed to schedule.	Later start to actual research engagement. Alternative could be to decrease number of desired participants.
August – September 2017	Kick off of 12 months of supervision	Participants, self	Participants outside my control except as I may influence and encourage them	Later start. Alternatives could be fewer sessions or compressed timeframe for the 10 sessions.
September-December 2017	Second action learning meetings. Record and transcribe notes from action learning meeting. Collect regularly the reflective journals from participants following each monthly supervision. Begin to develop coding. Meet and review with critical colleagues, advisor and consultants on the process to date and my learning as a researcher.	Participants, self	Participants outside my control except as I may influence and encourage them	Alternatives could be fewer sessions or compressed timeframe for the 10 sessions.
Jan – April 2018	Third action learning meetings. Record and transcribe notes from action learning meeting. Collect regularly the reflective journals from participants following each monthly supervision. Continue to develop coding. Meet and review with critical colleagues, advisor and consultants on the process to date and my learning as a researcher.	Participants, self	Participants outside my control except as I may influence and encourage them. Advisor and consultants likely to be responsive.	Alternatives could be fewer sessions or compressed timeframe for the 10 sessions.

April – June 2018	Fourth action learning meetings. Record and transcribe notes from action learning meeting. Collect regularly the reflective journals from participants following each monthly supervision. Continue to develop coding. Meet and review with critical colleagues, advisor and consultants on the process to date and my learning as a researcher.	Participants, self	Participants outside my control except as I may influence and encourage them. Advisor and consultants likely to be responsive.	Alternatives could be fewer sessions or compressed timeframe for the 10 sessions.
June – July 2018	Supervision sessions conclude. Collect regularly the reflective journals from participants following each monthly supervision. Continue to develop coding. Meet and review with critical colleagues, advisor and consultants on the process to date and my learning as a researcher.	Participants, self	Participants outside my control except as I may influence and encourage them. Advisor and consultants likely to be responsive.	
July 2018 – Dec 2018	Coding, analysis, reviews for quality assurance, finalize literature review.			
Dec 2018- Dec 2019	Write, write, write. Develop workshops or journal articles.			
Jan 2020	Submit thesis			

Appendix 5: Video Transcripts and FAQ

Transcript of first video: Information on Research

Kathryn Downing:	Hello, I'm Kathryn Downing, I'm a certified ███████ coach, and I'm a certified supervisor in the ███████ Supervision Center. I'm delighted to have this opportunity to share with you a little bit about my doctoral research and invite you to join us. Let me do that by sharing the screen and pulling up the power point, so that you can follow along.

There we are. So, I'm going to try to do this in four minutes. Just to let you know what's up and what's going on, I'm a student working on my doctorate at Middlesex University in London, and my doctorate is going to be in coaching supervision. And Pam and the ███████ Institute are supporting this work, and I'm delighted that we're doing it through the Supervision Center.

Who can participate? So, if you're interested, if you, and your supervision group, and your supervisor want to engage in normal supervision, plus as a research participant, then you would agree to do that. So that's all it takes. You just have to be entering supervision this fall, with a group and a supervisor who want to be research participants, and you can participate. And what do you get out of it? You get out of it a major contribution to the profession, because this is original research that will inform not only coaching supervision, but executive coaching. And of course, anything you learn you can apply in your actual practice.

The purpose of my research is to see, is there a way to enhance, is there any reason to enhance how we do supervision. So, as you know, it's case study reporting, we bring our cases, sometimes we write them up. And I'm curious if in addition to that, on occasion, we bring a recording, or part of a recording, of one of our sessions, or a transcript, or part of our transcript, or if we coach each other and then debrief it. How that would impact, if at all, our learning about ourselves, and ourselves as coaches.

So, it's about being experimental, experiential, playful. Just noticing, as you experiment a little bit during the 12 months, the 10 sessions, what do you learn? What impacts your learning? What gets in the way of your learning? And that's it really is about. The time involved is to journal each month, about 15 minutes after each of your monthly supervision sessions and return those journal entries to us. It's about my coming to meet with you and your group, three times during the research process. The first time about halfway through, so around four to six sessions in, just to say, "Hey, what are you learning, what have you noticed? What's kind of working, what's not kind of working?" To come together with you again at the end of the supervision period and say, "Hey, so what did you notice, what did you learn? What do you think?"

And then, because we all process things over time, and experiment and practice, to come back and meet with you again, four to six months later, and say, "So, now what do you think?" And then of course there would

be some of your time to get permission from your clients for the recordings, and send them out for transcription, and then figure out how you want to use them in the Supervision Center. So that's the time commitment.

It's important just to know at this point, all information is confidential and private, so no one will be named in the write up of the research results. It won't be shared, no one will know that you were involved in it; in fact, you'll be asked to keep confidential your involvement, and the involvement of your clients and the rest of your group. And that's really what it is. Are you interested in participating in a little doctoral research? It would be great if you are. There's additional information on the website, and there's a next steps video as well. Thanks.

Transcript of second video: What makes a good research participant.

Kathryn Downing: Hello, everyone. I'm Kathryn Downing, I'm a ███████████ ███████ , a member of the ██████ Leadership Team, and I'm delighted to talk to you very briefly about what makes a good research participant. Let me pull up the screen so you can follow along. Here we are, and this will be quite quick. It comes out of the question that I've been getting about, "What qualities and capacities are necessary in a research participant?" The short answer is the same as what you need to be in supervision as a coach.

Let me just share this with you, of course as you know my research is being done under the auspices of Middlesex University in London. Here are the things that will really make you an effective supervisee in supervision with your group and a research participant. Your commitment to personal and professional growth and to the profession as well. Actively coaching so that you have cases and situations to bring. The ability to observe yourself and to have curiosity, and perhaps suspend some judgment about what's going on for you. A willingness to be vulnerable and the courage to share what you notice in your thoughts, your emotions, resistance, whatever is coming up for you.

I'm undertaking this research because I don't know if it's a good idea to try to bring observational information into supervision, and I'm really curious about it and I don't have a foregone conclusion about it. I want to know how it is for each of you. The last thing that you need to be a good research participant is the same thing, again that you need to be in supervision, which is the time to commit.

A quick reminder on the time commitment for the research piece, it's about 15 minutes a month to journal. It's three one-hour meetings with me and your group with your supervisor to talk about the process. Then it's the time that it may take for you to reach out and ask a client for permission to record or to make a transcript of the session and get their permission to share it within the context of supervision and of research.

To that end, I have drawn up a document that's a consent to record for the client and I encourage you to use it because it gives the client the same important research protections, research process protections that you get as a research participant. As you may recall, this is just required by Middlesex University, by the US laws, the UK laws, and by the ICF and ███████ Codes. It's important that we all have agreement and understanding on what's going to happen in the research with our clients as well.

That's it, thank you very much for coming to this point. I hope you're excited. I hope you're willing to participate. If you need more information just reach out to Olivia, to your supervisor, to the website, to me, whatever is helpful to you so you could make your final decision. I look forward to seeing you soon. Thanks.

Transcript of third video: Next steps to volunteering to participate

Kathryn Downing: Hello, this is Kathryn Downing again, back for video part two. As you know from the first video, I'm a ███████ Certified Coach. I supervise in the ███████ Supervision Center, and I'm a Doctoral student at Middlesex University doing research on coaching supervision. I assume you're here because you're ready to go, you want to participate in the research, and you're wondering what the next steps are. Let me pull up the PowerPoint so that you can follow along as I talk about it. And I'm really excited to have this opportunity to have you as part of the research.

As I mentioned in the last video, this is all approved through Middlesex University in London, where I'm a student working on my professional Doctorate. Here's what you do to join. Take these steps. Let your supervisor know that you agree because then she'll make sure that the whole group agrees. As that happens, you'll be asked to sign the informed consent, which I'll talk more about in just a moment, and return it to Olivia at the ███████ Supervision Center. Olivia will then go through her normal process of invoicing you for the supervision engagement, standard ███████ Supervision Center rates, and send you the pre-work. And your supervisor will work with you and your group on scheduling not only your 10 session over 12 months, but also scheduling the three meetings with me.

As you might remember, the time commitment is about six to eight hours in total. We'll ask you to journal monthly following your supervision session. Olivia will send out the journal prompts. You'll just complete them and return them to us electronically. I'll meet with you three times, once halfway through your supervision session. So about four to six sessions in, I'll join you just to learn what are you noticing, what are you learning? Have you played around and experimented with a piece of a recording or a transcript, or coaching each other?

Then I'll meet with you again at the end of the supervision engagement, which will be sometime in the mid-summer next year and have the same questions. What happened? What did you learn? What did you notice? What do you think about these experiments? And then again four to six months later because we all tend to have different opinions as we sit with something and reflect on it. Then of course there's some incremental time if you decide to record one of your coaching sessions or have a transcript done. And getting the client's permission, and then actually doing it. That's the time.

As I mentioned, as you know at this point, I'm sure, the information is confidential, it's private, everything will be anonymized so that no one can identify you or your client as a result of my research. To ensure that that happens and that we all agree, there's a document called the informed consent document. The research is governed by a number of entities in order to ensure that it's done appropriately, ethically, and doesn't in any way endanger you as a participant. The informed consent document, which needs to be signed by each of you, just sets forth that you understand what the research is about, what I agree to do to keep it confidential and private, what you agree to do to keep it confidential and private. It's just a pretty fairly straight forward document.

Let your supervisor know, review and sign the informed consent, let ███ know that you're in and she'll invoice you. Then we'll be good to go. We'll start. And I really look forward to being part of this with you, and I thank you very much.

Frequently Asked Questions
Kathryn M Downing's Research on Coaching Supervision

Table of Contents

What is this all about?

Kathryn M. Downing is a Hudson certified coach, a member of the Hudson Leadership Team, an External Mentor Coach and a certified coaching supervisor in the Hudson Supervision Center. Kathryn is also an enrolled student in the Doctorate of Professional Studies (Coaching Supervision) Program at the Work Based Learning Institute of Middlesex University, London, UK. She is undertaking original research in coaching supervision. Hudson is supporting this research by providing the opportunity for members of the Hudson community to participate while engaged in coaching supervision.

This research study has been presented to and received formal approval to proceed from the Project Approval Panel and Research Ethics Subcommittee of the Institute for Work Based Learning at Middlesex University, London.

What are the details of the research study?

The PURPOSE: To explore three observational approaches within the usual practices of supervision in groups:
- recordings
- transcripts
- live-action coaching

The TONE: For the research:
- Experimental
- Experiential
- Playful
- Noticing what impacts one's learning

The OUTCOMES:
- Anything is possible
- There is no right or wrong answer
- Whatever happens are the data
- There is no drive to reach any specific outcomes
- Surprises welcome
- Candor and transparency essential
- About participants' actual experiences, feelings, noticing, learning, resistance....

Who can be a supervisee-research participant?

To be a supervisee-research participant, you need to be:
- A Hudson certified coach
- Be able to bring active coaching cases to supervision
- Be willing to make a 12-month commitment through the Hudson Institute of Coaching Supervision Center as standard prices
- Be willing to commit to group supervision
- Be willing to participate as a research participant
- Agree to abide by the Hudson Institute Code of conduct and the ICF Code of Ethics, and
- Sign the Informed Consent required by Middlesex University, US Law and the ICF Code of Ethics.

What qualities and capacities do I need to be a research participant?

If you are a coach engaging in supervision you have the qualities and capacities needed to be a research participant

- Commitment to your professional and personal development
- Actively coaching with cases to bring to the group
- Ability to observe yourself
- Curiosity
- Willingness to be vulnerable
- Courage to share what you are noticing – your thoughts, emotions, stirrings, actions, resistance...
- Time – for supervision and for the research components

How do I volunteer?

There are three steps to volunteer to be part of the research while engaged in paid supervision.

To join as a participant – take these steps:
- Let your supervisor know that you agree
- Your supervisor will let you know when everyone in the group has agreed
- Sign the Informed Consent and return to Olivia at the Hudson Supervision Center.
- Olivia will invoice you for the supervision engagement at the standard Hudson Supervision Center rates.

Your supervisor will work with you and your group on scheduling

What are the commitments I must make if I am selected to be a research participant?

Each of the supervisee participants must agree to the following commitments:
1. To register, through the Hudson Supervision Center, for supervision in one of the supervision-research groups starting in Fall 2017 at the standard costs.
2. To be willing to engage and experiment within the supervision sessions with interventions and practices that may expand the potential of the supervision.
3. To attend and participate in three meetings over 18 months with Kathryn and your supervision group to explore and share learning, insights, challenges and suggestions. These 60 minute meetings will be conducted over Zoom.
4. To respond to specific research prompts following each supervision session electronically. It is anticipated this will involve about 10-15 minutes each month.
5. To agree to and sign the Informed Consent agreement.
6. The total time for the research components is 6-8 hours in addition to the supervision.

Can you describe the overall process between what is supervision and what is research?

7/23/17

3

In supervision, you will participate in the standard 10 sessions of supervision over 12 months and are encouraged to meet bi-weekly between supervision sessions with your peer group. This is the standard engagement for coaching supervision.

In addition, as a researcher you agree to:
- Monthly Journaling - about 15 Minutes per month
- Three hours between February '18 – Jan '19 for Zoom meetings:
    o 60 minutes (Feb-Mar 2018) KATHRYN, SUPERVISOR AND GROUP
    o 60 minutes (June-July 2018) KATHRYN, SUPERVISOR AND GROUP
    o 60 minutes (Oct 2018-Jan 2019) KATHRYN, SUPERVISOR AND GROUP
- Preparation for the supervision sessions – recordings, transcripts, permissions.
    o Note: Any transcriptions costs will be reimbursed.

What is the timeline?

Timeline:
- **September or October 2017**: Supervision sessions begin
- **Throughout the 12 months**: Monthly journal prompts will be sent to you following each supervision session, for you to complete and return electronically.
- **February or March 2018**: First 60-minute Zoom meeting with Kathryn and your supervision group to review what you have noticed, experienced and learned in experimenting, or not, with recordings, transcripts and live-action coaching.
- **June or July 2018**: After your 10 sessions of supervision, a second 60-minute Zoom meeting with Kathryn and your supervision group to review what you have noticed, experienced and learned in experimenting, or not, with recordings, transcripts and live-action coaching.
- **October 2018 or later:** Third 60-minute Zoom with Kathryn and your supervision group to review what you now, with reflection time, have noticed and learned in experimenting, or not, with recordings, transcripts and live-action coaching. The second purpose of this meeting is for sharing the data analysis Kathryn has begun for fidelity and accuracy to your experiences.

What are the specific terms of the Informed Consent?

There are many requirements for the protection of those who participate in research. Meeting these requirements is important to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of the participants, to provide assurances from the researcher that all data collected with be handled appropriately and to identify the potential benefits and risks with the goal that individuals may make informed decisions. The requirements are set by Middlesex University, the laws and regulations of the US regarding human subject research and the ICF Code of Ethics.

The Informed Consent contains provisions for your protection and the protection of the research. Provisions include agreements to:

- protect your identity and contact information and that of your clients
- protections for confidentiality of your participation
- protections for the confidentiality of the research
- provisions that you may withdraw at any point in the research process

The Informed Consent form for coaches who participate is available on the Hudson website.

If I participate will that improve my standing within the Hudson community?

The Hudson Institute is pleased to support Kathryn's research and respects everyone's decisions about whether to participate or not. There will be no rewards directly from Hudson if you participate and no penalties if you do not, or if you withdraw.

What consents and permissions are needed from clients? How are my clients' identities protected?

There are many requirements for the protection of those who participate in research. Meeting these requirements is important to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of the participants, to provide assurances from the researcher that all data collected with be handled appropriately and to identify the potential benefits and risks with the goal that individuals may make informed decisions. These protections are being extended to your clients who agree to be recorded and/or transcribed. The requirements are set by Middlesex University, the laws and regulations of the US regarding human subject research and the ICF Code of Ethics.

- The required client consent form is available on the Hudson website.
- Consent to record includes consent to share with the researcher as well as supervision group.
- This provides your clients with important protections and is a benefit to them.

What if I become uncomfortable with the experimental nature of the supervision sessions?

At the heart of the supervision process is the relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee. If you are not comfortable with the experimental processes in the supervision sessions, the recommended first step is to discuss it with your supervisor and perhaps, with the full supervision group. If those discussions do not resolve your concerns, then please reach out to Kathryn for a discussion. If at any time, you decide you want to withdraw from the research, you may do so. See the Q and A immediately below for the possible ways of withdrawing.

What if I change my mind mid-way through and no longer want to be a research participant?

You may withdraw in at least 3 ways:

a. **Remain in supervision and withdraw privately from the research.** You may notify Kathryn in writing, and not your supervision group. You continue to be supervised within the group, but not the research. This means you would not submit any further learning journals, attend any additional meetings with Kathryn or participate in the end of research survey. Any journals you have submitted will be part of the research. In addition, when you present a case or situation in the supervision group going forward, you will notify Kathryn so she excludes any learning journal entries related to your case or situation.

b. **Remain in supervision and withdraw from the research.** You would share with your supervisor and co-supervisees and notify Kathryn in writing. You continue to be supervised within the group, you do not submit any further learning journals, or attend any additional meetings with Kathryn. You would not participate in the end of research survey. Any journals you have submitted prior to withdrawing will remain part of the research. Going forward, when you present a case or situation in the supervision group, you will notify members of the supervision group to exclude any entries related to your case or situation from their learning journals.

c. **Withdraw from both supervision and from the research.** You would share with your supervisor, co-supervisees and Kathryn that you are withdrawing from supervision and from the research. You will not participate any further. Any journals you have already submitted will be part of the research. [What happens from HI's point of view?]

GALILEO
COACHING

Coaching Supervision Philosophy

In coaching "super-vision" we come together to create a sacred space for you to reflect on and about your body of work as a coach. A core value in this work is that deepening your personal understanding will enable you to deepen your professional understanding. We believe in holistically approaching this work together because we are the instruments of our work, considering your whole self is an essential part of considering your professional self.

In co-creating our experience, we will learn from each other, challenge our assumptions and views of the world, wonder about what is in the energy fields between you and your clients, and you and this group, consider your needs and your clients and the systems they are in, hold curious and inquiring minds, and share our intuition, compassion, stirring, feelings and knowledge. At all times we will strive for unconditional positive regard among us.

My goals for you are your goals. Your learning objectives, overall and in each session will set our agenda. Our work will be permission based.

I encourage you to experiment with what preparation and follow through helps you to get the most from our sessions. Do you find it helpful to refer to your learning objectives, to reflect and have in mind themes across clients or with one particular client, to write a brief description of the client you wish to bring to that day's session, to take time after our session to journal on insights and questions, to pursue potential readings or ways of working with a client or clients? What metaphors come to mind about your work? What visuals or poems or songs remind you of a client? I offer these as ideas.

Occasionally we may pause and ask what we are not talking about, what might you be hesitant to bring forth and how might we create a safe way for you to give voice to what is unsaid.

My intention is for you to have experiences in supervision that are joyful, fun, contemplative, challenging, nurturing, stimulating, awakening, explorative, reflective and sometimes without immediate answers. To tune how we engage, I will invite you in the last few minutes of each of our sessions to share what worked well for you and what was not as helpful. This will let us shape our endeavours to more ably serve your learning. I trust we collectively believe in the gift of feedback and that there is always a learning opportunity in every exchange.

In the event we are looking at potential ethical dilemmas we will consider relevant

Codes of Ethics including The International Coaching Federation, the European Mentoring and Coaching Council, the code of ethics in the organizations that contract with you and any other relevant codes or values.

I may on occasion ask for your permission to record one of our sessions for my own learning and reflection. I would use the recording to review my approach as a supervisor and to review with my supervision supervisor. Your identities and those of your clients would not be disclosed. The recording would be deleted as soon as the review was complete. You may grant me permission or decline as you feel in that moment.

I am delighted and grateful that we are engaging in this supervision of your body of work. Thank you for trusting me.

Appendix 7: Pilot Group Contracting

The Daring Group – Initial contracting for the Pilot

We agreed on the following process based on our prior year of supervision – elements that were specific to the pilot are in blue font.

1. Logistical planning:
   a. Length and number of sessions: We would have three session of 60 minutes. In the larger group our sessions had been 90 minutes.
   b. Virtual: The sessions would be conducted using the Zoom virtual meeting platform.
   c. Scheduling: We would calendar the sessions, in advance, based on our availability.
2. Process ahead of supervision session: I would send an email which would contain three elements:
   a. a reflection question for their consideration ahead of the session,
   b. an inquiry as to what they have for the upcoming session including, a case, theme, recording or transcript, and
   c. a request to send in advance, if it will serve their learning, a write up of the client situation.
   d. There could be "prework" for the supervision sessions when a recording or transcript was offered. The prework time would be to watch or listen to the recording and/or reading the transcript.
3. Supervision session process:
   a. Designed similar to our prior engagements
   b. Check-in: we would each check-in at the beginning in response to the questions "How are you arriving" and "What do you have for us?". The first question lets each of us get our voice in the virtual room and share how we are as we come into the session. It continues the connection thread among us. The second question opens the possibilities for our focus. A case that was written up in advance, the coach may indicate that continues to be their desired focus or that it is no longer relevant or there is a more important matter.
   c. Initial contracting: based on what is shared during the check-in, I would propose an allocation of our time and the order of proceeding. We would agree, based on my offer and their responses.
   d. Reflecting on, and exploring the matters raised by one or both of the coaches.
   e. Closing: a reflection from each of us as to what we are taking from, or how we are leaving the session.
   f. The sessions would be recorded and sent to the coaches following the session. They could review, and download, they agreed to keep confidential, and not to post any part of the video to social media.
4. Post supervision session:

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a. Administrative matters: Calendaring future sessions, or re-scheduling existing sessions, or arranging to meet in person outside of the supervision sessions, would be handled following the 60 minutes.

b. Journaling Prompts: The coaches would receive journaling prompts following the session, either from me directly or through a survey software (Qualtrics).

c. Reflection journal was provided by The Organization as a standard practice – would this journal still be useful if the coaches were responding to the journal prompts?

d. I would send an email shortly after the session containing the link to the recording of the supervision session, as well as any resources that were promised during the session.

e. The coaches would send via email any resources that they had promised to share during the session.

f. Submission of journaling: The coaches would complete their journaling and submit either directly to me or through Qualtrics.

g. Acknowledgment of receipt and "thank you" would be sent back to the coaches.

5. Data collection: The recordings of our actual supervision sessions, the action learning meetings, and their monthly journaling would be captured as data for the research.

Appendix 8: Client Permission to Record

Client's Consent for recording, transcription and disclosure of session content for executive coach continuing professional development and for coach supervision doctoral research purposes.

To continue with professional development as executive coach, I, _____ (coach) regularly engage in small group supervision of my coaching practice. My current small group is participating in a doctoral research project researching the efficacy of different modes of coaching supervision.

I am therefore requesting your permission for me, as your coach, to share in the supervision group and with the researcher: Kathryn M. Downing, (executive coach and doctoral student conducting research) the following:

1. Information about our coaching work from the perspective of my own exploration of how to continue developing in the profession
2. Permission to record and transcribe at least one of our coaching sessions for sharing part or all of the recording and/or transcription with those mentioned above (could be more than one session recorded since you as client will always have the option of declining at the close of a given session whether I may use the recording.)

   ✔ **Identity Confidentiality and Disposal of Research Materials:** Your name, identifying information, and organization will not be disclosed to the group, and will be kept confidential. The recording and transcript will be deleted within 14 days of the supervision session in which it is reviewed.

   ✔ **Potential Benefits to Participants:** Participation by the coach's client has the potential to provide an opportunity for the coach, to develop professionally, and the opportunity to contribute to research for the executive coaching profession.

   ✔ **Potential Risks to Participants:** Potential harm is anticipated to be generally no more than you would encounter in engaging in executive coaching.

Client Consent for Recording, Transcription and Disclosure of Session Content

Your signature below signifies you agree to my request to use material from one of our sessions to further my professional development as executive coach and my participation in the research.

I, _____(client) give you _____ (coach)

   1. permission to record and transcribe the coaching session on _____ (date) including:
   2. authorization to release all or part of the recording and transcription to the members of your supervision group, including your supervisor, and
   3. authorization to release all or part of the recording and transcription to Kathryn M Downing, coach supervision project researcher.

I further understand that no identifying information, including my full name and organization, will be provided. This written consent will be retained by you, as coach, and by Kathryn M Downing the researcher. **Details of the research and commitments by Kathryn M Downing, researcher, are stated on the following page.**

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have reviewed this document, I agree to its provisions and am voluntarily participating.

_____   _____
Client Signature   Date

_____   _____
Coach Signature   Date

Details and Commitments by Kathryn M. Downing conducting doctoral research on coaching supervision

Kathryn is an enrolled student in the Doctorate of Professional Studies (Coaching Supervision) Program at the Work Based Learning Institute of Middlesex University, London, UK. This Informed Consent is required by Middlesex University, the laws and regulations of the US regarding human subject research and the ICF Code of Ethics. This research study has been presented to and received formal approval to proceed from the Project Approval Panel and Research Ethics Subcommittee of the Institute for Work Based Learning at Middlesex University, London.

The purpose of the research: To explore three modalities and the usual practices within supervision groups in service to the coach's professional development.

Confidentiality, Privacy and Data Collection and Storage Provisions:
Confidentiality:
- The supervision sessions with the group and the group meetings with Kathryn will be confidential among the supervisor, the coach-supervisees and Kathryn.
  - This requires that no one disclose to others outside the group, what occurs in the sessions, and
  - provides permission for Kathryn, for research purposes only, to record the group meetings with her, and collect and use the written reflections of the participants.
  - If the supervision group selects part or all of recordings of the supervision sessions to provide to Kathryn, these may also be used in the research. The recordings submitted to Kathryn will be confidential.
- Any data collected for the study may be reviewed by Kathryn's academic advisors, doctoral research consultants and transcription services as part of the research process for purposes of framing, reviewing, coding, analysis and writing. No coach or client will be identified in any transcript except with a speaker number. Any data shared electronically will be transmitted over secure internet lines.
- All clients' identifying information, including their organizations, will be masked in the supervision session which means that the coach will not use their name, position or organizational affiliations in describing their coaching sessions.

Privacy:
- In any publication or presentation of the research, only de-identified information will be included in the data analysis and in the results.
- You, and each participant, agree that you will not disclose you were a participant.

Data Collection and Storage
- Electronically collected data will be stored within password protected cloud accounts and in a separate password protected thumb drive. Paper data (including Informed Consent agreements, hard-copy notes, printed transcripts, etc.) will be stored in Kathryn's office, and may also be stored in a locked storage facility.
- The recordings, transcripts and journaling will be kept confidential by Kathryn and destroyed 3 years after the completion of the research. All electronic email and file transfer links will be deleted. Paper data will be shredded.

Intellectual Property Rights
- The research results, conclusions, and content of the dissertation are the intellectual property of Kathryn.
- You will receive a pdf copy of the final dissertation upon request.

Concerns, Questions or Complaints Regarding the Research Study
You are encouraged to explore any concerns, questions or complaints regarding the research study with your coach. If these discussions are not able to resolve your concerns, please ask your coach for the contact information of the researcher.

Kathryn M Downing (signed by font)   *July 22, 2017*
Researcher Signature   Date

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6   A new dimension? Using observational data creatively in supervision

Kathryn M Downing

An invitation
To experiment, and explore by
Asking others to sit with you
And observe your coaching
With kindness, appreciation, grace
Honesty, integrity and challenge.

Introduction

Reflective practice is at the heart of our continued development as coaches and supervisors. The purpose of the chapter is to stimulate consideration of occasional use of audio or video recordings in coaching supervision to formulate deeper reflective practices and increase coaching capabilities. Three methods of using recordings are explored: using a video that prompts reflection unrelated to a specific coaching session; using a video of a coaching session in which the coach is not part of the virtual supervision group; and using audio or video recordings of coaching by one of the coaches in the virtual supervision group. Any one or combination of these may be explored creatively in supervision.

I invite you to consider case studies and my own experiences using recordings as a supervisee and as a supervisor in the hopes of tickling your curiosity about the potential of utilising recordings for ongoing professional development. These cases suggest opportunities for developing greater self-awareness; seeing yourself from different perspectives; and with new insight, reflecting on how you might want to integrate the new awareness.

If you observed yourself in-the-moment utilising a recording, what more might you see, discover or learn? What if you invited others to observe recordings of your actual coaching? As R D Laing observes – we are "limited by what we fail to notice" (Seymour, Crain and Crockett, 1993, p. 53). Perhaps it's possible that recordings will provide an opportunity for you to notice something new.

Through the cases, we will look at creatively using recordings within the supervision session; the vulnerability, courage and openness required for exposing our work to observation; and how our willingness to use recordings is influenced by a number of factors, including our relationships with our supervisor,

other group members and our clients, as well as our developmental maturity and experiences with feedback. Reflection questions follow each of the case studies and include the perspectives of supervisees and supervisors.

Why I extend this invitation to you

I am enthusiastic about using observational data, including recordings, for reflective practices and for continuing to develop professionally and personally. As a doctoral candidate at Middlesex University (London), I have research underway on the use of observational data, including recordings, in virtual group supervision. The early experiences of the research participants are widely variable and raise a number of fascinating questions. I interweave elements of the research into the case studies in this chapter.

I developed, early on, a deep desire for feedback to fuel my learning and development. In my coach certification programme, I found the reviews of recorded coaching sessions with mentor coaches to be pivotal points in my learning. As a practicing executive coach and coach supervisor, I have continued mining recordings. In my own practices as a supervisee I routinely bring parts recordings to my supervisors. As a supervisor, I have used recordings with small groups.

As you consider the offerings and examples I share, I encourage you to sit back and reflect on what you see and feel, what resistance is stirred, what curiosity comes forward and what you notice that might contribute to your growth and development. One of the joys of supervision is it offers a space that is designed around adult learning principles (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2015). The elements of adult learning include being driven and designed by the adult, based on what is important and meaningful to them, and using experiential learning in the context of one's professional development. Applying these principles in the supervision context, a supervision process that is co-created among the supervisees and supervisor is ideal.

I am not advocating that recordings are essential, nor that they would be useful for every person or every coaching case. My stance, too, is invitational – inviting you to consider in what circumstances you might be drawn to experiment with or embrace their use. I describe possible processes for bringing recordings into supervision, and ask, how would you design a process that works for you?

Bringing your work to coaching supervision

> *The range of what we think and do is limited by what we fail to notice. And because we fail to notice that we fail to notice, there is little we can do to change; until we notice how failing to notice shapes our thoughts and deeds.*
>
> R. D. Laing's quote in Seymour et al. (1993)

There are a number of ways to bring your work to supervision; overwhelmingly the preferred method is people talking about their coaching cases and

relating what happened (Bird, Reilly, Wiggins, De Haan and Atter, 2014). This use of narrative, telling the story, can be in-the-moment during the supervision session, the coach sharing extemporaneously (de Haan, 2012) and trusting that learning will occur. The coach may also prepare for the session by reviewing their current clients and bringing forth a case, theme, pattern, concern or success to share, and, with one additional step, the coach may write up a brief of the case and share it in advance, using the write-up and their story in the session (Hodge, 2016, pp. 101–102). Hodge found the coach's preparation for the session, the actual session and the coach's reflections afterward enhance learning in coaching supervision. These narratives are shaped by what we remember, what we noticed, how we want to be seen and our self-awareness (Hay, 2007).

Another approach is one of emergence, trusting that what comes up in the session is just what needs to be there. For those who trust emergence, coming to supervision without a specific theme, case or situation on their mind, and accepting what emerges in the moment with their supervisor can result in learning (de Haan, 2012).

Alternatively, the coach may take time immediately following a coaching session to write down everything she remembers about the interactions between herself[1] and the client. This approximate transcript can be used as the basis for exploring the session (Ibid., pp. 91–92). Or the notes could be used to refresh the coach's memory before engaging in telling the story in supervision.

Storytelling approaches have advantages for the coach. We are biologically hardwired for stories. "Meaning making is in our biology and our default is often to come up with a story that makes sense, feels familiar, and offers us insight into how best to self-protect" (Brown, 2015). Telling our stories gives us greater control to select what we share and what we omit, and we are able to eliminate details to protect the confidentiality of the client and any facts or feelings that we find embarrassing or shameful. We can position ourselves in our stories as we prefer. For example, I have noticed in supervision that the act of sharing a story, in and of itself, becomes a tool for raising awareness about our biases and assumptions about the client's words or behaviour (Patterson, Grenny, Mcmillan and Switzler, 2002).

We know that we are inclined to view stories based on our own views and experiences. Karr (2015) is an author and memoirist who teaches about the writing of memoir. She recounts an exercise in her graduate classes where she stages a fight with a colleague and then asks the students to write about what happened. Each of the students writes their version of what happened, each from their own lens, background, beliefs and experiences, and their versions differ remarkably from each other. A month later their memories vary even more.

If we consider the limitations to storytelling, might they stir our curiosity to explore additional ways to learn about ourselves? Dunning (2005) found a

number of patterns in his research on self-insight. How we experience situations and interactions is viewed through our own worldviews and framed only by our awareness of what is going on. Self-insight is difficult to come by accurately. We are unaware of many aspects of who and how we are in the world and often misjudge or misinterpret our capabilities and impact on others. Perhaps surprisingly, it is especially hard to evaluate our own competency, especially when we are less skilled. "What others see in us also tends to be more highly correlated with objective outcomes than what we see in ourselves" (Ibid., p. 5). Our inner critic and threads of perfectionism can cause us to view ourselves more harshly, and fear of judgment can drive us, consciously or not, into nondisclosures (Brown, 2012) as well as "confabulations – lies, honestly told" (Gottschall, 2012, p. 110).

This raises interesting questions about what is in our stories, as well as what is missing from them. There are a number of factors that influence what one is willing to share in supervision. A selection of these factors with reflection questions are included at the end of the case illustrations.

Observational data is sometimes used in supervision and includes bringing a recording, a transcript of the recording or both (Sheppard, 2017), or through direct observation by the supervisor during a live coaching session (Hawkins and Smith, 2013). Using recordings in coaching supervision has been described as the "gold standard of preparation" (Clutterbuck, Whitaker and Lucas, 2016), and as providing a "contrast and compare" opportunity between the actual verbal and non-verbal information in the recording, and the coach's experience (de Haan, 2012, pp. 91–92). Rogers has encouraged us to bring our actual coaching to supervision, saying, "[c]oach supervision only goes so far because essentially it is two people talking about work one has done when the other was not present. It depends critically on extraordinary levels of self-awareness and candor on both sides" (Rogers, 2011, p. 343).

Bird and her colleagues (2014, pp. 25–26) explored the use of audio recordings in one-to-one supervision, noting the following benefits:

1   An opportunity for the coach to discover or recognise feelings that may have been stirring for him or her in the session;
2   A shift in the working alliance between the supervisor and coach that was a "more collaborative, shared endeavor";
3   Recognition of patterns including energetically what was happening in the session; and
4   An opportunity to fully observe from the balcony what was happening in the session.

The use of recordings may raise vulnerability and fear of judgment to a greater extent than storytelling. Coaches have shared with me a variety of reactions to recordings. For example, having recorded, some could not bring themselves to watch or listen. In other instances, the coach watched, and noticed that her inner

critic was front and centre and she hated her voice and mannerisms. In that circum-
stance when a coach could bring themselves to view it a second time they found it
was more possible to actually observe what happened in the session. Some coaches
ultimately concluded it would be inappropriate to ask their client to record because
of awareness of the client's organisational setting, sensitivity to the content of the
coaching, fear of impacting the relationship with the client or disclosing that the
coach is in 'supervision.' Still others had clients whom they were comfortable asking
for permission to record; they recorded sessions, listened and observed themselves,
and then shared part or all of the recording in group supervision.

Hay (2007, p. 7) shares her reactions to listening to tape recordings of her
work as a transactional analyst:

> I quickly saw the benefit of the process even though I had to steel myself to
> play the tapes to colleagues and my supervisor. I spent a lot of time notic-
> ing with horror how many significant aspects of the interaction with the
> client I'd missed. I was often shocked to realize that I had completed [sic]
> missed something the client had said, or I had failed to pick up at the time
> the tone the client used . . . I persevered and gradually learned to accept
> these insights and improve my competence for the future instead of beating
> myself up over my perceived inadequacies.

For coaches who are feeling reluctance in bringing a recording to supervision,
perhaps the approach of recording a coaching session only for one's own learn-
ing and reflection is worthy of trying. Hay (2007, p. 8) describes using recordings
to inform supervision in this way. The coach listens to the recording, noticing
what might have been outside of his or her awareness. The coach may identify
a pattern present in the interactions with this client. That pattern may also show
up as the coach listens to other recordings. Having recognised a pattern either
with this client or more broadly, the pattern becomes the exploration in super-
vision. Thus, the recording, although not brought literally into the supervision
session, informs the coach's self-awareness.

Table 6.1 features reflection questions for you.

There is another possibility beyond self-recording. I invite my groups to use
video recordings found online. This practice developed from my curiosity of
how to balance four observations:

- Exploring ways to create safety with the use of recordings – where the
  stakes, for some coaches, might be lower risk than self-recording;
- Exploring opportunities for supervisees to strengthen their abilities to
  observe themselves in the moment;
- Developing an approach with recordings that is consistent with reflective
  practice as distinct from using recordings for competency assessments; and
- Using recordings as fun and playful learning elements.

Table 6.1 Reflection Questions about Recordings

Potential key factors	Reflection questions for supervisees	Reflection questions for supervisors
Client's willingness to be recorded	*Do you have a client who might be willing to be recorded? *How might you explore this with a client? *What assurances would you give the client? *How would you explain the reason for your desire to record? *Would you share with the client this is for your continuing professional development? *How might you or the client modify their behaviour in the session if it was recorded?	*Having reviewed the recording, what do you notice in yourself as you consider the coach? *If the coach records the client and reviews the recording as part of their preparation for the supervision session, would you want them to share with you that they had used this approach? *What curiosities arise for you if you notice a difference between the coach's memory of the session, and the things they notice when reviewing the recording? How might you handle this with the supervisee? *What curiosities arise for you about recording one of your supervision sessions and reviewing it either by yourself or with your supervisor? *What expectations or principles do you have about seeking permission from a client?
Asking the client for permission to record to inform your reflections	*Would you ask verbally or provide a written Permission to Record document? *What provisions would you make for the client revoking their permission, e.g. in the session, after the session, at a later date? *What assurances would you make regarding the deletion of the recording?	*What else is stirring for you?

Method 1: watching the Ruby video – an infant reaching for a toy[2]

This experiment, with ways to introduce the use of recordings and build safety within the group, has been very interesting and not completely as I expected. I was introduced to this concept as an audience member when Guy Claxton, in a key note address,[3] invited the audience to watch a video of Ruby (Jane, 2013), an infant reaching for her toy. He asked us to notice what feelings we experienced

as we watched. He invited us to notice if there was any congruence between the feelings that arose while watching Ruby and the feelings that might arise while working with clients. I have used this video with several of my small groups.

My approach has been to ask if the supervisees would be willing to watch the 3.5-minute video of Ruby. The group selects whether to watch it in the session or individually in advance. I invite them to notice their own feelings and stirrings as they watch. We then share our experiences. There is a lovely amount of fun, laughter, learning, lightness and curiosity with which we explore. The coaches notice any number of feelings including their impatience, their wanting to hand the toy to Ruby, their contentment in watching her strive, how she engages her full body as she learns, her lack of frustration and her determination, or the desire to be a cheerleader for her.

When we explored how these feelings show up in us, we identified some of our responses to clients. We identified areas for our potential development, e.g. more noticing of client's body language, or where we are impatient with a client. Other things that were noticed:

- Feeling judgment for not noticing everything and realising how trying to notice everything was really impacting presence in coaching sessions.
- Curiosity about one's level of cheerleading.
- Was goal orientation leading to driving clients?
- Was presence impacted by judging clients' speed of learning?
- Could the joy of watching Ruby learn be felt in watching clients learn?

This process has enabled supervisees to build their ability to observe themselves in the moment, to broaden what they might notice by hearing from their colleagues' noticing and to reflect on what they would like to cultivate in themselves.

There is a need to attend to safety in all supervision sessions. The relationships among the supervisor and supervisees in the group are an essential focus of attention given the multiple dynamics at work (Proctor, 2000): the sense of safety created by the supervisor and group participants; the sense of identity, inner critic and comparison gremlins arising in the coach; and the relationships among the coaches in the group. It is the creation of a safe space that invites supervisees to bring challenges and vulnerability into the session, providing the container for vulnerability.

As described earlier in this chapter, the use of the video of Ruby was free from the concerns of recording or sharing one's own coaching. The use of this kind of video for reflection is perhaps the safest place for most to experiment and build our skills as outlined earlier.

Method 2: using a recording of coaching by a person unknown to the group

I had imagined that using a recording of a part of an actual coaching session where the coach and client were unknown to the members of the supervision

group might be a comfortable experience, more aligned with watching Ruby than bringing the coach's actual recording into a session. The group could experience reflecting on a recording without needing to bring their own work forward. You will see this is not a fair conclusion as you read the following cases.

I invited two of my supervision groups to explore the use of recordings by reviewing a YouTube session of a coach working with metaphor (TPC Leadership UK, 2012). Both agreed. One group, Group A, selected a flexible approach to watching the video, having the opportunity to watch in advance, if any member had the time, and to watch as a group in the session. The other group, Group B, selected to watch it individually, in advance.

Each group had its own characteristics, relationships and experiences; the responses of the coaches in the two groups varied.

Case study – Group A – using a segment of a coaching session recorded by a coach unknown to the group and watching it together in the session

In Group A, some of the coaches had watched in advance, and some had not. The coaches were invited to consider these questions: "What came up for you? What did you just notice? And if you watched it in advance, what, if anything, has shifted between then and today?" We watched the recording in the session. The group dynamics did not shift based on who had watched it in advance.

The coaches were curious, explored the process used by the coach on video and shared reflections on their own coaching. For example, one coach noticed:

- The coaching process – that the recorded coach asked his client to pick an image, and then at the end of the session asked her what the image had provided her. She saw this as an opportunity for the client to identify what she had learned.
- Reflections on her own coaching – she loves and uses metaphors, imagery and visuals often with her own clients.

Another coach noticed:

- The coaching process – that the client lit up with some of the coach's questions and seemed to uncover new learning.
- Reflection on his own coaching – he doesn't use metaphor, and the thought of doing so is very intimidating.

Case study – Group B – using a segment of a coaching session recorded by a coach unknown to the group and watching it in advance of the session

The group opted to use the recording by watching it in advance and as a case study. We discussed the recording as the final segment of the supervision

session. As we started to explore, judgment, comparison and the inner critic entered immediately. The coaches noticed that they had a lot of judgment about the coaching session. Was it staged? Was it too easy for the client to use the metaphor? They then moved from negative judgment of the coach to judgment of themselves as they acknowledged feelings of inadequacy of their coaching. This led to a rich discussion of judgment of our clients and of our inner critic. The sense of why judgment was so front and centre in the use of this video, and not with the Ruby video, was expressed by one coach as, "put me with coaches, that is so close to what I do and how I serve the world, it feels, the word, threatening is coming up. What if they're so much better and I figure out I really suck at this?" Looking from the balcony at the whole of the supervision session we could see the inner critic and comparison gremlins threading through from the moment we checked in until we concluded.

You may notice that this group has developed a depth of safety between them, and with their supervisor, that they dared to surface fears, inadequacies and the painful voice of their inner critics in service of the group and individual learning. As one coach shared, "What I have learned from supervision is that there is learning in everything. The power in becoming the observer is how it opens up access to choice." Choice, to this coach, means the ability to recognise in the moment how she is feeling and choose how to proceed rather than reacting.

Table 6.2 features reflection questions for you.

Table 6.2 Reflection Questions about Group Dynamics

Potential key factors	Reflection questions for supervisees	Reflection questions for supervisors
Relationships within the supervision group and a sense of safety with colleagues (Proctor, 2000)	★What influences your sense of safety in the group? ★What would you need from your colleagues? ★What explicit contracting would support you regarding how the recording will be debriefed, discussed, shared? ★What are you noticing about your curiosity or about your concerns? How might this influence how you come to supervision?	★What do you notice as you consider the invitation and use of a recording in your supervision practice? ★What explicit contracting would be necessary regarding how the recording will be debriefed, discussed, shared? ★What group dynamics, if any, may need special care?

Method 3: using recordings of our actual coaching

Let's now look at experimenting with the use of recordings of our actual coaching. There are many factors that influence how each of us perceives the levels of risk, anxiety and courage necessary to bring our own work into supervision. Consider:

- Imagining the use of the recordings as a reflective practice, initiated and led by the coach, not an assessment led by the supervisor.[4]
- Impact on our relationship with the client. The relationship between the coach and the client is the most important determinant in the outcome of the coaching engagement (Rogers, 2008).
- Disclosure to clients that we are engaged in our own professional development.
- Performance anxieties and resultant impact on the way we or clients show up.
- Observing ourselves on the video.
- Shame – am I good enough? Will everyone see I am an imposter?
- Comparison and judgment to others in the group.
- Relationship with feedback.

Table 6.3 features reflection questions for you.

Table 6.3 Reflection Questions about Vulnerability

Potential key factors	Reflection questions for supervisees	Reflection questions for supervisors
Vulnerability – ability to be vulnerable and how that was shaped in our family of origin (Brown, 2012)	★What is your relationship with vulnerability ★When you were growing up how did your family view vulnerability? Who in your family, if anyone, openly showed vulnerability? What impact did that have on you?	★What are your beliefs and assumptions about the use of recordings? ★How could you imagine using recordings to inform reflective practice as distinct from a mentoring process? ★What feelings are you noticing?
Self-compassion – how you manage your inner critic, and how you cultivate self-kindness (Neff, 2011)	★What feelings, if any, of comparison and competitiveness do you notice in supervision? ★How do you cultivate self-compassion? ★How do you contextualise where you are on the learning journey towards mastery? ★How do you manage your inner critic?	★What vulnerability and self-compassion issues might you want to explore?

Two case illustrations

1   *My own struggles with clients – using partial recordings as supervisee*

The first case illustration looks at my own use of a segment of recordings with my supervisors. In the first one I am a coach supervisee. The second case explores the use of a full recording with a group that I was supervising.

Supervision of my coaching

I had entered into a coaching contract with an executive in a corporation who was highly motivated about coaching. Her goal was to learn to modulate her need for control as it was negatively impacting her work and family relationships. We entered the coaching relationship with a warm connection, and both expressed pleasure to be working together. My sense of her was one of openness, candour and an ability to observe herself and articulate what her feelings were in the moment.

By our third meeting I noticed I was not looking forward to working with her. I found my presence diminished in our session. I was aware that I had an emerging judgment of her with respect to one of her relationships. I brought this, as a supervisee, to my small group session. In exploring the case my descriptions were critical of the client's actions. My supervisor and the other coach wondered what these feelings of judgment were telling me about her and how they could inform our work. Was there an opportunity for her to learn about her impact on another? How might I shift my presence to move towards acceptance rather than judgment? I left the supervision session with new insights.

In our next two coaching sessions I was able to be more present, and to shift a bit out of judgment. However, I was beginning to dread working with her; my feelings were growing stronger. I took this back to supervision. We explored my 'judger' from the lens of compassion. What was going on for my client in her world? Where had my compassion gone? We had identified a potential parallel process that I was feeling inept with this client just as my client was feeling inept in one of her key relationships. I felt encouraged.

In my next coaching session with her, I had the clear sense I should not continue to work with her. Following the session, I was considering stepping back from the engagement. I called my supervisor to inquire if we could quickly arrange a one-on-one supervision session. She agreed.

I explained that I wanted to work through how to terminate this coaching relationship. I was accepting full responsibility. I brought a few minutes of the recording from my last coaching session. My client had agreed, in our initial contracting, that we would record all of our sessions, and that I could use any of these recordings in my own supervision. We agreed she could ask for any recording to be stopped, deleted or not used at any time whether in the session, at the end of the session or on reflection. I contacted her to confirm that I had her permission to use the recording of this particular session.

My supervisor and I contracted to watch a few minutes of it together at the start of the session. I knew that she would completely see why I could not work with this client based on the client's behaviour.

Something else happened. When I paused the recording, my supervisor shared that this client did not exhibit many of the behaviours I had been describing. She wondered if I had brought another client recording in by mistake. I was momentarily stunned. Feeling defensive, I took a deep breath, and then another. I felt the shame flooding my body. I may have sat silently for 5 minutes, grounding myself, letting go of my fierce inner critic and moving towards curiosity. My supervisor sat beside me, and I could feel her compassion. I was ready to move forward with our discussion.

As we explored, I came to realise that I had identified with a member of the client's family and aligned myself against my client. In feeling protective of the third party I had lost presence and unconditional positive regard. The breach I felt in our relationship and my wanting to flee the engagement were all about me. It had little to do with my client. I left the supervision session revelling in the excavation of this blindness. I was blind to two perspectives – firstly, that I was projecting on my client and her family member my own stories, and secondly, that I had aligned with a third party against her. I continued to reflect and consider the steps in this journey with the client. I could feel my heart open up to her and to myself.

Prior to sharing the recording with my supervisor, I had watched the video of my coaching session and could observe a number of things. What I couldn't notice was that my client was different than I was experiencing her. Eurich (2017) shares that we are unable to fully observe ourselves even on video. She encourages, as one step in learning more about ourselves, to seek feedback on our abilities and behaviours. For me, in this case, I was watching with the same view I had of my client in the session. It was the feedback from my supervisor, who saw the client with different eyes, that enabled me to 'see' her as she truly was.

The relationship between myself and my supervisor was honed over several years and the bond of trust between us solid. Bachkirova (2015, p. 11), in considering how self-deception may be addressed in the supervision experience, proposes a model that recognises the need for "an *atmosphere of safety* in order to feel increasingly capable to disclose any aspect of their work and thus develop greater awareness and self-understanding" (italics in original). I had that 'atmosphere of safety' with my supervisor. It may also be worth noting that shame appeared, in those initial minutes, after watching a few moments of the recording, even though I have a strong relationship with feedback and had control of the process, and a solid bond with my supervisor.

Table 6.4 features reflection questions for you.

2 Case illustration: using a full recording with the group

John, a new member of one of my existing supervision groups, shared he was eager to bring a recording. He asked the group if he could do so at the next session.

K.M. Downing

Table 6.4 Reflection Questions about Supervisory Relationship

Potential key factors	Reflection questions for supervisees	Reflection questions for supervisors
Relationship between supervisor and supervisee has been established as the most important factor in effective supervision. The level of safety that lets one bring mistakes, shadows, ethical concerns and self-judgment to allow the full exploration of one's coaching practice depends first and foremost on this relationship (Beinart and Clohessy, 2017).	★What do you notice about your level of safety with your supervisor? ★If you want to experiment with a recording, what additional contracting do you need? ★What are you noticing about your curiosity or about your concerns? How might this influence how you come to supervision?	★How do you assess and manage the ebb and flow of safety with your supervisees? ★What considerations of additional contracting elements might be useful? ★What are you noticing about your curiosity or about your concerns?
Elements of adult learning include: the level of interest in the new learning; expectation that the learning will be meaningful; and whether the new learning will assist development (Knowles et al., 2015).	★What might you learn from any resistance to recording one of your sessions? ★What might you learn using recordings? ★How might the observations of others watching or listening to the recording be useful?	★How do you view the roles of the supervisee, the supervisor and the group? ★What is the balance in the structure you provide for the group in what you initiate or require and what you invite or expect of the supervisees?
How the recording will be used needs to be within the control of the supervisee (Ibid.).	★What are your prior experiences, if any, using recordings? How might this influence you now? ★Having read the different ways of using recordings described in this chapter, what process do you feel would be most useful to you?	★What are your prior experiences, if any, with recordings and their use? How does this influence you? ★What requirement or expectations are you currently holding about how the recording may be used? ★What additional time might be required if you use recordings, and how will that be handled with respect to your contracts and fees?

When they agreed, he asked if they would be willing to listen, in advance, to a full hour session. He offered to provide a transcript. The group agreed they would strive to listen in advance. To include this preparation time was a significant addition to the group's contract. He sent a brief description of his work with the client, the recording and the transcript. He designated a few specific minutes of the recording for those who chose not to listen to the full recording.

When we came together for our group session, we had a diversity of preparation. I had reviewed the full recording and transcript, one group member had

reviewed most of it, one group member had read the full transcript and listened to a part of the recording and two had not received the e-mail with the recording and transcript. John presented his case as he normally would through narrative. The discussions included some comments and reflections based on having listened or read the transcript; and some comments were informed only by the story. John reported the dialogue served his needs and reflections.

One aspect that I noticed throughout was that the participation of the individuals who had not listened contained more hesitancy and apologies for not having listened. This shifted the dynamic in the session by placing individuals in different strata – those 'in the know' and those who viewed themselves as not. This difference in strata felt to me as though it significantly diminished the presence of those who had not listened as their numerous apologies and body stance suggested diminution. It raised contracting issues, questions about committing unexpected time to prepare and questions about the different levels of communication needed when transcripts or recordings were sent in advance. This also raised the question about how many containers were needed for this one group. I use the word 'container' here to describe the boundaries around the different elements that make up the whole holding of the group within the supervision context. For example, how does the supervisor hold a container for the person bringing the recording, for the part of the group that listened, for the other part of the group that read the transcript and for the part of the group that was using the narrative description only?

This case study raises a number of lines of inquiry, including:

- How will the supervisor charge for their preparation time to review and make notes in advance of the session?
- What contracting might be required at the onset of the group and/or at the point of request by the coach?
- If the request is made after initial group contracting what inquiry might be useful about boundary management?
- Will group members be able to commit to the advance preparation and watch or listen ahead of the session?
- How does the supervisor contract with the group in anticipation that there may be different levels of preparation?
- What feelings or fears related to the process may show up in the supervision session?
- How might the supervisor and the group embrace different levels of preparation as a part of their overall inquiry – valuing the 'new' observations and the prepared thinking as both valuable in the whole?
- How might the supervisor use all available data (request, process, recordings, feelings) to hold a wider inquiry into parallel process?
- How does this experience inform our work with our coaching clients?

The case study illuminates our ongoing inquiry into how we show up fully in supervision. The disparity among the group is not limited to whether one has

listened to the recording. Disparity can show up in a number of ways – for example, a less experienced coach demurring to a more seasoned coach, a case reflection based on the use of an assessment with the client that another group member has no experience with or a coach working with a team in a group of coaches that engage in one on one coaching. What can we learn about ourselves as coach in these circumstances? If we are feeling less well prepared than the client, do we lose our voice? If we are not well versed in the organisational context, do we feel 'less than' our client? If our client arrives not having done their homework between sessions, to what extent do we take responsibility?

Notice also that, in this case, the coach was new to the group. He had just joined. He brought a recording. What does that say about him and how he is in groups? About how he joins groups? About group safety? This illustrates the point that the use of recordings is very individual – our own ability to be vulnerable, our relationship to the recording and our experiences with feedback are important determinants of our willingness to bring recordings into supervision. These may be acts of vulnerability and courage; they may be the easiest way for a participant to bring himself into the group.

Our relationship with feedback

McLean (2012, p. 15) writes that learning about our self and therefore our 'self as coach' "requires us to be fiercely aware of our strengths, weaknesses and tendencies. It demands that we call forth our talents, address ever changing challenges and constantly self-correct." To know ourselves is a life-long journey that requires robust opportunities for cultivating self-awareness, observing ourselves, reflecting, learning and, as importantly, receiving feedback. Being 'fiercely aware' is a challenge to us. In my own experience, using recordings takes a fierceness in facing my own vulnerabilities and ability to receive feedback. For others, it is as natural and comfortable as it was for the coach who brought a recording to his first group supervision experience.

In planning my research project, I assumed it would be fairly straightforward to recruit coaches and supervisors who were willing to experiment with recordings in small supervision groups. I was mistaken. I encountered a great deal of resistance; it was a more difficult task than I had imagined. The most frequent reaction was of fear of exposure – that we would not be seen as the coaches we want to be. The strong waves of fear, of imagining we might not be good enough, being discovered as an imposter or being seen as less than we hope to be were overwhelming. It was asking for vulnerability that was beyond what many coaches and supervisors were able to embrace (Brown, 2012). You, the reader, may have had some of these same feelings as you considered this invitation. Others of you may be quite ready to jump in and experiment. Some of you may be on the fence, leaning to one approach or another.

It is an intriguing set of circumstances. If, philosophically, we are curious about exploring the use of recordings, how do we overcome barriers related to our own vulnerabilities and relationships with feedback? Is there a sufficient

potential gift of learning about ourselves that might motivate us? How can it inform our work with our clients? What are the potential risks and harms? In answering these questions, we will open the door to learning something new.

Notes

1 Pronouns 'he' and 'she' are used interchangeably.
2 The case studies in this chapter are composites and anonymised to protect the identities of the coaches, clients and supervisors. The examples of coach supervision groups are based on actual groups comprising North American based coaches who primarily work as external executive coaches or as internal coaches for organisations, with North American based supervisors.
3 Claxton, G. (2017). *The Coach: Directive, Maieutic, Addictive or Empowering?* The 7th International Conference on Coaching Supervision May 13, 2017. Oxford Brookes University, Headington, Oxford.
4 There are a variety of positions on the use of assessment in coaching supervision from almost universal agreement that ethical assessment is required; to the downsides of requiring assessment back to the organisation which has contracted for supervision of internal coaches; to regulatory bodies requiring statements of competence by the supervisor. It may be that some coaches will want to use the recordings as a competency review with their supervisors. While this is intriguing it is beyond the scope of this chapter.
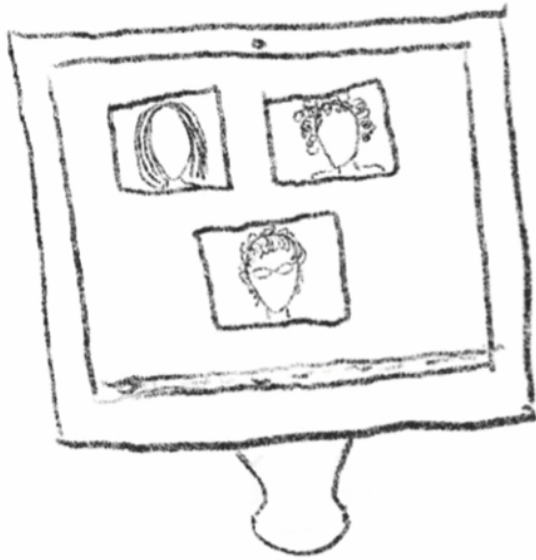
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Mary Karr On Writing Memoirs: 'No Doubt I've Gotten A Million Things Wrong' (2016) *Fresh Air* [Podcast] 23 September 2016 Available at: https://www.npr.org/2016/09/23/495161071/mary-karr-on-writing-memoirs-no-doubt-ive-gotten-a-million-things-wrong [Accessed: April 21, 2018].

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Storyboard presentation of parallel process

Illustrated by Kelly Grogan Hudson.

A SUPERVISION
GROUP CALL
STORYBOARD

I FEEL A LITTLE UNBALANCED

Check-In:

HOW ARE YOU ARRIVING?

REMIND ME TO BREATHE.

CONFIDENCE

This is a praise-free zone!
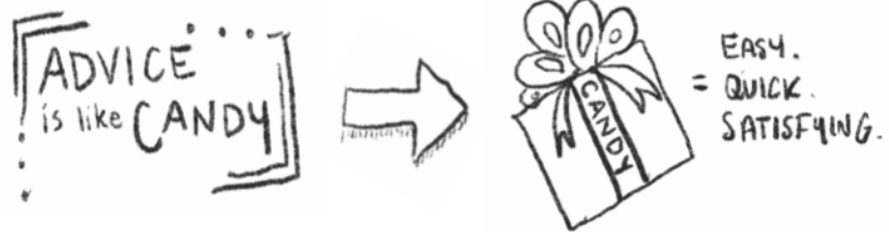
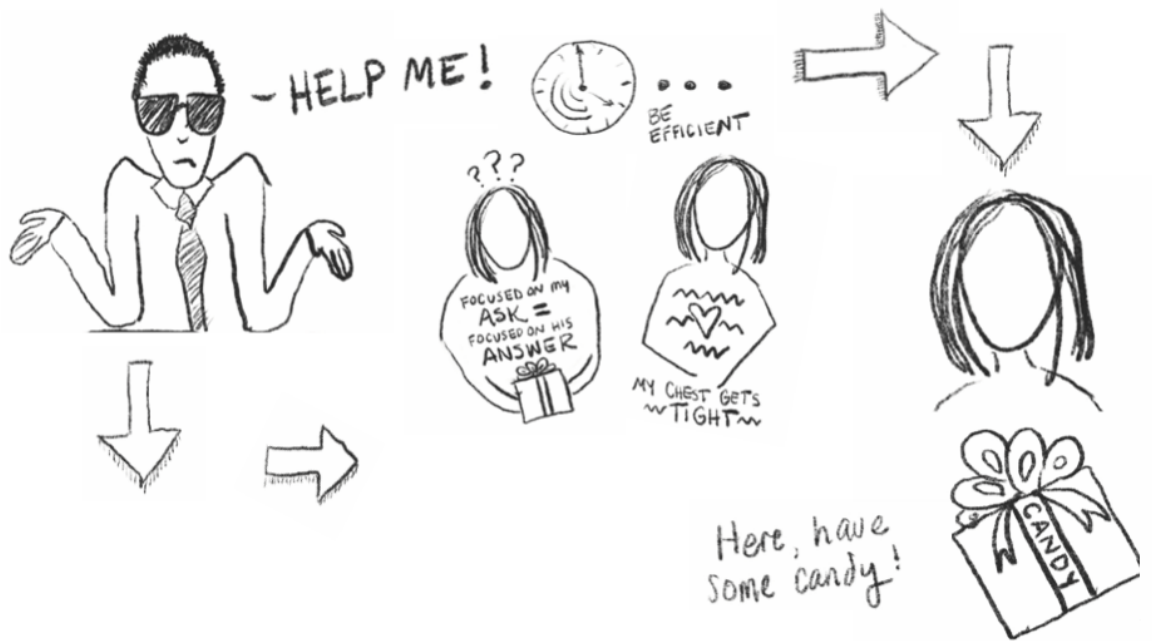I sometimes show up less confident than I really am...

The Coaching Case:

I want to talk about working with clients who seem less resourceful: i.e., they seem to have less access to their own reflections/intuition and/or other resources (role models, etc)

In coaching these types of clients, I find it harder to resist the temptation of telling...

ADVICE is like CANDY ➡ [gift box labeled CANDY]

EASY.
= QUICK.
SATISFYING.

Later...

I WASN'T COACHING

CURIOSITY   KNOWING

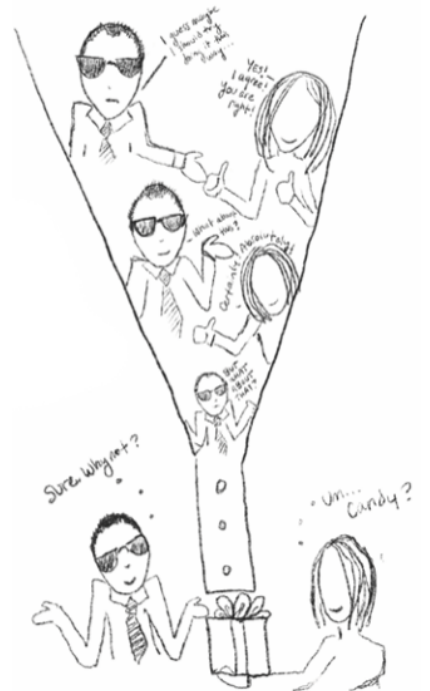WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I MOVE FROM CURIOSITY TO KNOWING:

1. I have a very clear point of view on the issue we're talking about.

2. I want to be efficient with our time

3. I'm frustrated because I already asked and he doesn't know the answer
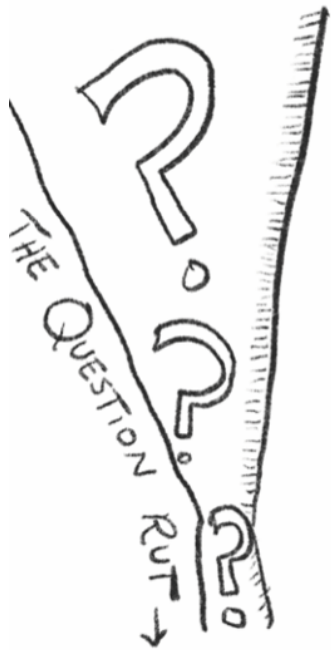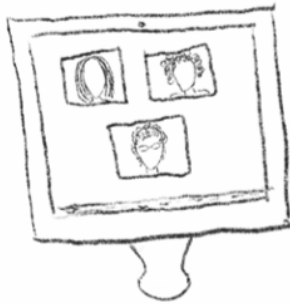
MAYBE IT'S
ME?

MAYBE I'M
MAKING THE
RUT?

Did you catch what just happened?

LOOK CLOSER

What if my Client is also in a parallel process?

DOWN THE CANDY LINE

Appendix 11: Contracting Elements

Essential elements of Level 2 Contracting

The essential elements of the group's processes and structure were contracted collaboratively; as a group we considered and decided on each aspect.

These were:

1. **Perspectives on supervision and articulating shared purpose**
   a. each member's expectations and hopes for supervision;
   b. any fears they were willing to share about engaging in supervision;
   c. the needs of each group member with respect to feedback, encouragement, challenge; and
   d. the expectations and needs of individuals for interactions with each other in the group.

2. **Confidentialities**
   a. commitment to not use client names or the name of their organizations;
   b. not to share what happened in the sessions outside of the group;
   c. members would ask clients for permission to bring their work to the group and which would disclose they were in supervision;
   d. members could share their personal learning with clients;
   e. members could disclose to others they were in supervision, and their supervisor; and
   f. members could share thematically what they were learning with colleagues and others but not any of the learnings of other group members.

3. **Recording of the supervision sessions**
   a. whether the sessions would be regularly recorded;
   b. if so, who would have access to those recordings;
   c. that the recordings were confidential, would not be shared or posted on social media;

      d.   the recordings would be deleted when the coach had finished their review, or at the end of the engagement; and

      e.   the Sponsor had access to the recordings through providing the Zoom accounts for the supervisors. The Sponsor would not access the recordings; all recordings, on the Zoom account, would be deleted no later than 60 days following the end of the engagement.

      f.   [This is one of the cultural norms within the sponsor, in all five research groups, every session was routinely recorded. Following the session, the recordings were shared with either the full group, or those members who had missed the session. Each session was available to the supervisor.]

4. Zoom

      a.   what were our collective expectations about using video or audio only;

      b.   individuals' personal locations for the session; and

      c.   expectations for levels of background noise.

5. The process and structure

      a.   would one coach bring the primary case each month, with about 20 minutes reserved at the end of the session for anything urgent with another group member; or

      b.   would we start each session asking who had something to bring and then allocate the time; or

      c.   would each coach bring a situation each session;

      d.   agreeing on the broad array of cases/issues/themes and the fullness of life matters that were within the arena of supervision;

      e.   would we use observational experiences, and if so, which ones; and

      f.   would we require write-ups in advance from the presenting coach or were they optional based on the coach's preferences.

6. Reflection question

      a.   would I send a reflection question in advance;

      b.   could the reflection question include a short video they would watch in advance; and

      c.   if the reflection question did not resonate, we would not spend time reflecting on it.

7. **Rituals**
    a. would we start with "how are we arriving" or open in another way;
    b. would we incorporate a centering practice into our beginning, and if we did who would lead it;
    c. how much time would we allocate to the opening ritual;
    d. would we speak in the sessions as we were moved, or would we pass the baton to another group member when we had finished sharing; and
    e. would we would each offer a response each round.
8. **Ethics**—what codes of ethics would we reference.
9. **One-on-one communications outside the group**
    a. did I have the group's permission to meet virtually one-on-one with a coach if there was a relationship matter that we needed to consider and repair or resolve; and
    b. if yes, did the group agree that the coach would disclose the conversation and resolution in the next group session if it pertained to the group.
10. **Resources**
    a. would I send resources (website links, articles, book recommendations, quotes or poems) and other potentially relevant materials following a session;
    b. if that was desired by some, we would agree these were purely optional; and
    c. it was acceptable for any of the group members to disregard them.
11. **Rescheduling**
    a. how did we anticipate handling unanticipated rescheduling needs;
    b. if more than three members of the group of six could not make a session we would reschedule;
    c. if either coach in the group of two could not make a session we would reschedule;
    d. the supervisor intended to make every session; it would take a significant situation for the supervisor to ask to reschedule; and
    e. in the unlikely event that the supervisor could not make a session we would reschedule.

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12. Supervisor's supervision

    a. would the group agree I could take themes and issues from the group sessions to my supervision; and

    b. what actions would I promise to ensure confidentiality.

    c. If they agreed, I committed to always give them a heads up that I was going to take my stirrings to my supervisor; and

    d. I would share my reflections from my supervision session(s).

13. The research

    a. confirmed the recordings of the sessions would be part of the data collected, would be retained on my system, but not the Sponsor's Zoom account;

    b. the coaches would submit their monthly journaling in response to the prompts; and

    c. I would have access to the journaling; neither the supervisor nor the Sponsor would.

Appendix 12: Key Findings - Use of Technology

Key findings virtual small group supervision

1. Participants, in diverse geographies were able to come together as a group.
2. Group sizes varied from 2 to 7 and all found the technology acceptable/desirable.
3. The supervisory relationship was impacted by the supervisor's ease with the technology – if the supervisor was at ease with the technology, the coaches experienced the environment as safer.
4. A calm acceptance by the supervisor of technology interruptions, which occurred in every session, was experienced by the group as acceptance of who and how they were.
5. Explicit contracting for enrolling in virtual small group supervision
   a. Zoom technology required
   b. Sessions were 90-minutes in length
6. Explicit contracting in the organizing session around the use of the technology
   a. whether access to a camera to appear on video was required
   b. whether and in what circumstances group members could select joining only by phone; contracting around one or more coaches on voice only, with others on video was important in establishing a group norm for the inevitable times when a participant had access only through a phone with no video capability.
   c. a quiet background was preferred, participants asked to mute when not talking
   d. sufficient bandwidth was assumed to enable video and voice
   e. whether the sessions were to be recorded and if so, the distribution of the recordings, the limits to their use, and when they would be deleted
   f. if a coach was coaching another coach in the session, the other group members muted and turned off their video camera while observing the coaching session; the only videos on the screen were the coach and the coach they were coaching.
7. Participants preferred the use of video technology, such as Zoom, over voice only:
   a. Ability to see all of the group at once, using "gallery mode" in Zoom, that represents the circle which gives a sense of being in the group.
   b. Ability to see facial and some body expressions which provides enhanced understanding of what is being said
   c. Contextual information is conveyed by the physical surroundings of each participant
   d. Enhances safety and connection for many participants
   e. Groups who started their group using phone and have moved to Zoom highly prefer Zoom
8. Important caveats to using video technology
   a. There were technology disruptions in almost every session, e.g., screens froze, voices were garbled, group members did not have access in the moment to the link to join session, one or more of the participants dropped unexpectedly and had to re-join.

     b. Acceptance of technology glitches - the messiness of the technology – when it froze, when the connections did not happen with ease, with disconnections, poor lighting, etc. – the calm, accepting response by the supervisor was a key element of creating and maintaining the safe container for the group. This acceptance transferred to what the coaches bring to the session – the messiness of their coaching.

9. Enables recordings
     a. Contracting – all of the groups in the research consistently recorded every session and this was contracted for at the start of each year's engagement.
     b. In some groups the recording was sent only to those coaches who missed the session; in some groups the recording was sent to everyone as participants wanted the opportunity to watch the recordings.
     c. Coaches who missed the session often watched the recording to stay current with the group's process and learning
     d. Coaches occasionally watched the recordings
         i. to observe themselves in the group
         ii. to deepen their understandings from the session, or
         iii. to refresh their memories on the discussion of their client case prior to the next session with the client
     e. Two of the four supervisors routinely used the recordings to observe and reflect on their supervising, and to share parts or all of selected recordings with their supervisors.
     f. Agreements on retention of recordings, and any other use of them (such as the supervisor using the recording or transcript with their own supervision supervisor) were explicit.

10. All of the supervisors were in virtual supervision of their supervision.

Sharing the research

ICF (International Coaching Federation)
Converge19 Research Conference
October 2019
Prague, Czech Republic

Reflective Practice in Virtual Small Group Supervision

Explore reflective practice as a critical component of ongoing professional development for executive coaches through the lens of small group supervision. Five supervision groups, throughout North America, participated in a yearlong research project on reflective practice by bringing their cases, issues, and themes forward for exploration and discovery. What the coaches learned about themselves and their practice, what facilitated their leaning and the subtle art of being within a group is illuminated. The outcomes of this study have applicability to executive coaches' own reflective practice and provide a number of paths to increase one's learning about reflection and from reflection.

Learning Objectives:

- Define key elements of their reflective practice.
- Enhance their current participation in supervision drawing on the findings from the case study.
- Decide whether to engage in virtual small group supervision as part of their reflective practice.

Global Supervisors Network
November 2019
Webinar

Virtual Small Group Supervision - building a safe container.

Kathryn will share key learnings from her research on 5 virtual groups engaged for 12 months in small group supervision.

Kathryn Downing: As a coaching supervisor and executive coach, Kathryn comes with a joyous commitment to lifelong learning and her belief in the resourcefulness of the individuals and groups she works with. Kathryn primarily works virtually as a coaching supervisor with groups of 4-6 coaches. She is a member of the Leadership Team at Hudson Institute of Coaching and faculty for Coaching Supervision Academy – UK and Asia Pacific. She is based in Santa Barbara, California." Turner, E., Nov 6 2019 email to members "Next week's webinars on virtual group supervision – more spaces available"

AOCS Virtual Supervision Conference

March 2020
Webinar

Supervision Themes brought to Virtual Supervision Groups

APECS
April 2020
Webinar

Virtual Small Group Supervision - building a safe container

Kathryn will share key learnings from her doctoral research on 5 virtual groups engaged for 12 months in small group supervision where we will learn to wake up more to what is happening, moment to moment, in the virtual space, and develop practical skills in how to become aware of and manage group safety virtually.

The Henley Centre for Coaching: Supervision Series
September 2020
Webinar

Safety in Numbers: Reflective Practice in Small Learning Communities

Thinking about small group coaching supervision? Wondering what structures and relationships you need to show up in a virtual setting with 3-6 coaching colleagues and truly share your challenges, worries and successes?

New research on creating safety in small group virtual coaching supervision will be shared that illuminates key elements for the supervisor and supervisees in co-creating a safe container – a supervision space where supervisees can be authentically themselves, able to move into vulnerability, risk being truly seen, and courageously challenge each other. The participative webinar will provide reflective space for participants to notice and articulate their own needs in small group supervision.

This webinar is primarily for coaches and supervisors who are engaged in or curious about virtual small learning communities for their personal and professional development. HR and L&D professionals who are sponsors or considering sponsorship of virtual supervision for internal coaches may benefit through learning about conditions that support safe space for learning through reflection.

EMCC Global Provider Summit 2020
November 2020
Webinar

The Garden of Supervision: Reflective Practice in Virtual Small Group Supervision

New research on reflective practice in small group virtual coaching supervision will be shared that illuminated possibilities for personal and professional development through experiential and transformative learning. This includes the first public presentation of a model for learning and development culminating from the research. The participative webinar will provide space for participants to explore their own practices in small groups.

Learning outcomes:

This is a session that combines the introduction to the reflective practice model, with time to reflect with colleagues. The learning outcomes for the session will come from the contrast and comparisons of your own practices with those of the research groups.

1. Expanding one's thinking about how to guide reflective practice virtually.

2. Understanding the elements of reflective practice

3. Understanding the additional elements present and possible in small groups

4. Cultivate curiosities about expanded possibilities for your own reflective practices and for your clients and students.

Appendix 14: Reflection Questions

Reflection questions sent in advance to Daring Group

Session	Reflection questions
#1	What are you noticing about being part of the research? Any connection to how you show up for any of your clients?
#2	It is the midst of summer; play and playful are on my mind. What do you notice about play and playfulness in your coaching?
#3	How if at all, you use metaphors in your coaching practice?
#4	What are you noticing triggers curiosity for you in your coaching? What kinds of things tend to move you out of curiosity?
#5	I am curious about endurance and resilience. I am wondering what is stirring for you, especially in light of running a marathon, or long travel and how does this infuse your own rejuvenation?
#6	I have an idea and wonder if you would be willing to consider this. It is based on the following ideas: • the use of recordings in supervision is for reflection, not assessment. • we can learn about ourselves as coaches from case studies of the others in the group • Susan shared in the session when Laura shared the transcript that she learned about herself • In another group, a recording was shared, and the others learned from listening Those thoughts took me to the idea that one way to learn about ourselves through recordings in supervision is to use a recording from someone outside the group. So, I went to YouTube this morning to see if I could find a short recording of part of a coaching session that might be interesting for this experiment. One of the reflection questions that seemed to resonate with you both was about the use of metaphors. Here is a short (7 minute) portion of a coaching session exploring metaphors. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QI3Uqtdxs3I Here are the possibilities for us on Thursday - 1, To use the recording as a reflection question - much like we did the Ruby video of the baby reaching for the rattle - to see what you notice about yourself as coach 2. To use the recording as a case study - what came up for each of you about this portion of a coaching session, and perhaps your own use of metaphors 3.To use it in some other way?? 4. To not use it at all.

	I am open to your preferences.
#7	The reflection question is what are you noticing about your own learning? Is there anything you want to give yourself or the 3 of us permission for?
#8	I am wondering what is on your mind about your coaching practice – perhaps what is one surprise or new awareness have you had in the last few weeks?
#9	For a reflection question, I wanted to share this passage from a book I love by Mary Catherine Bateson entitled Peripheral Visions, Learning along the way: "*Insight*, I believe, refers to that depth of understanding that comes by setting experiences, yours and mine, familiar and exotic, new and old, side by side, learning by letting them speak to one another." (p.14) What comes up for you as you read this? How does this show up, if at all, in your client work?
#10	For a reflection question Hetty Einzig (2017) in The Future of Coaching writes: "Initially this is one of the most useful roles of supervision: to help us recollect in tranquility and make sense of the fog of the session. As our body-mind becomes more attuned and adept, we are able to use our own experience in the moment to aid insight in the client." (p. 19)

Reflection questions sent in advance to Creating Community Group

Session	Reflection questions
#1	Do you have in mind 1-2 areas of development as a coach that we could support?
#2	What are you noticing triggers curiosity for you in your coaching? What kinds of things tend to move you out of curiosity?
#3	What do you notice that moves you to judgment in a coaching session? What information might these feelings give you and how could you use this in your session?
#4	As a reflection exercise, please watch this 3.5 minute video - and just notice what you observe in yourself while watching. You may want to make a few notes afterwards. The video link is: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Q2cL-WteZk The reflection question is: As you watched Ruby what did you notice about yourself that may be showing up in how you coach?

#5	As we discussed on our last call, I have a 7 minute video clip of a coach and client using metaphors. We can use this as an exploration of what it is like to get just a snippet of a recording session for us. My idea would be for us to listen to it as a group in the session - so <u>no pre-work for you</u>. Check-in will be how are you arriving and what do you have for us? We can just play with what we notice about ourselves in watching it - as we did the Ruby video - and what stands out for us. (I have attached the link just in case you want to watch it in advance, and for Julie who will not be able to make our session.) Here is the link to the video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QI3Uqtdxs3I
#6	I am attaching a mid-point questionnaire and would appreciate it if you would return to me before our session. The reflection question for check in is what, if anything, would you like to share from your mid-point reflections?
#7	What do you notice about how you are as a coach with the clients you look forward to working with as contrasted with the clients you may not look forward to as much or at all?
#8	For our reflection question - as we have been on this trip, I have been noticing how my sense of safety to be vulnerable ebbs and flows depending on the context, the interactions, the topics, the settings, my competitive and comparison gremlins, etc. This makes me curious about how that occurs within our group. I know overall we have a sense of safety with each other as demonstrated by the ongoing depth of sharing and reflection. I am wondering if you might want to notice, during our session, what makes you feel more willing to share, less willing, and everything in between. My guess is this is true for our clients as well - that they may feel more secure to be vulnerable with us in some parts of a session and perhaps less so in other parts. I know in my own supervision if I detect or imagine a whiff of judgment from a colleague or my supervisor, I can pull back. If you are up for this, we could save about 15 minutes toward the end of the session to explore what we noticed about ourselves and perhaps our interactions with our clients.
#9	the reflection question is about endings. What do you notice about your endings with clients? Do you have formal endings, do you or your client wander off or ??
#10	Based on our discussion in July here is how I imagine we might organize ourselves for this ending and our new beginnings. As we arrive and check-in, perhaps our check-in could include our own relationship with endings. We touched on this in our last call. It might be

| | helpful to remind the group how each of us is coming into the session. Those feelings will likely be present and sharing will let us each notice what may arise as a result. For example I am not masterful at formal endings, so my inclination may be to say a few times - "we are all part of the Hudson community", "looking forward to how our paths cross again in the future", "who's going to the April 2019 conference"…etc.

Then a conversation among us - about the ideas that came up in our previous session:

Sharing examples of what we are taking forward from our time together - as a coach, leader, partner, parent, human, etc.

Sharing what the group means and has meant to each of us.

Using the metaphor of "opening up" what is coming up for each of us this Fall as you start new beginnings

Considering the invitation in The Art of Possibility to give ourself an A going forward and share how we want to see ourselves in the future - we may want to each designate how far in the future we are imagining.

Let me know if I have missed anything from our discussion or if you have additional ideas. |

Creating Community Action Learning Meeting Reflection Questions

Reflection questions for action learning meeting:

Thanks for agreeing that I may join you for your peer learning call on Friday. This will be the 60-minute meeting to debrief our supervision process so far, in order to inform the research. What matters the most for Friday is that you come as you always do - open, honest and transparent. I am not looking for anything other than understanding how this is going for you. The overall inquiry is how is this supervision working for you. Because the research is about using recordings, transcripts and live-action coaching in supervision I will have some specific questions about those.

A few reflection questions in advance of Friday's session:

I am curious about how this supervision process is working for you. What, if anything, do you want to add to the midpoint reflections?

Has being "part of the research" had any impact on you?

How would you describe any barriers, if you feel them, to using recordings? Transcripts?

What about the reflection questions for journaling following our sessions - do they resonate, are they getting stale, are things on your mind that are not being raised by the questions, would you recommend revising them?

How is it to be in the group of 6?

What recommendations, if any, do you have about the use of observational data in supervision?
        Does it get in the way?
        Does it have a place?
        How is it as the one who brings it?
        How is it for the others to experience it?

How would you describe or define the following terms - vulnerability, exposure, risk - in the context of our sessions?

These are the questions percolating for me. And I love emergence, and how we work with it in our sessions, so they are starting points only.

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Appendix 15: Acts of Love

Acts of Love—My theory of practice in a five-act play.

My theory of practice

In Hamilton, The Musical[20] there is a song entitled "The room where it happened". Borrowing a few lines of that song, the contribution of this research is to enable others to "really [know] how the game is played, the art of the trade, how the sausage gets made" by inviting the reader into the room "where it happened" (Miranda and McCarter, 2016, pp.186-187). That sentence applies to me, as much as to the reader. By stepping into the room as the supervisor-researcher, I had the opportunity to research on my practice, consider and observe my theory of supervision, compare and contrast it with my colleagues' theories and practices, consider it in the context of the literature, continue to practice, and arrive at this point. Arrive as a supervisor-practitioner-researcher, on the perpetual journey toward mastery (Clutterbuck and Megginson, 2011), with a keen appreciation for the joys of being a curious and inquiring practitioner.

In this Appendix, I share my learning; my discoveries, and how my ways of supervising have changed. I share how my theory of practice has evolved (Boyd, 2008, p.89). There is a bit of irony that I set out to research if the use of observational experiences in supervision would provide the coach with new ways of seeing one's self - "Insight—take a deep, clear look at how you coach[21]" and have arrived at the point that the insights are mine —I have taken a deep, sometimes murky, sometimes clear, look at how I supervise – and recognize that who I am becoming is embedded in the phrase "Acts of Love". Using the metaphor of acts of a play, I have written five Acts about the embodiment of my learning. Following these Acts, I conclude with an illustration of the many aspects of virtual small group supervision.

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[20] Writers: Lin-Manuel Miranda The Room Where It Happens lyrics © Warner/Chappell Music, Inc

[21] One of the early titles for this research.

"Power that respects no one but includes everyone, that calls for the best in people, and that evokes great creativity, is love. Dialogue can unleash the power of love, not in a sentimental or moralistic sense but in the genuine sense of true creativity".

(Isaacs, 1999, p.395)

Act One

Contracting

The first session of a new season. I come downstairs first thing in the morning, and turn on my desktop computer, open the Zoom app to ensure I am signed in on the correct account, open the French doors to let in the breeze and the cacophony of bird songs. I am content, looking forward to the group, anticipatory feelings of engagement, more often now with no performance anxieties or deference. I notice how happy I am to be alone, having a cup of coffee and picturing the members of the group. Then I move to the breakfast room to enjoy a bite to eat, good music playing, and the sunlight coming in the windows.

10 minutes before 8 am, turning off the music, I go into the office, turn on the lights—both the overhead and the LED strip lights mounted on each side of my iMac. The lighting is precisely positioned so that I am not in the shadows, nor am I backlit which would create a silhouette with my face not visible. I am wearing professional attire from the waist up, and casual trousers, and fitness shoes. I stand—working at a stand-up desk—with note paper and 3 pens at the ready, my headset on with a noise canceling microphone to ensure high quality audio. I briefly review the proposed agenda I sent to the group in advance, smiling as it feels very resonant to have invited them to reflect about how they want to be together in the coming year, what they need as part of this group, what are their expectations, what do they want to share. It is the beginning of asking them to observe self, self in relationship and to share their needs and desires. I have explicitly labelled our session as one about contracting, calling their attention to the need for contracting in supervision just as with a coaching client.

I go into the virtual meeting room a few minutes before the top of the hour. It gives me an opportunity to chat with whomever has arrived, and to be promptly there at the starting time. The coaches arrive within a couple of minutes. I welcome them and share my delight at engaging with them to see what we can learn together. I am smiling, I feel the warmth emanating out to them. I ask them to share "how are they arriving in this very moment", I do not call on them but rather ask them to speak when they are moved to do so. When they have each shared, I pull the themes from their check-ins—noting the disparities whenever possible in order to reinforce that we are not about conformity, we are about what is "true" for each of us. I then share how I am arriving—perhaps on this morning I am contemplative, having been immersed in writing for the past many weeks.

I notice in these early minutes of the session the configuration of our meeting room— the virtual space created by the collective images of all of us—in our squares. I have a large expanse of space behind me, with bookcases and favorite books, fresh flowers from the garden, and the office doors open to the rest of my home. The others are each in their homes, as we are in the safer-at-home stage of COVID. The array of personal space in each square brings an intimacy – we see glimmers of each of our homes, sometimes of family members and pets, a spouse bringing coffee; the normalcy of being with another in their home.

This session is starting significantly differently than my research sessions. I am content; my performance anxieties have dissipated with learning, experiencing and practicing. The contracting is explicit, detailed, rich with examples, more collaboratively reached—the infusion of the clinical supervision literature. The contracting includes how I will facilitate—a new aspect of contracting inspired by Proctor's (2008) typology on group supervision. My groups start as participative groups and move to co-operative groups when they feel ready. There is no need to talk about how to be courteous on Zoom—muting one's microphone is now an accepted cultural norm. There will be technical

glitches in every session, and I welcome them as I would an ambulance siren wafting in an open window if we were meeting in person. It is part of the landscape.

Act Two

Intentional Attention

> I have a lightness in inviting the presenting coach to share their case with the group and in my contracting with him or her about what they want. The group responds and explores with them, appreciating the issues within the case, expressing gratitude the coach brought it, holding a mirror for the coach to see their own resourcefulness, sharing their own times of struggle with the same issue, offering different ways to think about or reflect. I add to themes or build on what they share. I can be playfully challenging—asking if they would play with me for a few minutes along another line of inquiry. The lightness is essential, as I am not expecting or demanding that they agree; rather I am hoping to pique their curiosity. As we conclude the case, I give them 2-3 minutes of quiet reflection time, to consider what they are each taking or sitting with. Then I go around the circle, starting with the presenting coach. I again pull themes and notice the multiple possibilities and challenges that have arisen. I share what I have learned, noticed, or am curious about in my own coaching work. I express gratitude to the presenting coach and the group. I briefly reference any resources that have come to mind during the case. We move to the next case.

The qualities of my attention are dramatically different. I am attending to multiple facets of what is going on in the session; I have developed greater capacities for the complexities within the space.

The attention on the presenting coach – what are they saying and not saying about this case, what is their energy, pace and inflection communicating that their words are not, am I detecting a disturbance in them such as shame, or possible ethical issue, to what extent can they identify what they need from the group, are they getting full—do they

have enough from the inquiry that there is no capacity to take in more. Are their life stories playing out in the case?

The attention on the other group members – who appears distracted, who is engaged, are their offerings responsive to the presenting coach's ask of the group, has something been triggered by the circumstances of the case, what are the dynamics among the group—for example, is there a subset of the group in dialogue, not the full group, or have some of the members moved into judging. I balance letting the inquiry proceed with when to pause the group to highlight this, challenge the stance they are in, and explore what it means about their beliefs and values.

The attention on the quality of the dialogue (Isaacs, 1999)—what evidence that it is happening, how long does it last, which members of the group are in it, what facilitation might the group need to stay a moment longer in real connection.

The attention on the content of the case – what am I sensing that has not yet been offered? When and how should I offer it? I know that my sensing is typically very useful for the full group—an aspect that was out of their focus—which broadens possibilities. And sometimes it is not. I am quite willing to move into the unknown and share, without concern about whether it lands. This comes partially from my group supervision supervisor saying consistently "help may or may not arrive" (Murdoch, 2014a) and the embodiment of Theory U (Scharmer, 2009). It also comes from the articulation of the reflective practice model, described earlier in Chapter 9.

The attention on what is going on for me—what images are coming to the foreground, what am I sensing, how is my energy, have I been hooked by the content, or an interaction? Is it about me and if so, I need to self-regulate. Is it about the group and in service to their learning? If so, I will share. All of that decided in a micro-second. In my better days I do this increasingly well. In my less resourceful days, I can find myself three sentences into a triggered reaction and course correct. Occasionally I react, I don't catch myself until after the session, I take it to my own supervisors, then repair with the group in the next or a subsequent session. What I have learned is that the repair strengthens

the container as my experience of being hooked, working it in my own supervision, and coming back to the client (the group) is doing just what the coaches are asked to do. My lack of perfection soothes their desires for perfection. My struggles illuminate our shared humanity.

Act Three

Expansiveness of acceptance

Judgment has entered the field. The reflection questions, sent in advance, were "What do you notice that moves you to judgment in a coaching session? What information might these feelings give you and how could you use this in your session?" I offer that the reflections might provide an opportunity for us to wonder about our relationships with judgment, our beliefs about what is appropriate, to explore the excruciating standard of expecting ourselves to hold the client as competent, capable and able, unconditionally, when we are hard wired for assessing, comparing, contrasting, and judging. I sense the opening in one coach, she breathes deeply and shares how relieved she is to reframe her understanding of her judgment as a potential source of information. Another coach shares that cannot be "right", moving to judgment. We notice, we may recognize all those feelings in ourselves, we appreciate the candor and difference.

As we proceed with the cases, there is the slightest shift in some of the group, a more curious inquiry. As we are closing the session I ask if they would be willing to do something differently in the next session—would they be willing to bring successful cases—where they were just the coach they wanted to be, and have us explore what they are doing in those moments. It is an invitation for us to pause and catch up with ourselves by affirming what we did or how we were when we felt in flow.

As I reflect on the thesis, I see my patterns of defining acceptance more in terms of one's foibles, challenges, lack of presence or resourcefulness, one's failings. What I hold now is the expansiveness of acceptance which includes: rigor and the direct and candid feedback

in service to another's growth and development; the resilience that is within us; that truth-telling creates safety—the willingness for us to inquire with a coach and say out loud what has not yet been asked; the courage to name and claim our own abilities, to celebrate our moves toward mastery. In all of my groups today, I invite the coaches to bring a wider variety of cases, issues and themes. This is the application of the learning with Aileen over the three times we explored her recordings and her ultimate ability to claim her strengths when we offered them. For many, it is harder to bring their "better" work than their struggles; for others not at all. For me, it is a letting go of prior frames of reference, a shifting of my beliefs and values.

Act Four

Listening and Inquiry

> I ask the presenting coach if she would be willing to experiment with her case in a slightly different way. She agrees, and I ask the group as she shares the case, to listen, to notice what is coming up for them—an image, a metaphor, feelings, or body sensations. We go around the circle, the presenting coach takes in their images or feelings, as an offering of something that may or may not be useful.

> A presenting coach is struggling in a relationship with one of the stakeholders in the client's organization. I offer we could play with the situation—perhaps she wants to assume the role of the stakeholder and have one of the coaches coach her in that role. There is lots of good exploration following the 15-minute coaching session.

> The presenting coach is mired in the lack of coachability of his client. I might ask "in your most resourceful self as the coach, what do you want to say, that you have not yet said to the client" or "what is your stuckness with the client telling you about their stuckness".

Listening and inquiry are the primary elements of dialogue. How these are cultivated in the sessions, as discussed throughout this thesis, is about the container that is vibrant

enough for self-disclosure, vulnerability, challenge, reflection and learning. It is about pace, tone and posture, facilitation, experimentation and being in service to each other.

The pace matters – slowing down to be very curious, to explore micro movements, small interactions in the client relationship, trying to imagine what was being felt going into the session, during and following the session. This cannot be a rushed process toward a destination. It is an exploration, a listening for what might emerge that was out of awareness, a collecting of possibilities and perspectives, but not necessarily in service to defining future steps. Collecting for reflection, for consideration, for experimentation, for holding up against our stories, values and beliefs, for challenging us to consider differently. There is no destination, no seeking a resolution, no need to fix. "Nowhere to go, nothing to do. Help may or may not arrive" (Murdoch, 2014b, quoting in part, Nepo, 2011, p.417).

The tone and posture of the group matters. If I, as the supervisor, or one of the group members moves into a teaching stance, or an advice-giving stance, we have moved into a space of knowing or of telling, which may close the inquiry down. Leaving all of us with "an answer" that may or may not be relevant. Inquiry from a stance of the resourcefulness of the coach is embodied in the offering—the invitation to consider—the quieter tone, not leaning into the screen but sitting back. I find maintaining the even tone and curious posture most challenging when I feel there is an ethical question lurking; I must be most mindful of my stance and posture in those moments.

My facilitation is about encouraging the addition of possibilities from the group - what else? What might be getting in the way? What stories are we hearing in the offerings? Have you moved to judging the client? What aren't you saying? What else could be going on? It is also, as mentioned above in the discussion of attention, to bring in perspectives that have not yet been brought in by the group members.

The experimentation, a variety of approaches, including the three described at the start of this Act, bring energy to the group, create a freshness in the explorations, and widen

the apertures. Any experiment is permission based with the group through in-the-moment contracting.

Isaacs (1999) tells us that the container is where we collectively hold "the intensities of [our] lives" (p.243). Receptivity to what each coach is holding, across their lives, calls on the abilities of the group to hold reflective space, not move to rescue or caretaking. The global pandemic has provided innumerable more opportunities for the holding of just this kind of space, in ways most of us would never have imagined.

Act Five

Reflective practice model

I use the model described in Chapter 9. I may present it overall in one of the early sessions, or I may notice and inquire about different elements through the early sessions, and then share the full model. The purpose is to provide one way of contextualizing what we are doing together—that this is a learning space, a reflection space, a noticing and observing space. The feedback has been that it is useful in making explicit what the opportunities are within the sessions. It provides a framework—another level of contracting about the coaches' responsibilities and opportunities.

As I share the model, we explore aspects of coaching, including the power of staying in curiosity and not moving to judgment—the need to be willing to ask one's clients questions when we don't know the answer. I commit that I will role model these ways of being at different times in our sessions. My offering, when it does not work, gives me the opportunity to explore with them how it was for them to be on the receiving end of a curious question that fell flat.

I think in images, the model is my visual, and as mentioned in the introductory Chapter, I am not advocating it's use or that it is generalizable. It has opened the possibilities of discovery and practice in my supervision groups.

An ending and a beginning

I am living fully into "Who you are is how you supervise" (Murdoch and Arnold, 2013). My commitment is to offer love, in its purest form: the offer of attention, to the coaches in my groups. Below is an illustration that captures the many components of virtual small group supervision experiences.

A

acceptance
accountability
attention
action
awareness
awake-ness
appreciation

C

challenge
compassion
competency
connections
candor
courage
commitment

T

transparency
together
trust
teach
time

S

self
service
surrender
support
surprise
shared
humanity

O

others
offering
open-hearted

F

felt-sense
feelings
fears

L

listen
learn
lightness

O

observer
open possibilities
offer perspective

V

vulnerability
volunteer

E

engagement
experiment
energy
empathy
exchange
expectation
ethics

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