How does supervisor power influence clinical supervision from the perspective of the supervisor?

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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MA

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Abstract

This thesis explores the role that power plays in clinical supervision from the perspective of the supervisor. It focuses on the level of awareness supervisors have of power, its impact on them, and how they view its impact on their supervisees and the supervision process itself.

This research will add to the limited literature available on this critical issue. It was conducted using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a methodological and analytical framework.

The results highlight the significant role that power plays in clinical supervision, as well as the understanding participants have of the way in which it impacts on them, the supervisees, and clinical supervision. Four superordinate themes emerge from this research: (1) the impact of power on participants; (2) participants’ awareness of power in supervision; (3) power as an entity in supervision; and (4) sharing power in supervision.

The results of this research reveal that many participants view their power as responsibility. The study also found that participants understand power as something that is exercised in clinical supervision if warranted, and that it is not a permanent active presence in supervision. Significant variations emerged in participant’s awareness of it and its impact on them.

This research highlights the need for all those involved in clinical supervision to critically explore how power is present in supervision, their understanding of it, and how its presence impacts on the way supervision is conducted.

A limitation of the research is the potential lack of generalisability associated with using an IPA framework.

The extent to which clinical supervisors are consciously aware of and understand their power would benefit from further research. Also, the role power plays in promoting and perpetuating an uncritical common-sense view of the role of supervisors needs to be further researched.
Declaration

I Michael John (Shane) Mc Guire, confirm that this thesis is my original work. It has been written and submitted in part fulfilment of the academic requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. I also confirm that this thesis and its contents have not been submitted for any other degree or academic qualification to any other institution.

This thesis is the result of my own work and investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references in the text. A full reference list is appended.

I hereby give permission for my thesis to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loans and to be made available to outside organisations.

Name: Michael John (Shane) Mc Guire

Signed: [Signature] Date: February 2018
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A PhD does not happen by accident, or without the involvement of many people. I have been fortunate to have people of the highest calibre and ability involved in all aspects of my PhD journey.

Most doctoral students have to settle for having one supervisor, but I have been lucky to have two. To Dr Sharon Houghton and Dr Patrick Ryan, my heartfelt and sincere thanks for being my guiding stars and compass from start to finish. I could not have wished for two better supervisors. You kept me firmly focused on my research, and you offered valuable insights into my research direction throughout the journey.

A special thank you to my work colleagues, who challenged, encouraged and supported me in my wish to undertake this research. Thanks to Fiona Walsh for inspiring me to embrace the challenge and uncertainty of conducting original research. You have always encouraged and supported me in my academic adventures.

John H, you always supported me and tolerated my long absences, thank you.

To Brian for providing accommodation, thank you. My proof-readers deserve special mention. Their critical insights, comments and suggestions helped enormously in the production of a professional document.

My parents, long since departed from this earthly realm, have my eternal gratitude for encouraging me to never give up on my dreams and to believe anything is possible if you put effort into it. Wherever you are, I send you my thanks.

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<thead>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACI</td>
<td>Addiction Counsellors of Ireland [Previously IAAAC]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACP</td>
<td>British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPS</td>
<td>British Psychological Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can</td>
<td>Critical Narrative Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DA</td>
<td>Discourse Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EHSREC</td>
<td>Education and Health Science Research Ethics Committee, University of Limerick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP</td>
<td>Existential (interpretative) Phenomenology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDA</td>
<td>Foucauldian Discourse Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPA</td>
<td>Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IACP</td>
<td>Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Narrative Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFQ</td>
<td>National Framework Qualifications</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSI</td>
<td>Psychological Society of Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QQI</td>
<td>Quality and Qualifications Ireland (Statutory body responsible for validation of qualifications in Ireland)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPhD</td>
<td>Structured PhD (University of Limerick)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td>Template Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>TP</td>
<td>Transcendental (descriptive) Phenomenology</td>
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<tr>
<td>EP</td>
<td>Existential (hermeneutic) Phenomenology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAAAC</td>
<td>Irish Association of Alcohol and Addiction Counsellors [Now ACI]</td>
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis explores the question of how supervisor power influences clinical supervision from the perspective of the supervisor. It contributes to a broader understanding of the nature of clinical supervision and the impact supervisory power has on the process. This thesis highlights the nature of power and the role it plays in clinical supervision from the perspective of the supervisor. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is the chosen method of data analysis used. By using IPA, “we commit ourselves to exploring, describing, interpreting and situating the means by which our participants make sense of their experiences” (Smith et al. 2009, p.40). The rationale for choosing IPA and rejecting other qualitative methods is outlined in detail in chapter three.

The role that power plays in human interactions has been the object of research by eminent social scientists. French and Raven’s seminal and ground-breaking work (1959), and more recently Foucault’s (1970, 1971, 1973a, 1973b, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1986, 1989, 1990), serve to highlight the complex and controversial nature of what is understood by the phenomenon of power. While the concept of power is recognised and commented on by many researchers, an overarching explanation of its essence has proven to be elusive and contestable. Power in clinical supervision, as understood from the perspective of the supervisor, is an under-researched area. The dearth of material unearthed in searches carried out as part of the literature review (details in chapter two) supports this contention.

The need to have working definitions of power and clinical supervision is important. This will help develop our understanding of how these two concepts exist in clinical supervision and the impact and influence they have on the clinical supervisor.

1.2 Motivation for undertaking this research

My motivation for undertaking this research arose from a conversation I had with one of my supervisees. The supervisee, a newly qualified psychotherapist, was working up her post-qualification hours to become an accredited member of the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP). As part of this process, she was required to have clinical supervision for her practice from an IACP accredited clinical supervisor. Part of my role as her clinical supervisor was to sign-off on her fitness-to-practice as an accredited psychotherapist. This is a requirement for accreditation as a counsellor-psychotherapist with the IACP (Appendix Seven). Gaining accreditation would be a significant milestone in her career development and enable her to work for the many organisations that insist that therapists be accredited with an accrediting body such as the IACP. My supervisee remarked that I did not appear to have an awareness of the power I held over her career in my role as her clinical supervisor, and she wondered how this substantial power impacted on me.

Power permeates every clinical supervisory relationship. As a result of discussions with my clinical supervisees, I am becoming increasingly aware of my positional power and its impact on both myself and my supervisees. Although the positional power of the supervisor is acknowledged in all of the literature, it appears that little research has been undertaken on how this power impacts on the supervisor, their awareness (if any) of it, their perspective on it, its effects on them, and how it informs the way they conduct supervision.

Previous research by Murphy (2002) explored power in supervision from the perspective of the supervisee. Murphy (2002, p.2) talks about “the scant literature” available on the supervisory relationship. Furthermore, there appears to be almost nothing of note available on how supervisors manage their power in supervision and how they perceive it to impact on themselves, their supervisees, and the supervisory process. Murphy (2002, p.1) further asserts that there is a “paucity of research about clinical supervision in general and specifically regarding the supervisory relationship”. This is somewhat surprising given the increasing number of professionals involved in conducting clinical supervision.
This research examines the concept and experience of power from the supervisor’s perspective. Although many studies have been undertaken on clinical supervision, few have addressed the issue of how, as supervisors, we manage our power; what awareness we have of it; and how we perceive it to impact on ourselves, the supervisee, and the supervision process. The lack of research on this issue is significant.

In addition, Murphy observes that:

The haphazard nature of research undertaken to date on this subject does indicate that power in the clinical supervisory relationship is a recurring theme and worthy of further study.

(Murphy 2002, p.33)

She also asserts that no one has attempted to develop a comprehensive theory of the supervisory relationship that specifically addresses the power dynamic present in this relationship (Murphy 2002).

This is an important issue due to the asymmetrical nature of power in clinical supervision. The failure of supervisors to critically engage in examining the impact their power has on themselves, their supervisees, and the supervisory process increases the chances of them overlooking this aspect of their supervisory practice. In addition, it may hinder their ability to develop a critical awareness of the impact their positional power has on them and the supervisory process. Ellis (2010, p.110) notes that “[his] own experience has been that those people who are least aware of their true power bases are the ones who are most likely to abuse their power”. Furthermore, Murphy and Wright (2005, p.283) suggest that “discussions about power should begin early in supervision and continue throughout the supervisory relationship”.

Overall, there is scant peer-reviewed published research on this issue. This is evident in the negligible amount of material uncovered in the extensive search undertaken as part of the literature review in researching what had already been published on this subject.

1.3 My research question

How does supervisor power influence clinical supervision from the perspective of the supervisor? This overarching question generates the following sub-themes:
• To understand the nature of supervisor power in clinical supervision;
• To explore how supervisor power is present in clinical supervision;
• To examine how supervisor power impacts on the process of clinical supervision;
• To develop a greater understanding of supervisor power in clinical supervision;
• To inform clinical supervision practice;
• To assess its implications for supervision theory, research, and practice;
• To elicit perspectives from participants on their understanding of the nature and use of power in clinical supervision;
• To explore participants’ understanding of their role and how they make sense of it;
• To contribute to knowledge about this important issue.

1.4 Significance of the research

As the role of the clinical supervisor develops into a distinct specialisation, it is apt that research is undertaken into all aspects of clinical supervision. In Ireland, the number of supervisors accredited with the IACP (December 2016) stands at 549. This is a significant increase in the figures registered in 2009 (235 approx.). Year on year, the number of accredited supervisors registered with the IACP has increased. Other organisations also report an increase in the numbers of accredited supervisors. For example, the Addiction Counsellors of Ireland (ACI) currently (December 2016) has 68 accredited supervisors listed on its webpage. This is a significant increase from the 42 recorded in 2009.

This is a welcome development, as it suggests that clinical supervision is practiced more widely. Furthermore, accredited supervisors must meet strict criteria before becoming accredited. This might be an indication that the importance of having appropriately qualified supervisors, with a distinct role within the therapeutic support framework, is being recognised. A word of caution is needed here. In Ireland there is no statutory regulation governing counselling and supervision. Despite the provisions of the 2005 Social Care Act, which provides for the making of regulations to govern the counselling profession, currently (2017) no such regulations have been introduced by the Minister for Health. However, in September 2016, the Minister for Health called for submissions from interested parties regarding the regulation of the counselling profession in Ireland. Currently, anyone can practice as a counsellor and supervisor in Ireland, without oversight from anybody. This is an unsatisfactory and
potentially dangerous situation for the client, the practitioner, and the profession itself. Consequently, it is impossible to quantify the exact number of people who are practicing as counsellors and those who are engaged in clinical supervision in Ireland.


This research is significant, as it will contribute to the literature already available on clinical supervision and address an aspect of it that is under-researched. It will provide greater understanding and knowledge of the power dynamics present in supervision as understood from the perspective of the supervisor. It will inform the development of supervision practice by highlighting the need for supervisors to engage with this aspect of supervision critically. Researching and drawing attention to this side of supervision will enable supervisors to increase their awareness of their power, its impact on themselves, their supervisees, and their practice. Likewise, enhanced supervisor self-awareness regarding their power will generate informed discussion between supervisors and supervisees on its impact on supervision practice.

1.5 Relevance of the research to practice and policy

The increasing awareness and acknowledgement of the distinct role of clinical supervision, and its impact on the therapeutic practice of supervisees suggests that appropriate clinical supervision, undertaken by a suitably qualified and accredited supervisor, can have a positive impact on the supervisory encounter and the clinical practice of the supervisee. For supervision to be useful and have a clinical value and currency, it is important that the power element of the supervision dynamic be
further explored and understood. How this power impacts on the supervisor (the subject of my research) is a critical component of this task.

1.6 Structure of thesis chapters

Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature available on power in clinical supervision. It highlights the focus of this literature, pointing out where there is convergence and divergence regarding the role and impact of power in supervision. In addition, it notes the gaps in the literature regarding the impact of power on supervisors and their awareness of their own power in supervision.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used to carry out the research. A rationale for choosing this methodology is presented. Persuasive arguments for choosing IPA are advanced. It outlines in detail the steps involved, from obtaining and analysing the data to the development of superordinate and subordinate themes. It provides an ‘audit trail’ which maps this process.

Chapter 4 (results) discusses the meanings that participants make of their power and my interpretation of these meanings. It explores these meanings and interpretations through the various superordinate and subordinate themes identified in chapter three.

Chapter 5 focuses on discussing the results and their significance for the theory, training, and practice of clinical supervisors arising from the research. It relates the results to theories of supervision and power. It offers recommendations for the practice of supervision and further research.

Chapter 6 (conclusion) summarises the main findings of the research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Power is everywhere, and nowhere more prevalent than in clinical supervision. Murphy and Wright (2005, p.283) advocate that “discussions about power should begin early in supervision and continue throughout the supervisory relationship”. This literature review seeks to critically review and analyse the views that are currently presented when discussing the type and nature of power in clinical supervision and to critically compare and contrast the definitions of clinical supervision that are available. In discussing aspects of clinical supervision, the need to attend to the power dynamics in the supervisory relationships was stressed in all of the material reviewed. However, as Murphy (2002, p.1) notes, “there is a paucity of research about clinical supervision in general and specifically regarding the supervisory relationship”. Moreover, Murphy observes the following:

The haphazard nature of research undertaken to date on this subject does indicate that power in the clinical supervisory relationship is a recurring theme and worthy of further study.

(Murphy 2002, p.33)

Furthermore, Murphy (2002, p.18) asserts that no one has “attempted to develop a comprehensive theory of the supervisory relationship that specifically addresses the power dynamic present in this relationship”.

2.2 Literature review

In this literature review, the relevant available material that relates to my research question was explored, critiqued, and evaluated. Areas of agreement and disagreement among scholars and authors were noted and acknowledged. Gaps in the literature were identified and highlighted. These evidenced the importance of researching the area of supervisor power, as outlined in the introduction to this study.

2.3 Literature review strategy

A systematic search strategy was carried out, primarily by accessing online resource and electronic libraries, to access the most up to date articles, journals, and books available on the subject. Initially, the Google search engine was used, using the key words ‘power’ and ‘supervision’. These searches yielded over two million entries.
Amending the key words to the phrase ‘power clinical supervision’ yielded seven results. This result indicated that I had narrowed the search phrase too much, and that I would have to pursue an alternative search strategy to get a broader set of results. Of the seven results found, one of them was a thesis which proved extremely useful (Murphy 2002), three other results were articles over fourteen years old, and the final three were well-known books on the subject by reputable authors.

I subsequently amended my search strategy to focus only on databases with an emphasis on scholarly works. A search on Google Scholar® using the phrase ‘power in clinical supervision’ generated 7,200 entries. After attempting to read some of the articles generated in this search, it became evident that: (a) I would never have the time to read all of them, (b) in many instances it was difficult to determine the publication criteria for the articles, and (c) there was a considerable variation in the quality of the articles read.

A new search strategy was thus required to access relevant articles, while at the same time ensuring that: (a) they were of a sufficiently high standard, (b) they had clear publication criteria, and (c) the journal they were published in was a reputable one, or in the case of a book, it was published by a reputable publisher.

Following on from this, amending the search criteria to include articles from 2001 onwards and only searching for journal entries and peer reviewed papers generated 245 entries. The search strategy was expanded to include other databases such as: End-Note Web Library, Science Direct, PsycINFO, Academic Search Complete, EBSCO, and University of Limerick library electronic database. Books and peer reviewed articles on the subject by well-known and reputable authors were also interrogated regarding their views on power in clinical supervision. The techniques of snowballing and reverse-snowballing were used to look at additional journals and articles.

Snowballing refers to the technique of looking at the list of references cited in papers and articles viewed and following through to view the cited article. By its nature, this method can only look at articles already written. In this way, I was able to access all relevant articles published previously on this subject without having to generate additional searches on multiple search engines. This enabled me to develop a critical understanding of the similarities and differences between theorists in the context of
my research question. It also allowed for the inclusion of relevant books and articles published before 2001.

Having exhausted the search for relevant articles and publications by using snowballing, I used the reverse snowballing method. This allows access to relevant articles written after the date of those being viewed up to the present. This was achieved by using the citation tracking device on Google Scholar and other search engines. Using the citation tracking facility available on many online databases enabled me to access more recent articles in my area of research. This process was continued until no further relevant or current articles were found.

2.4 Limitations of the strategy

It was hoped to conduct this review using articles and journals published in the last ten years. This was to ensure that the most up to date publications were consulted. However, due to the dearth of such material uncovered in the searches using the methodology outlined above, it was necessary to extend it to include all relevant material published from 2001 to date to get a greater body of material to review. Notwithstanding this, articles and books written before these years are included, as their content makes a significant contribution to developing a perspective on the topic under review. Another limitation of the research was the exclusion of material not published in English. Though this parameter was not specified in the search criteria, it is noteworthy that searches did not generate articles or journals in non-English language publications. It is probable that articles exist in other languages, but these were not consulted as part of this literature review.

Some of the articles refer to clinical supervision in training, academic, and educational settings, where the research done reflected the views of trainee counsellors or those who had recently graduated. Little work appears to be available on the nature and extent of research conducted on the supervisory experience of seasoned practitioners operating in a non-academic environment.

2.5.1 The concept of power

The notion of power as a concept is a highly contested one. This may initially seem somewhat surprising, as all of us in our daily lives exercise power in some ways and are subject to it in some ways. Why therefore is the concept of power, one which we experience on an ongoing basis in our lives, problematic?
It is problematic for a number of reasons. There is no agreed definition of what power is. It has many meanings in common with words such as ‘community’, ‘freedom’, ‘society’, ‘love’ etc. We have a nebulous understanding of what these words mean, but any attempt to provide an all-embracing definition of what they mean has proven to be inadequate, limiting, subjective, and at times, controversial. Consequently, it is not necessary or desirable to seek a single definition of power. Instead, theories of power by reputable authors will be explored and critiqued to illustrate the diversity that exists in relation to understanding the role power plays in our lives.

I will begin by looking at the concept of power advocated by Max Weber. Gramsci’s position on power will be critically engaged with. French and Raven’s (1959) ground-breaking work on types of power will be thoroughly critiqued. Particular emphasis will be placed on the works of Bourdieu (1984, 1986, 1989, 1990a, 1990b, 1992, 1993, 1998a, 1998b, 1999), Foucault (1970, 1971, 1973a, 1973b, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1986, 1989a, 1989b, 1990), and Lukes (1974, 1976, 1977, 1979a, 1979b, 1986, 2005). I have chosen to focus on these theorists as their views on power have had, and continue to have, a significant influence on the way in which power is conceptualised in the westernised world. Besides, each theorist offers plausible but different theories of power, the way it influences our reality, and how we perceive that reality. Their theories illustrate the range of philosophies of power and demonstrate the difficulty they encounter in attempting to develop a robust theory that adequately and comprehensively encapsulates what power is. Gramsci (1971) talks about the societal and class basis of power. Bourdieu emphasises the dichotomous, asymmetrical nature of power and how it is present in society. Foucault argues that power is an entity, while Lukes theorises power in terms of three dimensions.

The strengths and limitations of each of these views of power will be explored. What level of awareness clinical supervisors have of their power and its impact in clinical supervision will be examined in some detail. This examination will be informed by the theories of power advanced by the authors mentioned above. Finally, an attempt will be made to suggest how aspects of the theories of power might impact on how supervisors become aware of and manage their power in clinical supervision. How this awareness impacts on the inter-personal relationship that is at the heart of clinical supervision will be investigated.
2.5.2 Types of power

Guerrero et al. identify the following six “power principles” in interpersonal relationships:

- Power as perception: if people believe you have power then they will act accordingly;
- Power as a ‘relationship’ [sic] concept: issue is how much power each person has in a relationship vis-a-vis the other person;
- Power as resource based: sometimes called the scarcity hypothesis, it argues that people have more power when the resources they have are in high demand or scarce (e.g. oil in the Middle East);
- Power as interest: proposes that the person who has the least to lose has the more power. They can walk away from a relationship, as they had invested less into it;
- Power as enabling/disabling: the enabling aspects of power can have a positive influence on people. Disabling influence is negative;
- Power as prerogative: if you have the power then you can make up the rules to suit you.

(Guerrero et al. 2014, pp.261-267)

In the context of clinical supervision and the power inherent in the supervisor role, this definition focuses on a number of pertinent issues. “Power as perception” is a strong element of the supervisor-supervisee relationship. But it is more than perception, as supervisors have expert and professionally sanctioned power. Supervisor power is a reality, something that supervisors and supervisees are aware of. This in turn impacts on the ‘relationship’ aspect of power as outlined above. The acknowledged asymmetrical power relationship that exists in supervision (with the supervisor having greater power than the supervisee) is an ever-present reality in supervision.

In the context of “power as resource”, the resources of qualifications and significant experience are possessed by the supervisor. However, its application to supervision is difficult to assess as there does not appear to be a scarcity of people available to take on the role of supervisor.

“Power as interest”, on the other hand has relevance for the supervisor-supervisee relationship. If a supervisor decides to end a relationship with a supervisee, the impact on the supervisee may be significant. The supervisee has a significant interest in investing and maintaining the supervisory relationship from a professional point of
view. Once it is ruptured or ended, they have to find a new supervisor to continue with supervision which may be mandatory.

“Power as enabling/disabling” is one that resonates strongly with many philosophies of supervision. Supervisors may understand and define their power in terms of enabling their supervisees to become better practitioners. Disabling aspects of supervisor power need further investigation.

Finally, “power as prerogative” is something that all supervisors and supervisees need be aware of. Supervisors and supervisees cannot make up the rules as they go along, and having defined roles for supervisors and supervisees is a key element of the contracting aspect of supervision.

The multidimensional concept of the “power principles” outlined by Guerrero et al. provides a conceptual framework that can be usefully applied to exploring aspects of interpersonal relationships that are influenced by supervisor power.

In contrast, Sharp (2012) asserts that political power derives from the will of the subjects to cede this power to the state. In essence, he argues that if the people do not obey, then the ruler has no power. This view is credited with igniting the “Arab Spring” upheavals that swept across North Africa in 2009-2010.

While ultimately power may rest with the people, a limitation of this theory is that it appears to underexplore the personal costs (in economic, emotional, and other terms) that the assertion of power places on those who assert their power. Nonetheless, his theories place a strong emphasis on nonviolent resistance.

2.5.3 Power as legitimation

Max Weber (1978[1910-14]) describes power in terms of ‘legitimate rule’. He identifies three types of authority or legitimacy: (a) legal authority, (b) traditional authority, and (c) charismatic authority.

(a) Legal authority comes from sets of rules and regulations that are established by a government to enforce law and order in the public interest.

(b) Traditional authority comes about from the social practices and customs of people. These practices and customs are understood as forms of society that have been historically present and accepted over a period of time. As a result, a belief is
formed that this is the way it has always been, and it is therefore accepted as the status quo. Such authority is evident in the role of the monarch, the structure of society, and the weight and value it accords to tradition and practice.

(c) Charismatic authority emanates from the personal charisma of a leader whose persona dominates people both psychologically and politically to such an extent that they are perceived as natural leaders, often with god-like attributes. The basis for their power and authority lies in their subjects’ acceptance that they alone possess certain characteristics and qualities that give them this charisma. Such people usually possess considerable power and often rely on their own insights when making decisions. Rulers in ancient Egypt stressed the divine origins of their charismatic power. In many religions, the priesthood/pastor claims divine origins to assert the legitimacy of their power. Beetham (1991, p.3) suggests that “where power is acquired and exercised according to justifiable rules, and with evidence of consent, we call it rightful or legitimate”.

Criticisms of Weber’s concept of power stem mainly from the view that it is insufficiently robust and sophisticated to take account of the realities of the 21st century. It is Eurocentric and westernised. It is focused on charismatic power ascribed to males and does not pay enough regard to the role that prevailing beliefs and attitudes play in maintaining people in power. Beetham (1991, p.34) challenges the categories of power developed by Weber and asserts that they are misleading and misrepresent the nature of legitimacy “and cannot provide an adequate account of legitimacy in the modern state and in different contemporary political systems”. Beetham adds that the fundamental flaw in Weber’s conception of legitimacy is that it “reduces a complex of different elements that go to make up the legitimacy of ‘Herrschaft’ [authority/power] to a single dimension: the belief in legitimacy” (1991, p.34).

Beetham (1991, p.42) argues that “legitimacy is a multi-layered concept and the legitimation of power occurs at a number of different levels”. The criteria for the legitimation of political power are:

(a) It is acquired and exercised in accordance with the rules or the laws;
(b) The rules and laws embody an acknowledged principal authority, in terms of which they can be justified;
(c) There is evidence of express consent to authority on the part of those qualified to give it.

(Beetham 1991, p.42)

Yet, these criteria are not without their difficulties. For example, if legitimation is acquired in accordance with the rules or the laws, who determines the rules and the laws, and what interests do these laws seek to promote and protect?

The notion of a principal authority is problematic for similar reasons. Finally, what evidence of consent to authority is acceptable, and who determines who is qualified to give it?

In the context of the application of Weberian power principles to supervisor power and supervisory relationships, a number of difficulties emerge. Weber suggests that subject resistance and an adversarial relationship are key elements in the expression of power. (The adversarial element of power is something that Weber, Gramsci, Bourdieu, Foucault, and Lukes explore). Supervision is about co-operation and the development of a positive working relationship (a working alliance) between the supervisor and supervisee. Power is not exercised primarily through an adversarial supervisor-supervisee (though this can happen) relationship, but by an acknowledgement by both people in the supervisory relationship of their respective roles and responsibilities.

The legitimacy of supervisor authority from a Weberian stance is contained in legal authority and traditional authority types. Legal authority refers to sets of rules and regulations established by government to enforce the law and protect the public interest. In countries where counselling/psychotherapy is not regulated by statute (e.g., Ireland, UK), representative associations have taken on this governance role. Over time, the exercise of this authority, whether by a government or representative associations, satisfies the ‘traditional authority’ construct outlined by Weber. The concept of charismatic authority as outlined by Weber does not appear to have any significant role in supervisor power.

Weber (1976) asserts that power is something that is tangible and can be taken away or lost. He offers a number of conditions in which power can be seen as dominance. Chief among these is its voluntary nature, a belief in the dominated and the legitimacy of the domination. Weber notes that, when dominance continues for a
period of time, it becomes normalised and structured and more acceptable and seen as common sense. It takes on the attributes of traditional authority.

In summary, Weber’s description of power in terms of three types of legitimacy offers a useful conceptual framework within which to view power. The concepts of legal authority and traditional authority have relevance in the context of supervisor power and power in the supervisory relationship. However, I believe Weber’s emphasis on the adversarial relational aspect of power expression undermines its usefulness as a model in illuminating the power aspect of clinical supervision relationships.

Power is the subject of a number of sociological theories that attempt to describe and explain it in terms of human behaviour. There are many exchange theories, and all of them (social exchange theory, resource theory, etc.) acknowledge the role power plays in human relationships. Theorists such as Markovsky et al. (1988) and Markovsky (1995) see it as central to understanding relationships. Exchange theory implies a relationship between at least two people (Murphy 2005). Many of the theories involved creating an unequal relationship between agents, where each of them is attempting to maximise their gain/benefit from the exchange and to minimise the cost to them.

All of these theories argue that power is based and becomes manifest in relationships and not in individuals. These power relationships may be between individuals or the individual and the state. One of the earliest theories on the relationship between the individual and the state and the rich/elite and the working classes is offered by Antonio Gramsci.

2.5.4 Power as a means of legitimation and production of dominant values

Gramsci (1971) proposes a broader philosophical and sociological view of power. He views power as producing and reinforcing dominant values culturally, socially, economically, and politically. He sees it as the means by which ‘states’ promote and perpetuate these norms to maintain power in a capitalist society. These norms eventually become understood as ‘common sense’ norms. Power is the mechanism by which those in positions of dominance seek to perpetuate this dominance and deceive the working classes into thinking that they have common interests with the
ruling and powerful class. In this way, he argues that capitalism exercises consensual power over the working classes to further its aims.

He strongly advocates that ideas and philosophies are influenced by the social relations between their users. Consequently, he argues that there cannot be such an unchanging and immutable thing as ‘human nature’, as it follows that as relationships between people change, so too do their views on what constitutes ‘true’ theories. For Gramsci (1971), truth is relative and a reflection of the prevailing perception of reality, and not some definable objective entity. His views on human nature may have influenced Foucault, who asserts that there is no such thing as human nature, but rather that as humans we have ‘essences’ which are subject to change.

In a similar vein, the sociological aspects of power are further elaborated and developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1986). He is credited with developing the terms “symbolic violence,” “symbolic capital,” and the concepts of “habitus” and “field.”

Bourdieu (1989) sought to understand and expose the workings of power in society, how it is embedded in all aspects of society and social relations, and how as agents of power we perpetuate its influence and in turn are influenced and dominated by it. This influence is all pervasive in structural, sociological, political, economic, and educational aspects of society, and is present in all social interactions.

Influenced by Weber, Durkheim, Marx, Heidegger, Husserl, and in particular Pascal, he postulates a view of society in which existing social structures tend to reproduce themselves, thereby perpetuating the existing unequal power relations in society.

Bourdieu defines power in terms of capital, habitus, and field (Gaventa 2003, p.6). He talks about capital in terms of resources, cultural capital (e.g. skills, competencies and qualifications), socio capital, symbolic capital (status, position in society), and (traditionally understood) financial capital. The possessors of these capitals are in a position to exercise power and influence.

Bourdieu also examines power in terms of ‘symbolic violence’. This is when the possessors of symbolic capital use their positions of power and influence to impose their notion of thinking, acting, perceiving, and doing on society. This is done in such a manner that these representations will be considered by society as natural, objective, taken for granted and common-sense ways of looking at the world. It privileges existing social structures. He argues that its primary aim is to inculcate
people (agents) with a set of learned beliefs and dispositions that eventually filter from the conscious into the unconscious, and over time they become unquestioned and unchallenged deeply held beliefs. Bourdieu calls these strongly held beliefs ‘doxia’. The central point to make here is that these once contested beliefs are now accepted as universal, self-evident truths which provide a conceptual framework for actions. Assimilation and incorporation of these are now complete.

This means that what was once understood as radical and new is now accepted as the norm and self-evident. As a consequence, it is not questioned or interrogated in the manner it was when it was first proposed. It moves from the conscious visible, into the invisible unconsciousness. The development of the various theories of power, and in particular that offered by Foucault (as outlined below), seeks to expose and bring to the fore the way in which power is an active agent in all relationships and the role our unconscious plays in forming our beliefs and attitudes. Doxia emphasises the role that unconscious structures play in perception and thought formation and how we are unwittingly unaware of the role that we play in the transmission and perpetuation of these concepts. One of the ways in which we do this is by ‘habitus.’

Bourdieu defines habitus as “the set of attributes, the way of being (political, social, economic, moral and interpersonal), that we operate in different fields” (cited in Wacquant 2005, p.316). It includes the type of accent we have, the way we might interact with authority, etc. In summary, it is the visible manifestation of the socialisation process that makes us the person we become. It is our way of being, our shorthand for living. In acting in this manner, the agent emphasises the legitimacy of the current social order and reproduces it (and its dominant philosophy) in all their interactions and in such a manner that does not allow for the intrusion into the mindset of the possibility of other ways of being. Bourdieu states that we are unwitting and willing participants in our continuing subjection and domination by a powerful elite. Also, the development of what Bourdieu calls class dispositions (e.g. public manifestations of their social status, like taste in fashion, food, furniture, where they live, etc.) serves to reinforce the existing dominant order among the various classes and delineate and reinforce class distinction.

This habitus is therefore exercised in what Bourdieu calls ‘fields’. By this, he is referring to the arts, education, economics, politics, and other defined spheres. It is in these spheres that the social interaction that reinforces and replicates the dominant
social values and structure take place by agents who consider their way of being as natural and not in need of critical reflection.

In summary, Bourdieu’s work emphasises how the social classes, especially those in possession of power, maintain their dominance inter-generationally by subtly and invisibly preserving and promoting their values to such an influential degree in society that they are assimilated by everyone and viewed as the norm.

This suggests that, at some level, the dominant ruling and intellectual classes have an enhanced insight into the workings of the world (and their role in it), and as a consequence, can manipulate the social order to protect and perpetuate their interests. Likewise, it proposes that there is a form of unconscious behaviourism among the dominated classes. A major limitation of this view is that it fails to offer an adequate explanation of how the elite and powerful possess an enhanced societal self-awareness that is apparently absent, or dormant, in the dominated.

Bourdieu might argue that his emphasis on practitioner reflectivity on the part of sociologists (and indeed of everyone) might in part refute this suggestion. However, the question remains unanswered, as, in spite of this level of reflexivity, the dominant continue to dominate, and social inequality remains a marked feature of present day westernised societies.

### 2.5.5 Power as an exercise in interpersonal relationships

One of the most influential studies on power is that undertaken by French and Raven (1959). They identified five bases of power: reward, coercive, legitimate, expert, and referent. In 1965, Raven added information power to this list. (1) Reward power: takes its name from the ability of the person or institution exercising this type of power to give or withhold something that the potential recipient values, desires, or needs. (2) Coercive power: this is where the threat of coercion (actual) is used by the dominant to gain compliance from the dominated. The goal of coercive power is to dominate, and it must constantly be reinforced and exercised so that the dominated comply. (3) Legitimate power: is power that is given to a person or organisation by society (police, monarchs, doctors, etc.). French and Raven state that cultural values, acceptable of social structure and designation, form the basis of legitimate power. (4) Expert power: is based on a person's perceived knowledge and skills, and on the belief that the more skills one has the more power
one has, and the less skills one has the less power one has. Raven points out that this expertise does not have to be possessed by those seeking to influence, they must just be perceived to have it. In many cases, people equate qualifications with expertise, and so confer power on those with the qualifications without any critical faculty. This expert power can have both a positive and negative consequence. (5) Referent power: Petress (2003) describes it as rooted in the affiliations we make, and/or the group we belong to. It emphasises a shared vision of beliefs between those in similar organisations and in a similar place in society, etc. Its effects can be both positive and negative. It is positive in that it can use the shared beliefs and values of the dominator and dominated.

The development of French and Raven’s theory of power offers a multi-dimensional way of classifying different types of interpersonal power relations. Based on their observations, it had a significant influence on the subsequent development of theories of power. Nevertheless, the theory, while elegant in some respects, does have some limitations. It is based on observable events only (authors’ observations of participants). Participants were not interviewed. Although theory generation does not require interviews, it is the meaning that the researchers attribute to participants observable actions that forms the basis of the theories, and not the meanings participants ascribed to them. It is not possible to determine the extent to which the researchers’ interpretations accurately reflect what the participants were experiencing. These limitations are commented on in detail by Murphy (2002, p.16) who notes that “French and Raven’s theory was not based on participants’ ideas of power, but rather the theorists’ thoughts about the bases of power”.

Despite this, a study exploring power in clinical supervision using French and Raven’s model was undertaken by Kadushin (1974). The results of this study suggest supervisees are aware of their lack of power and supervisors appear to be less aware of their own power. This apparent lack of awareness by clinical supervisors of the full extent of their power, its impact on themselves, the supervisee, and the supervisory encounter is deeply troubling. It also raises questions about how this situation arose and the implications for supervision theory, training, and practice.

An impressive and radical attempt to understand the concept and nature of power, and how it is present in all human interactions and in society, has been undertaken by

Among those who have reflected on the matter, there is no agreement on how to define it, how to conceive it, how to study it, and if it can be measured, how to measure it.

(Lukes 1974, p.61)

Lukes’s comment has a number of critical implications for understanding the concept of power generally and its application in clinical supervision. In clinical supervision, the supervisor has considerable power that is legitimised, socially sanctioned, and expert. In the light of Lukes’s comment, caution needs to be exercised in how this is understood and made operational in clinical supervision.

In support of this stance, Lukes proposes the following:

1. The word ‘power’ is polysemic, like the words ‘social’ and ‘political’ it has multiple and diverse meanings appropriate to different settings and concerns;
2. Like the word ‘game’, ‘power’ denotes a range of different objects or references that have no single or common essences, no one property that they all share other than their name: it exhibits what Wittgenstein called ‘family resemblance’;
3. Language concepts of power have their place in local ‘language games’, this means that the search for a single concept of power is illusionary;
4. Power is essentially a contested concept.

(Lukes 1974, p.61)

Because of this, he concludes that different ways of conceiving power are natural to different perspectives and purposes. Building on the works of Mills (1956) and Dahl (1957, 1958, 1961, 1968), he offers a three-dimensional model of power.

The first dimension of power is a situation in which A exerts power over B to do something that B would not otherwise do. If A gets their way, then A has the power. This one-dimensional model depends on observable outcomes and is coercive in its execution. There must be some form of resistance from B for A to exercise power. Power in this dimension is viewed as the outcome of a coercive and visible decision-making process. In the context of clinical supervision, this dimension of power, with its coercive aspect, is inappropriate and inhibits the development of a collaborative working alliance between supervisor and supervisee.
Pluralist theorists, most notably Bacharach and Baratz (1962, 1963, 1968, 1970, 1975), point out that this one-dimensional perspective fails to take account of the power to control or set an agenda, thereby determining what gets included and left out of debates. Lukes calls this ability the second dimension (or face) of power. Like the first dimension, it relies on a situation of conflict for effect. Less obvious than the first dimension of power is its ability to prevent items from getting on the agenda (‘non-decisions’). This aspect of power is less amenable to scrutiny and empirical research, thereby making it more difficult to determine how specific items do not make it onto the agenda. Its implications for supervision practice and the role of the supervisor need to be considered. This is difficult, as it is impossible to find out with any degree of certainty what gets left out in the first place. A potential way to deal with this issue is to constantly critically interrogate taken-for-granted assumptions affecting supervision practice, and to always be open to investigating alternative ways of practising supervision.

The third dimension of power described by Lukes is its ability to shape the perceptions and social reality of agents without them ever consciously realising this is happening. This is often referred to as Lukes’s radical view of power, and it takes some of its cues from Gramsci (1971), Bourdieu (1980a, 1980b, 1984, 1986, 1989, 1990a, 1990b, 1992, 1993, 1998, 1999), and to a lesser extent French and Raven (1959). It also shares some assumptions with the concept of power championed by Foucault (1970, 1971, 1973a, 1973b, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989a, 1989b 1990, 1991, 2000), although Lukes is keen to distinguish his position on power from those advocated by Bourdieu and Foucault. This third dimension of power is, according to Lukes, characterised by its ability to manipulate people’s perceptions, needs, and wants, or more specifically, impose on them what they think is their ‘true’ needs and wants without their conscious awareness of this manipulation. Though Gramsci argues that even when people are aware of this manipulation they still acquiesce to it, as they believe (or are deceived into believing) that their interests are best served by supporting the interests of the powerful.

This third dimension of power exerts its influence through culture by determining the dominant prevailing values, norms, and social interactions in society. It is more powerful and less visible than the first and second dimensions, and it does not rely on a coercive philosophy to achieve its aims. It promotes its essence and presence by manipulating and imposing its chosen norms in such a manner that they are
perceived as ‘right’ and common sense by agents. These agents will defend the preservation of this status quo despite it not being in their best interests. This is similar to the views put forward by Bourdieu when discussing ‘habitus’ and ‘fields’ of interpersonal interaction.

Clinical supervision, when seen from this third dimension of power, is no longer removed from the environment in which it takes place. The challenge for supervisors is to interrogate their understanding of supervision and what informs their sense-making of supervision. The ability of practitioners to function in therapeutic professions where post-qualification supervision is not mandatory challenges the requirement that therapist supervision is essential for the protection of the client and the maintenance of adequate professional standards by the supervisee. Both in Ireland and the UK, lifelong supervision is a mandated norm in many counselling bodies for membership. This is despite the observations of McMahon and Errity (2014, p.265) pointing out the “limited evidence attesting to its value for client welfare”. Consequently, there is a need to engage in ongoing critical reflection on the purpose of supervision in order to unmask the taken-for-granted assumptions that underpin our understanding of power in supervision and supervision itself.

Lukes’s subsequent additions and revisions to the book in 2005 acknowledged some of the limitations of his original theory. They are:

1. Its focus on the ‘exercise’ of power thereby committing the ‘exercise fallacy’; (The exercise fallacy happens when having power is equated with exercising it. For example, ‘when we define power as winning, as achieving success in decision making, or as prevailing over others’ (Lukes 2007, p.59).)
2. On power-over stuff;
3. Equates power with domination assuming that A affects B in a manner contrary to B’s interests;
4. It assumes that power affects those subject to it, aversely;
5. It operated with a reductive and simplistic picture of binary powers.

(Lukes 2005, p.109)

Lukes proposes that, when talking about power in this context, we are talking about “the securing of compliance and domination” (ibid.). He asserts that power is located in society’s social and cultural norms. As society is not equal, the distribution and exercise of power cannot be equally available to all.
However, Shapiro (2003, p.53) talks about domination as “arising only from the illegitimate exercise of power”. What is meant by domination is contested, as is the definition of power itself. Lukes (2005, p.123) resonates with this. He notes that “how to interpret domination is not down to a single answer”.

Scott (1985, p.20) talks about those subject to domination as being actors who “dissemble in order to survive”. This suggests that they are aware of their domination, but choose (for strategic reasons) to accept this domination in order to survive. He quotes the Ethiopian saying: “When the great lord passes, the wise peasant bows deeply and silently farts” (Ibid.).

Scott (Ibid., p.4) argues that it is not enough to look at official societal accounts which might suggest that “the subordinated groups endorse the terms of their subordination and are willing, even enthusiastic partners in that subordination”. He posits the notion of ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ false consciousness. ‘Thick’ false consciousness persuades the dominated to believe in the values of the dominator. Whereas ‘thin’ false consciousness “maintains only that the dominant ideology achieves compliance by convincing subordinate groups that the social order in which they live is natural and inevitable” (Scott 1990, p.72). He adds (Ibid., p.10), rather pessimistically, that the dominated although “acting a mask…they will eventually find their faces have grown to fit the mask”.

Lukes’s concept of power is not without its critics. Swartz (1997) believes that Lukes had been unduly influenced by Gramsci, especially his notion of hegemony. Swartz draws attention to the apparent lack of focus or mention of state power, something that is very evident in Foucault’s view of power. Furthermore, he notes Lukes’s omission of ways in which countering the influences of domination might be undertaken. The role of the state in power relations and how it influences and shapes society and the individual is the subject of exploration and critique by Foucault.

2.5.6 Foucault and power

Foucault espouses a post-modern theory of power in which communications and knowledge are central to its existence. He (1980, p.23) declares that “knowledge and power are inseparable”. Foucault is interested in the relationship between power and knowledge and how this relationship informs and shapes society in all its aspects:
politically, economically, morally, thought generation, and perception. He sees power as “a complex strategic situation in a given social setting” (Ibid., p.3).

For Foucault, power is everywhere. There is no escaping it. It relies on the ignorance of its agents to be effective. It is silent, always present, and manipulative. He proposes that no single person manages or controls power. He talks about no individual running the ‘disporative’ (the power machine), and suggests that power, like the autonomic nervous system, can and does function independently of individual control. A feature of his writings is to challenge the notion that power is held by individuals or groups. He believes power to be constituted through accepted forms of knowledge, scientific understanding, and truth. Each society has its ‘regime of truth’ that includes: (a) the types of discourses it accepts and makes function as true, (b) the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, (c) the means by which each is sanctioned, (d) the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth, and (e) the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. Rabinow (1984, p.4) notes that “for Foucault there is no external position of certainty, no universal understanding that is beyond history and society”. This ‘regime of truth’ is in constant flux. Foucault suggests that, rather than being engaged in the search for an ultimate objective truth, the battle be waged about (my emphasis) truth, i.e. whose truth are we pursuing, what does it look like and how is it present in society?

For Foucault, power is what makes us what we are. Foucault (1980, p.63) claims that “power is everywhere and comes from everywhere”. His notion of power is like the ever-present air we breathe. We are not always conscious of the presence of the air, but we cannot exist without it. We cannot exist in a non-power state of being. He is dismissive of the notion that power is a negative and malevolent influence on human agency. Rather radically and controversially, Foucault goes on to say that power produces the reality that we live through, and it is used in the production and maintenance of socialisation norms.

Foucault is different in this regard from the classical Marxist interpretation of power. Marxism views power as coming from the holders of capital, the rich ruling class, people who possess and control the means of production. Conversely, Foucault describes power as something that is everywhere, in every relationship, and freely in circulation and available to all. It is analogous to the way a surfer might use a wave.
They are dependent on it, can manipulate it, but never possess or own it. In this instance (to develop an analogy), if they have access to a means of regulating the water (a surfboard), they have power. Possessing the ability to regulate enables the regulator to exercise and manage power.

Foucault uses the concept of “bio power” (1981, p.140, Rabinow 1984, p.262) to explain how the state regulates subjects “through an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving subjection of bodies and control of the population” (Ibid.). Essentially it is about managing the birth, reproduction, and illness of people in society. These ‘regimes of truth’ are promulgated, promoted, and reinforced through all aspects of society. They are prominent in the education system, the media, state institutions (e.g. prisons, hospitals), and in norms governing interpersonal relations. Foucault coined the term ‘governmentality’ to illustrate how the state exercises this control over its population. Gilbert believes that in the context of Foucault’s concept of governmentality:

Clinical supervision can be shown to function in two independent but interrelated ways. First, as modes of surveillance disciplining the activity of professionals. Second, as ‘confessional’ practices that work to produce particular identities-autonomous and self-regulating.

(Gilbert 2001, p.199)

Foucault rejects the view that people have a fixed and real identity. He maintains that they have a set of discourses which provide a context in which they describe themselves. There are similarities between Foucault’s concept of discourses and Bourdieu’s notion of ‘habitus’. Foucault has been criticised by many who suggest that he was being somewhat disingenuous by offering ideas about power while at the same time arguing that we are, for the most part, unwitting accomplices in enabling power (as an entity) to serve the interests of the powerful in promoting and maintaining societal norms.

On the other hand, Foucault’s view on power offers a surprisingly radical and challenging way in which to look at power. The fact that it contrasts significantly with other theories of power make it worthy of merit. In particular, his views cast serious doubt on the notion that, as humans, we can free ourselves from its effects. The idea that our reality (however we understand it) is not as it seems, along with our
reluctance to explore this possibility, underscores the need to be open to and interrogate the concept of power proposed by Foucault.

2.5.7 Summary

What emerges from the various theories of power is the emphasis they place on different aspects of power. Gramsci, Foucault, and Bourdieu discuss power in terms of societal structure and how it influences (consciously and unconsciously) and directs the lives of everyone. Bourdieu talks about power in terms of symbolic violence giving rise to ‘fields’ and ‘habitus’. Foucault emphasises the role power plays in determining truth and knowledge. He focuses on power producing ‘a regime of truth’ and how this truth pervades all aspects of social relations and thinking. Lukes talks about the three dimensions of power, starting with the one-dimensional coercive visible power and moving to the harder to detect but powerful invisible power. These invisible forces of power, which he calls the third force of power, compose and constitute the social behaviours and values of our society. This invisible power is present everywhere and very difficult to detect. Lukes’s three-dimensional model of power offers a more comprehensive stance on power, both visible and invisible. The model illustrates how power can manifest in overt and covert ways, and how the exercising of this power, or the threat of exercising this power, creates an impact on those subject to it.

The models of power reviewed here talk of the use of power in terms of ‘power-over’, and little reference is made using power as an enabling ‘power-to’ (though Adler would be an exception to this). Rogers (1951, 1961, 1969, 1974, 1980) also emphasises the transformative personal power that we possess individually, and the power of the collective good if exercised. Giddens (1968) views the concept of power as something that is enabling and voluntary. Downs (2006) notes that Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) ‘power over’ verses ‘power-with’ can also be applied to supervision. Abernethy and Cooke (2011, p.3) state that “RCT assumes the centrality of relationships as the key” in clinical supervision. They add (ibid. p.7) that “the relational engagement does not require setting aside the professional role or denying that a power difference exists” in clinical supervision between supervisor and supervisee.
2.5.8 Conclusion

When discussing theories of power, it is evident that there is no overarching theory to define it and capture its essence. This is not surprising given the diverse backgrounds: methodological, epistemological, and ontological positions taken by theorists who offer definitions of power. For example, post-modern feminist theorists (Allen 1999; Bordo 2003) argue that power is socially constructed and found in relationships. They take the view that relationships are not static, and consequently it is next to impossible to provide a fixed definition of power. Because of this, it could be argued that, just as there is not one definition of reality, one definition of power, if it were available, would be incapable of capturing its essence and complexity.

The central question explored in detail by the theorists of power reviewed here (Weber, Gramsci, Bourdieu, Foucault, Lukes) is how the powerful secure the willing compliance of those they dominate.

Their answers are varied. Although they sometimes have a lot in common, they are at times contradictory. In the case of Foucault, they can be obtuse to the point of being incomprehensible to many. French and Raven (1959) suggest power can be possessed by individuals and groups and is exercised in relationships in an observable manner. Power relations are asymmetrical, with a clear distinction between the powerful and less powerful. Gramsci believes that this unequal relationship between those who exercise power and those who are dominated by it has its basis in social relations, where the dominated unwittingly believe that their interests are best served by aligning them with those of the dominators. Bourdieu suggests that social relations and society itself determines how power operates. The invisible substructure of society is exercising power on the visible superstructure of social norms and beliefs. His primary aim is to expose the workings of this (invisible) substructure to critical scrutiny in the belief that it would display connections between position in society and the exercise of power.

Foucault is consumed by his belief that power is present everywhere. He argues that power is an autonomous entity in itself and that we are manipulated by it in ways that are obvious and visible, as well as in ways that are subtle and unseen.

Lukes’s model, with its three dimensions of power, offers a more in-depth and nuanced view on power. His initial one-dimensional visible conflict model evolved
into a sophisticated three-dimensional one, which takes account of the non-exercise of power and the ‘invisible’ way in which it is present and influences many aspects of our thinking, culture, and way of being. In seeking to define power or to offer some theorists views on the concept, I think it is worth keeping the following observation in mind:

There is no reason to believe there exists a canonical set of such interests that will constitute the last word on the matter, that will resolve moral conflicts and set the seal on proffered explanations, confirming them as true.

(Lukes 2005, p.148)

In the context of my own supervisory practice, my working definition of power is influenced by the theories of French and Raven (1959, 1965), Gramsci, Bourdieu, and the Foucauldian concept of power as previously critiqued in this thesis. I believe power is relational, sometimes visible, but often invisible. It is embedded in all interpersonal and societal relationships, social norms, and institutions. It is asymmetrical. It is everywhere and always active. We cannot exist in a non-power influenced space.

Power is therefore something that is present in the supervisory space. As Holloway and Wolleat (1994, p.33) remark, “power is the property of the relationship and not of one or the other individual”. However, the onus is on me as a supervisor and the person with socially sanctioned expert power as noted by Granello et al. (1997, p. 314) “…power in the [supervisory] dyad inherently belongs to the supervisor”, to initiate discussions with supervisees on the management of power in the supervisory relationship. This is something that happens during the contracting stage of the supervisory engagement with supervisees and remains part of the ongoing dynamic process in supervision.

The concept of power, however understood, continues to exercise the minds of researchers and philosophers alike. What emerges from the literature reviewed is that the essence and nature of power, how it is present and exercised in society, and its impact on individuals is subject to a wide variety of interpretations. Ongoing research will shed more light on the notion of power and the role it plays, both consciously and unconsciously, in our interpersonal relationships in shaping the structure of society and in determining the ‘truths’ that we uphold. As a result, it is not surprising that when it comes to exploring the role power plays in clinical
supervision, theories that highlight the asymmetrical nature of the supervisor-supervisee relationship dominate the literature.

Though every article reviewed talks about power in clinical supervision, none attempt to offer a precise definition of it. This is all the more surprising given the comments of Canham and Bennett (2002, p.67) who note that “clinical supervision provides a stage on which power dances energetically throughout the whole performance”. Likewise, Murphy (2002, p.18) points out that “power appears to be a multi-dimensional, amorphous concept which has provided researchers with much difficulty in attempting to define and measure it”. Murphy further states that there is widespread disagreement as to what constitutes an operational definition of power.

What emerges from the literature surveyed is that there is some agreement on the concept of power and its elements or essences. However, there is no universal definition of it that can be considered satisfactory. The literature reviewed highlights the gap that exists in our knowledge of how power impacts on the clinical supervisor in supervision. Furthermore, how supervisors go about making sense of and understanding their power is significantly under researched.

Developing a comprehensive and concise definition of clinical supervision is almost as controversial and contested as trying to produce a satisfactory definition of power. Nonetheless, I will critique some of the commonly used definitions of clinical supervision in order to highlight some of its essential features.

2.6.1 Definition of clinical supervision

The fact that clinical supervision, however understood and defined, has been practiced and recognised as a distinct speciality has been commented on extensively by Borders et al. who note:

Publication of the Standards for Counseling [sic] Supervisors (Association for Counselor Education and Supervision [ACES], 1990) marked the counselling profession’s recognition of clinical supervision as a separate specialty, requiring specialized training and credentialing and warranting focused attention from counsellor educators, administrators, accreditation bodies, and licensure boards.

(Borders et al. 2014, p.26)

Milne (2008, p.5) suggests that forms of supervision have always been practiced throughout the centuries, asking “how else would those with the necessary skills and
the responsibility…ensure that they had a skilled workforce…doing their work to the required standard?"

Nonetheless, trying to define supervision has proven to be extremely problematic. Calvert et al. (2016, p.7) define it as a relationship which “is best conceptualized as a platform for experiential learning about relational processes and dynamics”. Kaslow and Bell (2008) and Orchowski et al. (2010) express similar sentiments. Kolb (1984, p.4) describes learning as a process in which knowledge is obtained through the transformation of experience which is then put into action. Both of these definitions stress the learning and educative aspects of supervision. A broader definition of supervision is offered by Gaete and Ness who state:

Supervision can be seen as an ongoing dialogue between a more senior member of a profession and a more junior member, with the simultaneous purposes of enhancing professional development, monitoring the quality of professional services and serving as a gatekeeper of the profession.

(Gaete and Ness 2015, p.73)

Supervision involves managing several roles and relationships. They add that “supervision is primarily focused on training supervisees to improve their skills, supervisors also have a responsibility to perform other roles” (Ibid. p.57). Knox (2015) claims the definition of supervision offered by Bernard and Goodyear (2014) to be a fitting one. They define supervision as:

An intervention provided by a more senior member of a profession to a more junior member or members of that same profession. This relationship is evaluative and extends over time and has the simultaneous purposes of enhancing the functioning of the more junior person(s), monitoring the quality of the professional services offered to clients, she, he or they see, and serving as a gatekeeper for those who are to enter the particular profession.

(Bernard and Goodyear 2014, p.151)

Both these definitions of clinical supervision are embedded with power, as they talk about a more senior member of the profession working with a more junior member of the profession in a monitoring and evaluative capacity.

Although the definition of supervision offered by Bernard and Goodyear (2014) is often cited, it does have its strengths and limitations. One of its strengths is that it defines what many of us might understand as a ‘common sense’ view of supervision,
and as supervisees, may have experienced in our first supervision, especially as
trainees. In addition, it encompasses some of the essential elements of supervision,
e.g. the evaluative element (supervisor evaluating supervisee) and the gatekeeping
role of the supervisor, in maintaining standards and ensuring that the supervisee is
‘fit to practice’. It is also attractive, as it can serve as a form of checklist to determine
if appropriate supervision is being carried out. Also, Bernard and Goodyear have
developed a particular model which underpins this definition that is easy to use. This
model, referred to as the discrimination model, is explored in detail by Timm (2015)
who notes:

Because Bernard’s (1979, 1997, 2014) model is relatively simple (i.e. three roles, three
foci), it is accessible even to beginning supervisors. Furthermore, the fact that it is
amenable to any therapeutic orientation making it a desirable one for many supervisors
has been commented on by many researchers and practitioners. (Bernard and Goodyear,
2014; Nelson, Johnson and Thorngren, 2000). Finally, the placement of clear boundaries
around these three roles is a good preventive measure for avoiding role ambiguity.

(Timm 2015, p.115)

Nevertheless, their definition of supervision does have consequences. Firstly, its
emphasis on the hierarchical nature of the relationship (a senior member of the
profession and a junior less experienced supervisee) only serves to further reinforce
the indispensable asymmetrical nature of that relationship. Secondly, its stress on the
gatekeeping and monitoring functions of the supervisor serves to highlight the power
that the supervisor holds. Thirdly, their assertion that the evaluation of the supervisee
“is the nucleus of clinical supervision” (Bernard and Goodyear 2014, p.222) places
an over-emphasis on one aspect of supervision to the detriment of others. Also, it
appears to exclude, or significantly diminish, any possibility of a collaborative
alliance between supervisor and supervisee.

Others have commented on the limitations of this definition. Milne (2007) points out
that it suffers from significant shortcomings, including a lack of clarity over what is
being measured and how it is measured in clinical supervision. Milne wants to know
what the primary functions of clinical supervision are, e.g. restorative, formative,
normative, etc. This is why Milne considers Bernard and Goodyear’s (2004)
definition of clinical supervision to be lacking in clarity and continues in his pursuit
of an empirical definition of clinical supervision without its normative and
restorative functions.
Likewise, Bernard and Goodyear’s definition of clinical supervision shares a similarity regarding its purpose with that offered by Holloway and Wolleat. They state:

Supervision is an instructional method that finds its origins in the apprenticeship approach to learning an art or craft...and provides an opportunity for the trainees to learn the skills and ethical principles of the profession. The supervision relationship is crafted not only to facilitate teaching and learning, but to allow for the evaluation of the student’s performance.

(Holloway and Wolleat 1994, p.33)

The learning, teaching and evaluative components are of significant importance in this model of clinical supervision. Therefore, the hierarchy and power differential between supervisor and supervisee are also explicit and accentuated in this model of supervision. The stress on instruction (presumably from the supervisor to the supervisee) and the reference to the apprenticeship approach suggest a strong asymmetrical relationship between a knowledgeable supervisor and a less competent supervisee. This is a situation ripe with unequal power and potential for misuse by both supervisor and supervisee.

In many definitions of supervision, the emphasis is on the supervisee as a trainee or a junior and less experienced participant. So for this reason, a broader definition of clinical supervision is needed to reflect the supervisory reality that exists for more experienced supervisees. Roche et al. offer a useful definition of clinical supervision as they talk about clinical supervision as being:

A working alliance between practitioners, in which they aim to enhance clinical practice to meet ethical, professional and best practices standards, while providing support and encouragement in relation to professional practice.

(Roche et al. 2007, p.242)

The notion of supervision as a working alliance (Bambling et al. 2006; Bordin 1983; Bussey 2015; Shulman 2006) and the absence of references to the status of the practitioners (senior working with a junior) places less emphasis on the hierarchical nature of supervision and views it as a forum where the supervisee is supported and encouraged. This definition is moving away from that initially developed by Bernard and Goodyear towards a less hierarchical definition of supervision.

In a similar vein, Beddoe and Egan talk about supervision as:
A professional relationship that provides opportunities to reflect and takes into account the organisational, administrative, professional, practical and cultural contexts of practice.

(Beddoe and Egan 2009, p.508)

The accent on the reflective nature of supervision is welcome, as is the acknowledgment of the various influences that impact on the supervisory relationship. Moreover, the collaborative nature of supervision is emphasised by many feminist supervisors. Mangione et al. state:

Our supervisory vision is a collaborative one of two authentic, open people working together to enhance the learning and growth of the supervisee, with the added awareness that the supervisor can also grow and change from the experience.

(Mangione et al. 2011, p.161)

Previously, Porter and Vasquez (1997) defined feminist multicultural supervision as collaborative, mutual, and reflective, but importantly, not egalitarian. Mangione et al. (2011, p.163) claim that “naming the issue of power and the unequal power is essential” in clinical supervision. Arczynski and Morrow (2016, p.193) emphasise that “reflexivity is core to the development” of feminist multicultural counsellors.

Following on from this, feminist clinical psychotherapeutic supervision puts emphasis on collaboration between supervisor and supervisee, while at the same time not ignoring the need to be reflective about power relations within the supervision relationship. Downs (2006, p.8) maintains that “a relational approach does require a shift in the attribution of power in the supervisory relationship”. They add that “the supervisor can see herself not as a source of objective truth, but as one whose power is used to create a space for a mutual, reflective process” (Ibid.).

Mangione et al.’s concept of supervision, shares some similarities with Bernard and Goodyear’s (2009, 2014) discrimination model of supervision with its emphasis on discrete processes and roles in the supervision process. However, it places more stress on the collaborative element in supervision and explicitly acknowledges the potential for supervisor as well as supervisee growth.

An integral aspect of this collaboration is a renewed focus on the learning aspects of supervision. Carroll (2010, p.1) is keen to stress this learning aspect of supervision suggesting that “the heart of supervision is learning”. He acknowledges a debt of gratitude to Holloway’s definition of supervision which:
Provides an opportunity for the student to capture the essence of the therapeutic process as it is articulated and modelled by the supervisor and to re-create it in the counselling relationship.

(Holloway 1992, p.431)

The emphasis on the coaching and modelling aspect of supervision is stressed here.

Following on from this, Carroll (2010, p.16) offers a more radical, less traditional definition of supervision which emphasises the collaborative and reflexive nature of supervision. This leads to ‘transformational openness’. He defines supervision as:

Something that …interrupts practice. It wakes us up to what we are doing. When we are alive to what we are doing we wake up to what is, instead of falling asleep in the comfort stories of our clinical routines and daily practice. Supervision is about a new way of looking, a super way of visioning. With new visions come new perspectives and new meanings. I notice new things. Supervision is always about the quality of awareness. With reflection comes meaning at different levels.

(Carroll 2010, p.13)

Carroll’s (2009, p.212) previous statement that one of the roles of a supervisor is “to manufacture uncertainty” is challenging and refreshing, as it is radical. It is a call to us as supervisors, to let go and relinquish our status and positional power, which we all too often uncritically assume as a matter of right and position, and instead engage in meaningful and creative dialogue with our supervisees. We need to come down from our pedestal (if we are on one), and with our supervisees, co-create an uncertain, though safe generative space, where transformative supervision can be practised. As Mangione et al. (2011, p.163) declare, “the person in the more powerful position has the responsibility to set the tone and provide the conditions for talking about the supervision and the relationship”. As supervisors, we need to be open to initiating the discussions with our supervisees on the nature of supervision and our own philosophy of supervision.

Supervisees have a role in this regard too. They must stop colluding with a hierarchical model of supervision that perpetuates an unequal supervisory relationship. They need to be courageous in drawing attention to this imbalance and engaging in meaningful conversation with their supervisor. Doing this is not without risks for the supervisee, especially if they are a trainee or a student therapist. The desire of the supervisee not to ‘rock the boat’ may prevent them from following this
course of action. Their need for a positive recommendation from their supervisor and becoming accredited may be uppermost in their minds. Initiating a conversation with their supervisor about managing the supervision may not be considered prudent on their part, as there is no guarantee that their supervisor will see this in a positive light. Then again, not to have this conversation would be a lost opportunity. As a constructivist, I agree with Guiffrida’s view that:

Knowledge is not something that can be imparted from teacher to student. Rather, he believes that learning occurs best when learners are engaged in activities that promote the discovery of their own knowledge. Instead of expecting supervisees to adhere to the supervisor’s approach, constructive supervision empowers supervisees to develop their own answers that are right for them.

(Guiffrida 2015, p.41)

This approach can initially be frightening for the supervisee, and also risky for the supervisor. The supervisee may be expecting a more traditional style of supervision from the supervisor, as defined by Bernard and Goodyear and others, and may resist attempts by the supervisor to engage in a more collaborative engagement. As a supervisor who was trained in the more traditional model of supervision, where the supervisor was seen as (and expected to be) the expert and the supervisee the novice, it has been challenging for me to let go of these familiar roles and to share the supervision space with my supervisees in a more egalitarian (though not equal) co-creative manner. In this scenario, both supervisee and I are venturing from our comfort zones into what initially may be an unfamiliar and uncertain arena. Calvert et al., advocate using dialogical reflexivity in supervision as a means to achieve this.

Dialogical reflexivity involves utilizing the supervisory relationship as a space of experiential learning through a present-centered, relational focus in supervision, created through a direct conversation between the supervisor and supervisee about the supervisory relationship and process itself. We propose that this highly experiential approach to supervise learning has the potential for the transformative development of relationship and reflective competencies beyond the acquisition of knowledge and skills.

(Calvert et al. 2016, p.1)

The emphasis on the ‘relationalship’ aspect of supervision and the development of reflexive competencies through dialogue is not a power neutral experience. Calvert et al. define dialogical reflexivity as follows:
Dialogical reflexivity refers to a present-centered, relational focus in supervision, created through direct conversation between supervisor and supervisee and a narrative about the supervision relationship and process itself.

(Calvert et al. 2016, p.9)

According to Burbules and Rice (1991, p.407), dialogue is at the heart of a social relation. Bohm and Garrett (1991) state that the purpose of dialogue is to reveal the inarticulateness in our thoughts, which in turn makes it possible to establish genuine awareness. It is a process of ‘awakening’ facilitated by a free-flowing dialogue between participants. Levanon (2008) stresses the collaborative element of dialogue. Bohm and Garrett (1991, p.43) assert that no fixed rules should be laid down in conducting such a dialogue, as learning is “part of an unfolding process of creative participation between peers”. Dialogue does not require an egalitarian relationship, but it does require an openness to the ‘I-Thou’ (Buber 1965) relationship, which is mutual and respectful, rather than the ‘I-It’ relationship, which treats the other as an object. ‘I-Thou’ dialogue encourages supervisee critical reflection by not objectifying the supervisee.

The emphasis on learning as an unfolding process chimes with the concept of “wisdom education” (Levanon 2008, p.64). This places a strong emphasis on “the development of better thinking skills, as well as the socialisation and development of student’s sense of self” (Ibid.). The use of Socratic dialogue, where one person in a supervisory dyad (the supervisor) gradually disrupts the assumptions of the other person (the supervisee), is a key component of this way of working. This is to enable the supervisee to “receive new ideas or refine their innate apriori knowledge that proceeds but also enables interactions with other minds” (Ibid.). Habermas (1984) stresses that the purpose of dialogue is not about winning or losing the argument, but using dialogue to advance understanding. In a similar vein, Bohm (1998) states the basic idea of a dialogue is to communicate while suspending personal opinions.

The unfolding aspect of supervisee learning (or awakening) by using dialogue has strong hints of the concept of tacit knowledge (Polanyi 1958). Polanyi argues that there are both explicit and tacit forms of knowledge and that “we can know more than we can tell” (Polanyi 1967, p.4). He argues that explicit knowledge is grounded in a positivistic epistemology which stems from the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century. On the other hand, tacit knowledge has “challenged the absurdities of sheer objectivity expressed in a perfect language” (Ray 2009, p.75).
All of this learning takes place in a relational context. The importance of a positive relationship, or working alliance, between supervisor and supervisee is cited by many researchers as a vital element of effective supervision (Bourdin, 1983; Efstation, Patton and Kardash, 1990; Ladany, Ellis and Friedlander, 1999). Power is always at play in relationships, and the supervisory relationship is not immune from its presence. The primary responsibility for attending to the power aspect of this relationship rests with the supervisor. This is because their role bestows significant power on them regarding their signing-off and evaluative functions in relation to the professional competencies of their supervisees. Finally, it is worth bearing in mind the comments by Calvert et al. (2016, p.15) who point out that, in the context of engaging in an experiential person-centred learning in supervision, the importance of the supervisor maintaining appropriate professional boundaries with their supervisees should not be overlooked. Engaging in an experiential, dialogical model of supervision can be rewarding for both supervisors and supervisees. However, it may also occlude the very real power that the supervisor holds. This power is always present in supervision, and the tensions associated with the supervisor holding onto this power while at the same time engaging in a style of experiential, dialogical learning with their supervisees must be acknowledged.

One of the strengths of this approach to supervision is that it avoids the supervisor being thrust into the role of omnipotent expert. They can be seen as an experienced partner on the journey of exploration with their supervisee. At the same time, it is essential that I acknowledge and own my expertise as a supervisor. It is only by doing this that I can provide suitable supervision to my supervisees.

In keeping with my constructivist leanings, supervision with my supervisees is now a process of shared meaning making between us. The ultimate goal is that supervision is transformative for me and my supervisee. It is not an imposition of supervisor experiences, values, or solutions on supervisees. It moves away from labelling the supervisor as the expert who dispenses sage advice to their supervisees, who in turn, uncritically accept it as the right thing to do.

It is somewhat understandable that disagreement exists on the exact nature of supervision, given the variety of definitions of supervision that exist (Bernard and Goodyear 2004, 2009, 2014; Calvert et al. 2016; Carroll 1995, 1996, 2009, 2010; Ellis 2010; Gaete and Ness 2015; Guiffrida 2015; Hawkins and Shohet 2006 and
holloway 1992, 1995; inskipp and proctor 1993, 1995; knox 2015; mangione et al. 2011; page and wosket 1994, 2001, 2014; timm 2015). some of these are in broad agreement with each other, while other definitions appear to emphasise some particular aspect of the supervisory process. in addition, bernard and goodyear (2004, 2009, 2014) suggest that, although many attempts have been made to define clinical supervision, it can be difficult to talk about clinical supervision as a distinct discipline as there is not universal agreement as to what clinical supervision is.

Nonetheless, it is both possible and necessary to recognise clinical supervision as a distinct professional activity. falender et al. (2013, p.9) point out that “clinical supervision is acknowledged by granello as a distinct professional practice in psychology”. the amount of literature that has emerged over the last forty years or so, and the ongoing vigorous debates between the various schools of supervision, as evidenced by the multiple definitions of supervision reviewed here, suggests supervision as a discipline to be finding its feet. it has moved from its adolescent state of “growing energetically and randomly as adolescents do” (bernard 2006, p.7), to a more adult and critical self-reflective stage.

What can be seen is that the nature of supervision, what supervision is, its purpose, focus, content, and how it is carried out, is not something that is static, fixed, and immutable. it is evolving into multiple strands, many of which regard the creation of a positive therapeutic alliance, the relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee, as the bedrock of supervision. with a nod of acknowledgement to rogers, guiffrida points out:

Unconditional positive regard can be established in supervision when supervisors genuinely convey confidence in their supervisees’ abilities to develop and grow as counsellors, even in times in which they become frustrated or appear to struggle; to trust supervisees to select the focus of supervision, including identifying their own strengths, weaknesses and goals for supervision.

(Guiffrida 2015, p.43)

Supervision now becomes a place of exploration and creation for the supervisee (and the supervisor). the emphasis is on supervisee self-learning and exploration and not on the gatekeeping function of the supervisor. this constructionist approach to supervision is one of many ways in which supervision can take place. it has its strengths: the development of the supervisee, its collaborative nature, trusting the
supervisee’s ability to engage effectively in critical reflexivity, and the lessening of
the power differential between participants. Its limitations are that it can appear to be
unstructured, it assumes that the supervisee is willing to embrace this type of
supervision and can engage with it, and it appears to downplay the evaluative role
that is present in all supervision.

The impact that this evaluative role has on supervision has been commented on by
Gaete and Ness (2015, p.59) who point out that “the supervisory learning alliance
can be weakened by evaluation practices inviting mistrust and/or negative emotional
responses (e.g. anxiety, shame) in supervisees”. Acknowledging and managing this
tension and these emotional responses is something that I believe should be
discussed at the contracting stage of supervision. We have moved a long way from
Holloway and Wolleat’s (1994, p.4) assertion that “the process of supervision is one
of the least understood of the many social interactions that a professional
psychologist undertakes”. Though it is only fair to acknowledge the comment by
Milne (2007, p.2) who states that “the exact nature of supervision is not clear”. However, it is futile to look for the exact nature of supervision or counselling. Some
concepts are not amenable to having a precisely defined exact nature. They have
essences, or cores, which contain some of the marked features of the phenomenon.

As previously noted, there are numerous definitions of supervision available. My
own ‘working definition’ of supervision is not a constant, and it is something I
always review in light of my own experiences and new research in this area.

When I started working as a supervisor, Holloway and Wolleat’s (1994) definition of
supervision offered a template on which to base my supervision. They state:

Supervision provides an opportunity for the trainee to learn the skills and ethical
principles of the profession. The supervisory relationship is crafted not only to facilitate
the teaching and learning processes, but also to allow for the evaluation of the student’s
performance. The supervisor is both the support for learning and the gatekeeper to the
profession.

(Holloway and Wolleat 1994, p.250)

My initial working definition of supervision was challenged by subsequent research
(Bordin, 1993; Roche et al., 2007) which talked about supervision as a working
alliance between practitioners. These placed less stress on the power differential and
hierarchical nature of the supervisory relationship and viewed it as more of a collaborative endeavour (Mangione et al., 2011).

The importance of developing an effective supervisory alliance cannot be underestimated. Falender et al. are quite forthright in this regard in asserting the following:

The supervisory alliance has emerged in supervision as an essential component of effective supervision (Bernard and Goodyear, 2014; Falender and Shafranske, 2004, 2007, 2014; Pearce, Beinart, Clohessy and Cooper, 2013); neglecting its importance would ignore a vast literature base demonstrating its centrality to the practice of supervision.

(Falender et al. 2014, p.396)

This, in turn, led to my current working practice of supervision which incorporates my constructivist stance. My current constructivist working definition of supervision is one that is influenced by Calvert et al. (2016), Carroll (2010), Downs (2006), Hemner (2012), Guiffrida (2015), and Hernandez et al. (2009). As a supervisor, I do not see myself as the source of objective truth (Downs 2006), but instead as someone who uses their power to create a less formal more equal partnership (Hemner 2012) with their supervisees, so that practice can be interrupted (Carroll 2010) in order to engage in dialogical reflexivity (Calvert et al. 2016). I want to empower supervisees to discover new knowledge and find their own way of working with their clients. This is best achieved through developing a working alliance with the supervisee, with clarity around roles, responsibilities, and expectations of both the supervisor and the supervisee.

The vigour of the debate over what constitutes clinical supervision, along with the many definitions available, illustrates the rich, diverse, and complex nature of clinical supervision. We have multiple definitions and theories of counselling, yet this does not undermine the essential nature of counselling. Having numerous definitions of clinical supervision does not lead to confusion. It demonstrates how the concept of clinical supervision is amenable to a variety of learning and developmental philosophies and concepts. This diversity, this plurality in clinical supervision, is something that should be welcomed and embraced. As we construct our own version of reality (or seek to find an objective reality), we will always be developing visions or theories of supervision to meet the learning and developmental
needs of ourselves as supervisors and of our supervisees. Supervisees are co-creators in supervision. As Creaner (2014, p.3) remarks, “there are many ways to supervise, and each supervisor and supervisee will have their own styles and approaches”.

So, bearing in mind that we do not have a universally accepted agreement of what is meant by either power or supervision, I am now going to explore how power is present in clinical supervision.

2.6.2 Power in clinical supervision

The asymmetrical power relationship in supervision between supervisor and supervisee has been extensively commented upon. This is evident in the evaluative function that supervisors have in relation to their supervisees. As Doehrman aptly puts it:

>The criteria for evaluating students’ performances tend to be subjective and ambiguous . . . psychological health, interpersonal skills, and therapeutic competence are being judged against unclear standards . . . supervisors are thus not only admired teachers but feared judges who have real power.

(Doehrman 1976, p.11)

The potential to misuse this power has been commented on by Goren who notes:

>Given the hierarchy of power in supervision and therapy, if a person in the “one down” position, as Dr Castellano refers to it feels abused, does this mean there is sufficient cause to claim a boundary has been violated? And what about feelings of abuse that the person in the “one up” position may experience at the hands of the other? Professional codes of conduct can specify only unethical conduct in a fairly delimited way.

(Goren 2013, p.741)

Following on from this, Mangione et al. (2011, p.145) talk about the “need to be reflective regarding power within the supervisor relationship”.

In general terms, power is usually conceived as “power over” or domination (Holloway and Wolleat 1994, p.32). This is especially evident in western culture, where we often refer to people in positions of power as being able to exert control and influence over people and events. Power is ever present and everywhere. As a result, Holloway and Wolleat (1994, p.32) talk about power “appearing in any discussion of relationship, organization, politics and gender”. Consequently, it is always present in the supervisory relationship. Even the terms ‘supervisor’ and
‘supervisee’ are redolent of power positions of people who have socially sanctioned or positional power. One of these (the supervisor) exercises it over the other person (the supervisee), thereby creating and sustaining an asymmetrical relationship. It is little wonder that the actual word supervision “may be viewed with suspicion by those who are unfamiliar with the concept, having, as it does, connotations relating to power and surveillance” (Feltham 2010, p.169). Foucault’s concept of governmentality through moral regulation is achieved by using experts to manage the population and exercise power. According to Gilbert:

Power is exercised through the activity of health professionals and the complex web of discourses and social practices that characterize their work. These include the discourses and practices of reflection and clinical supervision.

(Gilbert 2001, p.199)

Notwithstanding this concept of power, Holloway and Wolleat (1994) assert that the power present in the clinical supervisory relationship is power ‘with’ rather than power ‘over’ the supervisee. They further talk about the use of the word empowerment to describe the dynamics that exist in clinical supervision, because it embodies the concept of involvement by the supervisee in the supervision process. This involvement by the supervisee in supervision confers powers on the supervisee. They can choose to use or misuse their power in supervision by either engaging in the process or by withholding information from the supervisor.

It is surprising, therefore, that in the literature surveyed, there is little information on how supervisors might share their power with their supervisees. It is also important to determine what style of power relationship in clinical supervision is most appropriate in meeting the needs of the supervisee. The hierarchical nature of the clinical supervisory relationship is not always seen by the supervisee as a negative aspect of the dynamic that exists between supervisor and supervisee.

In order to make supervision more egalitarian and lessen the power differential between supervisor and supervisee, several authors have stressed the importance of the supervisory alliance. Building on the ground-breaking work of Fleming and Benedek (1964, 1966) and Bordin (1983), Watkins et al. assert:

The supervision alliance can be defined as the bond that develops between supervisor and supervisee and their mutual agreement on the goals and tasks of supervision.

(Watkins et al. 2015, p.100)
Previously Watkins stated:

The supervisory alliance has been referred to as the heart and soul of supervision and is viewed as significantly contributing to the unfolding of a favourable supervision experience.

(Watkins 2014b, p.67)

Watkins also observes that:

…of the various elements that compose the supervision relationship, none seems to exert more power and influence on supervisor and supervisee than their jointly-forged supervisory alliance.

(Watkins 2014a, p.20)

The partnership nature of the alliance is also emphasised by Falender, Shafランスke, and Ofek (2014, p.96) who point out that “a strong supervisory alliance is a key component of evidence-supported supervision practices”. Karpenko and Gidycz (2012) stress the importance of the supervisory relationship as an important factor in fostering supervisee learning and evaluation in a positive manner.

In what appears to be a modification and development of their previously stated view of clinical supervision, Bernard and Goodyear voice agreement with Ellis’s (2010, p.106) assertion that “good supervision is about the relationship”. They add:

The supervisory relationship is necessary to enable supervisee learning. Moreover, the quality of that relationship will predict supervisees’ perceptions of the extent to which their experience constitutes “good supervision” (Worthen and McNeill, 1996), or on the other extreme, harmful supervision (Ellis et al., 2014).

(Bernard and Goodyear 2014, p.83)

A similar stance on the nature of power in clinical supervision is offered by Holloway and Wolleat (1994) who discuss in considerable detail an egalitarian concept of power in supervision. They view power as being the property of the supervisory relationship itself and not belonging to one person in particular. This is somewhat Foucauldian in its philosophy of power. One aspect of the power that many regard as the prerogative of the supervisor is the sign-off power. It is to this that I will now turn my attention to.
2.6.3 Supervisor power in clinical supervision

The sign-off role of the supervisor in relation to students’ progress or practitioners seeking accreditation or re-accreditation is often talked about by both supervisor and supervisee when discussing the power of the supervisor in clinical supervision. In addition, the fact that the supervisee may have a limited right of appeal against the sign-off decision of the supervisor confers significant power on supervisors. According to Holloway, with reference to French and Raven’s (1959) classification of power:

The types of power inherent in the role of supervisor are evaluative (i.e. reward and coercive), expert, and legitimate power. Referent power results from the personal and interpersonal attributes of the supervisor. Referent power can emerge only as a relationship develops.

(Holloway 1995, p.32)

Karpenko and Gidycz (2012) point out that it is recognised that, due to the power differential and evaluative nature of supervision, it is ultimately the supervisor’s responsibility to attempt to establish and maintain an effective supervisory relationship. Mangione et al. (2011, p.163) put it bluntly, suggesting that “naming the issue of power and the unequal power status is essential”.

Naming the issue of power is extremely important, as the one thing that most novice supervisees are very much aware of is the power differential that exists between supervisor and supervisee. So why avoid naming it? Is it not better to acknowledge it and have a discussion about how it is present in the supervision space, along with its impact on both supervisor and supervisee? The presence of power in the supervision space highlights the need for supervisors to possess the skills of self-awareness and self-assessment “to guide them in an ongoing reflection of the supervisory relationship and its effect on their supervisees’ learning and evaluation” (Falender et al. 2004, p.140). In addition, Karpenko and Gidycz (2012) stress the importance of the supervisor discussing the interpersonal nature of the supervisory relationship and how it influences many aspects of clinical supervision. Ladany et al. (2005) recommend that supervisors should regularly check with their supervisees about the state of the supervisory relationship.
2.6.4 Limitations of supervisor power in clinical supervision

Although it may not be obvious at first, there are limits to the confidential nature of clinical supervision, which in turn, serve to limit the power of the supervisor. A supervisor does not have the power to not disclose situations where the supervisee discloses ethical breaches in their practice. The role training organisations play in the context of confidentiality needs to be discussed at the earliest stage in the supervisory relationship. It is vital there be clarity between supervisor and supervisee on the meaning and extent of confidentiality and on issues that are not covered by confidentiality. Bernard and Goodyear (2009) and others stress the importance of having a dialogue between supervisor and supervisee around this issue.

2.6.5 Supervisee power in clinical supervision

There is a growing body of literature becoming available on one aspect of supervisee power, self-disclosure and non-self-disclosure, and its impact on the supervisor–supervisee relationship in clinical supervision (Goren 2013; Knox 2015; Nielsen et al. 2009). Nielsen et al. (2009) note supervisee and supervisor self-disclosure and nondisclosure to be topics which seem to be attracting growing interest (Farber 2006; Ladany and Melincoff 1999). Although it is arguable that the amount of power a supervisee has in comparison to the supervisor is minimal, they do have some power. Murphy (2002, p.22) draws attention to the fact that “supervisees have power too and they can abuse it. They can withhold important information or evaluate their supervisor unfairly”. This is why Knox (2015 p.152) notes that “some degree of SE NSD (supervisee non self-disclosure) is normative, and perhaps also unavoidable”. She adds that this non self-disclosure by the supervisee may be exacerbated by shame, power differences, and the evaluative components of supervision, as well as by the supervisory relationship itself. This point is taken up by Gaete and Ness who state:

Practices involved in supervisors’ role as “gatekeepers” of the profession may conspire against the practices involved in their formative role. For example, supervisees may restrain themselves from disclosing relevant experiences to supervisors in order to avoid negative evaluations that may affect their careers.

(Gaete and Ness 2015, p.58)

Moreover, according to Kreider:
Research has indicated that withholding information from supervisors is a common supervisee practice (Ladany et al. 1996; Mehr et al. 2010). Multiple reasons for nondisclosure have been identified, notably fear of professional repercussions and impression management (Ladany et al., 1996).

(Kreider 2014, p.206)

For supervision to be effective, it is imperative that supervisees disclose difficulties they have with their clients (Walsh et al., 2003). Experiencing difficulties when working with some clients is a normal aspect of counseling practice, and it would be unusual if a supervisee had no cases that they were struggling with.

Also, as a supervisor, it is impossible not to self-disclose (Elliott, 2000). Knight points out:

The clinician is never a completely blank slate, as her or his body language, facial expressions, and gestures always are present. Photos in the practitioner’s office, her or his framed credentials and diplomas, and even the office décor convey something about her or his personality and life outside of the professional role.

(Knight 2014, p.164)

To disclose or to withhold information consciously or unconsciously, either by the supervisor or the supervisee, impacts on supervision and the supervisory relationship. Discussing and acknowledging this aspect of the supervisory relationship might help lessen the instance of deliberate non-disclosure by the supervisee. Where supervisee disclosures that could be viewed in a negative light occur, it is important that they are dealt with in an open and honest way.

2.6.6 Limitations of supervisee power in clinical supervision

Though many authors stress the need to avoid summative evaluations of supervisees (Bernard and Goodyear 2014, Lambie and Ascher 2016), and stress the need to flag potential difficulties early in the supervisory relationship, the fact remains that supervisors have immense power in this regard and this does not go unnoticed by the supervisor and the supervisee. Supervisee evaluation by the supervisor is an integral part of supervision. Bernard and Goodyear maintain:

It is safe to assume that supervisors will continue to evaluate supervisees based on their own knowledge of what is understood in their professional community to constitute acceptable standards of practice.

(Bernard and Goodyear 2014, p.223)
Another limitation may be that supervision is mandated for a particular reason, and supervisees may have no choice in this regard. Furthermore, they may be assigned a supervisor that they have no choice in choosing. Somewhat surprisingly, therefore, Kress et al. note:

Participants [supervisees] reported that for them, sanctioned supervision was more active, directive, and structured than their traditional supervision sessions. They believed that it was necessary to more clearly articulate the expectations for supervision than with trainees or licensure-seeking supervisees.

(Kress et al. 2015, p.50)

This suggests the context in which supervision takes place plays an important role in influencing how supervisees view their own role and that of the supervisors and vice versa. Once again, this highlights the need to have a conversation early in the supervisory relationship about roles and responsibilities of both the supervisee and the supervisor. This is important, as it offers an opportunity for all involved in supervision to discuss and explore their understanding of what is involved in supervision and how it will take place.

2.6.7 Differential power in clinical supervision

All of the literature surveyed acknowledges that a power differential exists in clinical supervision and that it is not possible to eliminate power differentials in clinical supervision.

On foot of this, Smith (2005, p.2) argues trenchantly for the need for a more dialogical approach to clinical supervision in order to “flatten” unequal relationships and to allow interaction across differences. Smith acknowledges that even in ‘flat’ forms of supervision, there is a power dynamic present in such relationships. What is more, practitioners acknowledge this power dynamic does exist in clinical supervision, no matter what form it takes or what philosophical outlook informs the process. Furthermore, Murphy and Wright (2005, p.34) acknowledge that “the use of power in supervision is not always easy to discern, even if it is inherent or preferred”.

As a consequence, the need to have discussions between the supervisor and the supervisee early in their relationship about the presence of power is important. Murphy and Wright (2005) advocate strongly in favour of this approach, and they
note that it should be a frequently recurring and ongoing dialogue that occurs throughout the supervisory process. How it is defined is critically important in attempting to determine the nature of the power dynamic in clinical supervision.

Nonetheless, professional clinical supervision, by its nature and purpose, does not lend itself to the creation of an equal relationship between supervisor and supervisee. The definitions of supervision discussed in this study acknowledge the asymmetrical relationship that necessarily exists between supervisor and supervisee. Not only are unequal relationships tolerable in clinical supervision, they are necessary if effective supervision is to take place. This is especially evident in the hierarchical nature of the power relations in supervision.

2.6.8 Hierarchy in clinical supervision

In their writings in assessing the power relationship between supervisor and supervisee in clinical supervision, Murphy and Wright (2005, p.283) note that “hierarchy is a central aspect of clinical supervision”. This is especially so in how supervisors are often seen as gate-keepers to the profession. The gate-keeper function of clinical supervision is commented on by Bernard and Goodyear (2009, 2014) and others (Carroll 1995, 1996, 2009; Hawkins and Shohet 2006, 2012; Holloway and Wolleat 1994; Page and Wosket 1994, 2001, 2014). This gate-keeper aspect of the supervisor’s role is filled with power as the very title suggests. The gate-keeper (supervisor) possesses significant power (Holloway 1995), whereas the supervisee has significantly less power, thereby highlighting the hierarchical nature of the supervisory relationship.

In talking about the elements that contribute to the hierarchical nature of clinical supervision, Holloway and Wolleat (1994, p. 25) refer to the professional sanction that the clinical supervisor receives from the profession. It confers on them authority “to exercise evaluation, expert and legitimate power over the supervisee”.

So, for this reason, Kilminster et al. found that hierarchy plays an important part in supervisor-supervisee relationships in clinical supervision. They state that the:

Innate hierarchy power…may be used as a positive or destructive force on either side, although the potential for abuse is probably greater on the supervisor’s side.

(Kilminster et al 2007, p.13)
They acknowledge that the supervisee also has the potential and ability, to varying degrees, to abuse their power to the detriment of the supervisor.

2.6.9 Feminist clinical supervision

As a consequence of the evident power differential in clinical supervision between the supervisor and the supervisee and its inherently hierarchical nature, attempts have been made to lessen the power differential and reduce the hierarchical nature of the clinical supervision encounter. Proponents of feminist clinical supervision argue that it offers a way to conduct clinical supervision that acknowledges the power differential that exists between the supervisor and the supervisee, while at the same time seeking to minimise this power differential. Feminist clinical supervision achieves this by viewing clinical supervision as a collaborative engagement between the supervisor and the supervisee.

This emphasis on a collaborative style of supervision is endorsed by Mangione et al. who state:

Our supervision vision is a collaborative one of two authentic people working together to enhance the learning and growth of the supervisee, with the added awareness that the supervisor can also grow and change from the experience.

(Mangione et al. 2011, p.160)

Bertsch et al. (2014), talk about supervision as a space where the supervisor and the supervisee can work together as a team and collaborate on important supervisory issues. Prouty (2001) and Morgan and Sprenkle (2007) state that feminist supervision brings an added depth to the supervisory relationship by emphasising the collaborative element of the relationship and attempts to create an equal partnership between the supervisor and the supervisee. Similar sentiments are expressed by Burkard et al. (2006), Eunjung (2014), Henretty and Levitt (2010), and Tabol and Walker (2008). Hemner (2012, p.828) talks about the emergence of feminist models of supervision that “portray supervision as a partnership rather than a dictatorship, with less formality and more even power relations”.

The feminist model of clinical supervision is an attractive one for many supervisors and supervisees as it encourages a degree of supervisee empowerment that is less available in traditional constructs of clinical supervision. Syzmanski offers the following definition of the features of feminist clinical supervision:
A collaborative relationship that is characterised by mutual respect, genuine dialogue, attention to social contextual factors and responsible actions.

(Szymanski 2003, p.221)

This feminist perspective on the nature of power in clinical supervision contrasts sharply with the view that power rests with the individuals involved in clinical supervision, as stated by Bernard and Goodyear (1999, 2004, 2009, 2014). The power is mostly in the hands of the supervisor, with some power available to the supervisee.

The contrast in emphasis between feminist models of supervision and more traditional models does not mean that they are mutually exclusive, or that they are at either end of a hierarchy–collaboration model of supervision. In reality, many divergent philosophies of supervision contain elements of each other. What it draws attention to are the variety of ways that are available to engage in supervision. All of these, while not naming power specifically, acknowledge that the asymmetrical aspect of the supervisor–supervisee relationship is a core element of clinical supervision. It cannot be ignored or minimised.

Hemner (2012) discusses the more recent trends in feminist clinical supervision that involve a movement to a more collaborative style of supervision between the supervisor and the supervisee. These trends acknowledge the role that culture plays in the supervisory space (Chopra 2013). Research by Arczynski and Morrow on the complexities of power in feminist multicultural psychotherapy supervision identified seven categories which “constituted the properties of anticipating and managing power” (2016, p.195). These are: the complexities of power in supervision, bringing history into the supervision room, creating trust through openness and honesty, using a collaborative process, meeting shifting developmental (a)symmetries, cultivating critical reflexivity, and looking at and counterbalancing the impact of context.

They argue that their research:

…provided the first known empirical framework for understanding how feminist multicultural supervisors conceptualise their integration of feminism and multiculturalism into their work as supervisors.

(Arczynski and Morrow 2016, p.202)
Yet, they concede (Ibid. p.196) that there are tensions inherent in balancing responsibility, power, and egalitarianism in supervision. Collaboration is used to share power and manage these tensions.

A concept of supervision that incorporated many of these feminist features is offered by Mezirow et al. (2000) who refer to it as transformative learning. Supervision-as-learning becomes a transformative space, where both supervisor and supervisee engage in supervision as equals, co-creating in a spirit of mutual learning and cooperation, the supervisory space. This is a theme that is taken up and developed by Carroll (2008, 2009, 2010), Scharmer (2007), and others.

Then again, Green and Dekkers believe that what may be most important in clinical supervision is:

…the supervisor modelling the appropriate use of power for the supervisee in order to empower the supervisee to mentor future generations of feminist therapists, supervisors, researchers and mentors.

(Green and Dekkers 2010, p.306)

This notion of ‘supervision as modelling’ has strong associations with the master-apprentice mode of learning, which has a long and successful history in many trades and professions. It is about an experienced practitioner empowering a less experienced practitioner to gain the competencies, skills, and qualities necessary to become a competent practitioner.

Feminist clinical supervision has, at its core, the establishment of a non-authoritarian, more egalitarian relationship (supervisory alliance) between the supervisor and the supervisee who work in a collaborative and reflexive manner. It acknowledges that a power differential exists between the supervisor and the supervisee and stresses that naming and managing it is essential if supervision is to be authentic and empowering.

2.6.10 Empowerment in clinical supervision

The theme of empowerment in clinical supervision is an interesting one insofar as it freely acknowledges the power dynamic that exists in the supervisory relationship between supervisor and supervisee. It advocates how the power is used and plays a significant role in supervision. Because of this, Murphy and Wright (2005) discuss the concept of empowerment in clinical supervision as a means of benefitting
therapists-in-training and encouraging supervisees to exercise their own power. Though supervisees view this more collaborative use of power by the supervisor as positive, its impact on the effectiveness of supervision in meeting the expectations of both the supervisor and the supervisee needs to be investigated in greater detail.

According to Holloway and Wolleat, radical empowerment of supervisees in supervision:

…allows professionals-in-training to break from the constraining bonds of their gender socialisation-constraints that may keep them from fully using their intrapersonal and interpersonal awareness skills to implement a facilitative relationship with clients.

(Holloway and Wolleat 1994, p.41)

Supervision takes place in a world where roles and responsibilities are sanctioned and socialised. In empowering my supervisees, I am offering them the opportunity to be critical and reflexive practitioners. Empowerment takes place within the supervisory relationship, and establishing and maintaining a positive supervisor-supervisee relationship, is a core factor in empowering the supervisee in clinical supervision. Holloway (1995, p.107) suggests that the supervisor maintains “a relationship of referent power and trusting involvement” as they seek to empower their supervisees.

Holloway and Wolleat (1994, p.31) argue that “supervision can be a collaborative effort that provides an opportunity for empowerment and yet maintains a professional gatekeeping role.”

2.6.11 Evaluation in clinical supervision

When gender, race, or cultural differences are present in the supervisory relationship, the power imbalance may increase or shift in direction, resulting in either the supervisee or supervisor feeling that they do not have enough power to perform optimally.

(Nelson et al. 2006, p.107)

Murphy and Wright (2005) note that evaluation in clinical supervision is undertaken in the context of a power relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee. This power rests primarily in the hands of the supervisor. In this unequal distribution of power, the impact of the evaluative function vested in the supervisor is a significant contribution to shifting the balance of power towards them in supervision.

Gaete and Ness (2015, p.60) state that “evaluation seems to be a very sensitive issue in supervision”. Yet they also assert, echoing Bernard and Goodyear (2013):

In actual supervision practice most evaluation measures are used primarily as a way to organize feedback for supervisees, rather than to do better gatekeeping decision making.

(Gaete and Ness 2015, p.58)

However, they go on to say that many supervisees are fearful of negative evaluations from their supervisors, and consequently they do not disclose practices which they feel the supervisor might judge negatively. They conclude by pointing out:

The supervisory learning alliance can be weakened by evaluation practices inviting mistrust and/or negative emotional responses (e.g. anxiety, shame) in supervisees.

(Gaete and Ness 2015, p.59)

Yet Creaner (2014, p.100) asserts that “feedback can be a powerful learning intervention”.

This highlights the importance of acknowledging the creative tensions that are inherent in the role of clinical supervision. Having an in-depth discussion with supervisees about these and how they will impact on the interpersonal relationship is vital. Carroll (2009, p.218) acknowledges this vital aspect of supervision. He states:

Supervision holds these three tasks in creative tension, building relationships and creating environments that sustain learning while still monitoring the professionalism of the work.

Borders (2009, p.201) comments that this tension is present where supervisees “are asked to be open and vulnerable about their professional and personal challenges with their supervisor evaluators”.

Manathunga (2007, p.219) suggests that, at a macro level, one of the tensions that come to the fore in supervision relates to the sanctioned societal role of the supervisor. She proposes that “there is the inherent risk of [the supervisee] losing parts of their identity that are normalized out during the process of socializing them into appropriate disciplinary subjectivities” (Ibid.). Supervision can and is used as a normalising process, where the supervisees are duped into an uncritical acceptance of the good and positive mentoring role of their supervisor. Manathunga argues strongly that:

Power remains an integral part of any form of pedagogy and that portraying supervision as mentoring and therefore as an innocent, neutral practice serves only to mask the very real and inescapable role that power plays within supervision.

(Manathunga 2007, p.208)

This is a strong reminder that, no matter how collegial and convivial the relationship between supervisor and supervisee is, it is ultimately an asymmetrical relationship in which the supervisor, by virtue of their status and assigned role, is in the more powerful position. Furthermore, the role of supervisor and the purpose of supervision is a professional and socially sanctioned role. Supervision is not immune to the influences of the environment and society in which it operates. It is influenced by, and in turn influences, supervisees and society. It is not something that is undertaken in isolation. Because of this, styles of supervision which promote a collegiate and transformative approach need to be aware of the potential impression they may create and that the power inequality can be overcome or downplayed in supervision. In this context, practitioners and proponents of this collegiate and transformative style of supervision need to be upfront with their supervisees and acknowledge this power dynamic that is an inherent part of supervision.

Such conversations are best undertaken during the contracting stage of supervision. Bernard and Goodyear (2014) propose discussing all aspects of the supervisory relationship during this contracting phase. This includes expectations of both supervisor and supervisee and how these might be met. Knox suggests part of this process might:

…include a discussion of ‘hot topics’ that supervisees may find difficult to share with supervisors (e.g. attraction to clients, multicultural concerns).

(Knox 2015, p.160)
To this, I would add, the subject of power. Specifically, how the asymmetrical power relationship between supervisor and supervisee is acknowledged and managed. Falender, Shafranske and Ofek assert:

The supervision contract plays an important role in the formation of the supervisory alliance and sets the groundwork for an effective supervision experience.

Falender, Shafranske and Ofek 2014, p.398)

Contracting is the space where all topics can be discussed in an open and transparent manner. This provides the supervisor with an opportunity to discuss their philosophy of supervision and way of working with the supervisee. It helps both parties determine if they are a ‘good fit’ to work together.

In conclusion, it is important to be aware that contracts are not just templates used to manage a supervisory relationship. They are a living and current document and should be regularly reviewed by the supervisor and the supervisee to ensure that they are fit for purpose and that they are providing a supportive framework for supervision to take place (Bernard and Goodyear, 2014; Bond, 2000; Carroll, 1996; Hawkins and Shohet, 2000; Inskipp and Proctor, 1993, Page and Wosket, 2001; Scaife, 2010; Sills, 1997). Their structure will reflect the supervisor’s ontology, epistemology, their life experiences, and their expectations of the supervisee. Spending some time getting the contract that best acknowledges and meets the needs and expectations of the supervisor and supervisee is one of the fundamental ‘first acts’ of any supervisory engagement. Getting agreement on this aspect of supervision will ensure there is a shared understanding between supervisor and supervisee on what to expect in supervision and of the roles and responsibilities of supervisor and supervisee.

2.6.12 Race and culture in clinical supervision

Hernandez et al. identify race and ethnicity as important factors in clinical work and supervision across mental health fields in therapy. They note that:

Favouritism based on ethnicity/religion/shared culture between supervisors and supervisees was a perception that arose more than once and created privileged relationships.

(Hernandez et al. 2009, p.94)
How this perception impacts on the supervisory practice needs to be studied further. In particular, the extent to which it happens in clinical supervision needs to be determined and quantified. Its potential impact on the supervisory relationship, as perceived by both supervisor and supervisee, also needs to be explored. Falender et al. point out:

A gap exists between perceived competence in diversity and actual clinical practice (Hansen et al., 2006), and between knowledge of appropriate practice and actually enacting such practice (Sehgal et al., 2011). Supervisors also perceive themselves as more multiculturally competent than their behaviors [sic] indicate.  

(Falender et al. 2014, p.397)

The need for both supervisors and supervisees to have an open and honest conversation about race and culture within clinical supervision is acknowledged as being important and necessary by an increasing number of practitioners. Nelson et al. (2006) talk about the positive aspects of having such a conversation on supervisee comfort and their satisfaction with supervision. The responsibility for initiating this conversation rests primarily with the supervisor. The need to be sensitive to issues of race and culture must remain uppermost in the mind of the supervisor at all times. They add that “the social construction of supervision is based on a Eurocentric model” (Nelson et al. 2006, p.108). The appropriateness of following such a model in a multicultural, multiracial, and multigender identification society needs to be questioned by all parties involved in providing and engaging in clinical supervision.

Bertsch et al. (2014, p. 175) assert that “being able to understand individual and cultural diversity is a fundamental criteria needed to progress towards competency as a psychologist”. It is also needed to progress towards competency as a clinical supervisor.

Previously, Sodowski et al. (1994) proposed a Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI) framework to be used by counsellors to measure their multicultural counselling competencies. They are keen to point out that:

…a major limitation of multicultural training consists of the assumption that acquiring knowledge and skills is sufficient to be a culturally skilled counselor.

(Sodowski 1994, p45)

What all of these have is common is that they stress the need for all therapists and supervisors alike, to develop “cultural sensitivity” (Ridley et al. 1994, p.125).
Following on from this, Ellis et al. state:

Supervisors need to be knowledgeable about the unique aspects of their own country and culture as they pertain to clinical supervision.

(Ellis et al. 2015, p.621)

Falender et al. advocate:

Best practice around multicultural competencies include self-awareness of one’s own multiple cultural identities and the impact of supervisor worldview on supervision and the clinical work, adopting a position of cultural humility, exercising meta-competence, and not erroneously assuming one is competent in facilitating culturally responsive supervision.

(Falender et al. 2014, p.397)

They stress the important role that culture plays in all supervisory and therapeutic relationships.

In a similar vein, Hernandez and McDowell highlight the role that culture plays in supervision practices. From a critical post-colonial perspective, they assert:

Supervision informed by a critical postcolonial perspective disputes theories and practices that reproduce the status quo of inequalities generated and maintained by the cultural and social capital of dominant groups.

(Hernandez and McDowell 2010, p.29)

Similar sentiments are expressed by Monk et al. (2008, p.449) who argue that all counselling (and by extension, supervision) is culturally situated as it involves “the use of language, discourse and concepts each element of which is a product of a cultural world”.

Supervision does not take place in isolation form the rest of the world, and it is influenced by the cultural milieu in which it takes place. Both supervisors and supervisees are immersed in and influenced by their cultural conditioning. The need to be aware of how culture intersects supervisor and supervisee expectations regarding their roles and positions is something that needs to be constantly interrogated. Phillips et al. assert that:
The training of the next generation of supervisors must include attention to the importance of having discussions related to diverse identities and examples of how to do so.

(Philips et al. 2016, p206)

There is a responsibility on every supervisor to engage in ongoing critical self-reflection on the cultural capital associated with their sanctioned roles and responsibilities.

Becoming culturally aware of our own culture and the culture of supervisees is essential if supervision is to be conducted in a professional and ethical way. Whether we care to admit it, we are all capable of conducting supervision that is culturally insensitive and harmful to supervisees. By acknowledging that this is possible, and at the same time taking steps to increase our cultural awareness, we can ensure that valuing cultural diversity becomes an integral part of supervision practice.

2.6.13 Conclusion

What all of the literature reviewed has in common is that it acknowledges power to indeed exist in all aspects of relationships between individuals and this power dynamic to also be present in the supervisory relationship. How to deal with this power in a manner that enhances the experience and effectiveness of the supervisory encounter for both the supervisor and supervisee is a matter on which there appears to be no uniformity of approach. Its impact on the supervisor, the supervisee, and the supervision session from the perspective of the supervisor has not been adequately addressed.

Feminist clinical supervision stresses the importance of a more dialogical approach, whereas other models of clinical supervision stress the need for both supervisor and supervisee to acknowledge the power differential and hierarchical nature of clinical supervision and work within these parameters. What that power is and who owns it, its types, and purpose are the subject of different perspectives in the literature. This in turn impacts on the supervisory relationship between supervisor and supervisee in a clinical supervision setting.

Nonetheless, while agreement among authors as to the precise definition of what power is and how it is used in clinical supervision may be uncertain or somewhat tentative, there is general agreement that it is present in clinical supervision.
There is also broad agreement in the literature surveyed regarding the value of clinical supervision in the professional development of the supervisee. Yet there is some disagreement in the literature concerning the exact rationale for clinical supervision. Finding an agreed and all-encompassing definition of clinical supervision appears to be somewhat elusive at this time. It may be, as is the case at present, that a variety of overlapping definitions of what clinical supervision is and its purpose will suffice to give enough common ground which accommodates these varying perspectives and philosophies.

However, there are areas within the supervisory encounter that would benefit from further investigation and research. The effectiveness of feminist clinical supervision and the development of more collegiate and collaborative models of supervision in meeting learning outcomes for supervisors and supervisees is worthy of further study. Further research into the role that race, gender, and culture play in clinical supervision might lead to new and exciting discoveries.

The results of this literature review suggest that both supervisors and supervisees are impacted by power in the supervisory relationship in a variety of ways. The review has drawn attention to some of the gaps in our knowledge around some aspects of clinical supervision. These centre mainly on how supervisors’ power impacts on the supervisors themselves, and how they as supervisors perceive it to impact on their supervisees. The review acknowledges that there is scope for more work to be done in order to further our understanding of the critical role power plays in the dynamics of clinical supervision.

Power is an integral element of all relationships, including the supervisory one. The acknowledged asymmetrical power relationship between the supervisor (who has significant power) and the supervisee (who has less power) is a potent factor in determining the nature of the relationship between supervisor and supervisee. The fact that the supervisor has significant sanctioned power means they have substantial influence in clinical supervision. There is a gap in the literature regarding how supervisors understand and interpret this power in clinical supervision. This is the subject of this research, as outlined in my research question: How does supervisor power influence clinical supervision from the perspective of the supervisor? This overarching question generates a number of sub-themes as follows:

- To understand the nature of supervisor power in clinical supervision;
• To explore how supervisor power is present in clinical supervision;
• To examine how supervisor power impacts on the process of clinical supervision;
• To develop a greater understanding of supervisor power in clinical supervision;
• To inform clinical supervision practice;
• To assess its implications for supervision theory, research, and practice;
• To elicit perspectives from participants on their understanding of the nature and use of power in clinical supervision;
• To explore participants’ understanding of their role and how they make sense of it.
• To contribute to knowledge about this important issue.

How this will be achieved, and the methodology involved in doing this, will be discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In conducting any study, the research question determines the approach used to undertake the research and not vice versa. Consequently, my research question would be best addressed by using a qualitative approach to the research design. A quantitative approach, with its emphasis on numbers, would not be in keeping with my personal philosophy (constructionist-interpretivist, outlined below). A mixed method approach (combining features of qualitative and quantitative approaches) might be useful, but ultimately the qualitative approach was a ‘best-fit’ in view of the aims of my research. According to Forester:

Qualitative methods are generally regarded as being particularly good at giving access to what things mean, so people who share concerns about positivism are often attracted to qualitative methods.

(Forester 2010, p.26)

In the social sciences, there has been a movement away from positivist/deficit/quantitative models of research, and qualitative models have become more prominent in the human sciences.

Creswell (2013, p.32) points out that the choice of a research design should be informed “by the worldview assumptions the researcher brings to the study”. Guba (1990, p.17) calls this worldview (sometimes referred to as a paradigm) “a basic set of beliefs that guide action”. Langdridge (2007, p.3) defines a paradigm as “a set of basic beliefs that provide the principles for understanding the world”. Thomas (2009, p.72) describes a paradigm as “a set of basic belief systems or framework representing the worldview of the researcher”. Paradigms are not static, complete, or perfect. They shift when they are no longer useful and another framework proves more useful in viewing the world. Paradigms have three components: ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Ontology is all about how we look at reality and acknowledges there to be diverse ways of doing this. Epistemology is concerned with knowledge of the world, types of knowledge, and how this knowledge is obtained. Methodology refers to the approach taken in the research.

The two main philosophical approaches to research are classified as quantitative (also called positivist) and qualitative (also referred to as interpretivist
Each of these approaches operates from a set of underlying assumptions. These assumptions inform the type of research undertaken, its focus, and the role of the researcher in the research process. Tormey and O’Grady (2006) summarise the distinctive features of these approaches. They are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative (Positivist)</th>
<th>Qualitative (Interpretivist)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social laws are real</td>
<td>People interpret the world differently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variables can be named and relationships between them identified</td>
<td>Reality is a complicated mix of different contributing factors which should be understood in all its complexity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher is an objective outsider who brings theories to the research</td>
<td>Researcher is a rigorous and careful insider who understands people’s worldview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher begins with a hypothesis</td>
<td>Researcher lets the theory emerge from their interaction with the research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The person researched is a research subject</td>
<td>The person researched is a research participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical data is used to see patterns</td>
<td>Text and words used to see meanings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The researcher portrays the research as objective</td>
<td>The researcher identifies themselves in the research (Makes “I” statements)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normally uses surveys or large data sets</td>
<td>Normally uses interviews, observations, maps, images, or texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually involves many research subjects</td>
<td>Usually involves small number of research participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often looks to measure the extent of an issue within a population</td>
<td>Typically describes processes happening within a group</td>
</tr>
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</table>

As the aim of this research is to explore and gather in-depth insights into the ‘lifeworld’ of clinical supervisors and how they give voice to and make sense of an important aspect of their role (their power), qualitative research is a suitable method to “find out what is happening…in little-understood situations…seek new insights…and assess phenomena in a new light” (Robson 2011, p.59).
3.2 Qualitative research

Creswell (2013, p.43) refers to the “evolving definition” of qualitative research. Likewise, Smith (2008, p.2) states that the focus on qualitative research is generally “engaged with exploring, describing and interpreting the personal and social experiences of participants”. Similarly, Langdrudge (2007, p.2) asserts that qualitative methods are “concerned with the naturalistic descriptions or interpretations of phenomena in terms of meanings these have for the people experiencing them”. Creswell (2013) expresses similar sentiments regarding qualitative research. He talks about quantitative methods as focusing on the counting of aspects of the phenomenon being studied. Creswell (Ibid.) also notes that numerous people have commented on the use of labels, words and descriptions in both qualitative and quantitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.18) discuss credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability in qualitative research. The language of quantitative research is about internal validity, external validity, generalisations, and objectivity. Schwandt (2001) notes that words like ‘understanding’, ‘discover’, and ‘meaning’ are those that are used in the repertoire of the qualitative researcher. Finlay (2011, p.9) points out that “qualitative research is a human science rather than a natural science”, and adds that “qualitative research findings tend to be complex, rich, messy and ambiguous” *Ibid.).

The definition of qualitative research offered by Denzin and Lincoln illustrates both the characteristics of qualitative research and their reluctance to offer a rigid, unchanging definition of qualitative research. They state:

> Qualitative research is a situational activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

(Denzin and Lincoln 2011, p.3)

Qualitative research promotes a style that is inductive and has at its heart an emphasis on the meanings that individuals ascribe to events. This approach honours the spirit of my research question. I want to explore and interpret how participants understand and make meaning of their power as clinical supervisors. “Qualitative research illuminates the less tangible meanings and intricacies of our social world” (Finlay 2011, p.8).
In contrast, the behaviourist underpinnings of much of psychological research and their dominance in academia ensure that it is seen by some researchers as the preferred way to conduct research that is valid, objective, replicable, and that stands up to scrutiny. Ashworth notes that when psychology was emerging as a distinct discipline in the late 19th century…

…it was defined as the science of experience and - maybe surprisingly - the methodology replicated as far as was possible that of the physical sciences.

(Ashworth 2003, p.5)

Ashworth further states that…

…behaviourists were not able to recognise the social nature of human being…they were not able to recognise fully the social construction of human reality.

(Ibid., p.9)

Smith suggests that qualitative analysis…

…is concerned with describing the constituent parts of the entity, while quantitative analysis is involved in determining how much of the entity there is.

(Smith 2015, p.1)

Smith adds that phenomenology and interpretative phenomenological analysis emphasise the purpose of qualitative analysis in “providing rich or ‘thick’ (Geertz, 1973) descriptive accounts of the phenomenon under investigation” (Ibid.).

Because of this, qualitative research, with its emphasis on the spoken word of the participants and the meaning they make of the phenomenon under investigation, is a more authentic and effective basis on which to carry out this research. This is in stark contrast to the philosophy of much quantitative research, with its emphasis on numbers. Yet it must always be kept in mind that the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research is “not as categorical as sometimes portrayed” (Smith 2008, p.2). Furthermore, Finlay (2011), Forrester (2010), Smith (2008), Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) and others point out that, within qualitative research, there are a variety of methods available to the researcher (e.g. Grounded Theory (GT), Discourse Analysis (DA), Narrative Analysis (NA), Critical Narrative Analysis (CNA) and IPA), etc. These are discussed later in this chapter.

The differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches in terms of their assumptions and philosophies are recognisable and have consequences for the type of
research they are used to undertake. For this reason, a quantitative approach to research, with its emphasis on numbers and theory generation, is not a suitable tool for gathering, analysing and presenting the data I wish to capture. Forrester (2010), Langdridge (2007), Thomas (2009), Creswell (2013) and others stress the importance of choosing the design frame that is right for the question being asked. The research approach will be determined by the research question and not vice versa.

Qualitative research has a number of attributes that make it suitable for the research undertaken in this thesis. Creswell (2009) identifies a number of the primary distinguishing features of qualitative research, which relies on words rather than numbers in data collection and analysis. Creswell cites a number of these features which he argues are defining features of qualitative research. They are:

- It takes place in a natural setting, often where participants encounter the phenomenon being studied;
- Multiple sources are used to gather data including interviews, observations and researcher journals;
- The process is inductive (rather than the deductive of quantitative) insofar as themes, patterns and classifications emerge from the ground up from the data. No effort is made by the researcher to impose meaning on the data obtained;
- The meanings that participants hold about the problem or issue is what qualitative researchers are attempting to unearth;
- The research process for qualitative researchers is emergent;
- The role and influence of the researcher in the process is acknowledged and valued. Researchers state their positionality and philosophy explicitly, and indicate how this informs their research paradigm/worldview.

(Creswell 2009, p.175)

Willig (2008, p.150) notes that Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) talk at length about the components of ‘good’ qualitative research. They state that good qualitative research has the following attributes viz.: “the importance of fit, integration of theory, reflexivity, documentation, theoretical sampling, negative case analysis, sensibility to negotiated reality and transferability” (Henwood and Pidgeon 1992, p.54). In the context of qualitative research, transferability is defined as:

…to allow readers to explore the extent to which the study, may or may not, have applicability beyond the specific context within which the data were generated.

(Henwood and Pidgeon 1992, p.54)
In common with Creswell (2009), they emphasise the importance of the role of the researcher and the importance of providing a comprehensive data/audit trail of all the steps taken in the acquisition, analysis, and writing up of data. Providing lots of detail on the content of the research will impact on transferability and the extent to which the study may or may not have applicability beyond the research area. Johnson and Christensen state that:

…qualitative research is used where little is known about a topic or phenomenon and when one wants to discover or learn more about it.

(Johnson and Christensen 2012, p.33)

In a similar vein, Willig (2008, p.151) points out that Elliott et al. (1999) and others acknowledge that there is a number of criteria common to both qualitative and quantitative research (e.g. appropriateness of methods, clarity of presentation, and contribution to knowledge), while at the same time there are “further attributes that are especially pertinent to qualitative research” (Creswell 2009, p.54). Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) point out that these features emphasise the importance of the role of the researcher in the process. They stress the need for the researcher to disclose their values and assumptions, i.e. their own philosophy and positionality. Furthermore, the need to provide context to both the researcher and participants’ life circumstances in ‘situating the sample’ is stressed. What is evident is that there is considerable agreement between the author’s perspectives on what constitutes good qualitative research and what gives it some of its distinctive characteristics. My decision to use a qualitative (interpretivist) research methodology is congruent with my personal worldview, something I will now describe.

3.3 Personal positioning/philosophy

Wherever I position myself in conducting my research, this positionality needs to be explicit and inform all aspects of the research process, from questions asked, to research methodology, to how my thesis is written up and presented. My research position must be congruent with my own values and beliefs. Robson (2011, p.15) observes that “you can’t leave your humanity behind you when doing research”. In my therapeutic encounter with my clients and my research interviews with participants, I can bracket my values to some degree (usually interpreted as leaving them ‘aside’ in case they ‘contaminate’ the counselling/interview session), but
ultimately, I believe I can never be value-free and that the concept of value-free is impossible. Robson (2011, p.151) goes further in this regard in asserting that “the researcher is considered inseparable from assumptions and preconceptions about the phenomenon of study”. So, what is my worldview, my philosophy, my research paradigm?

Cohen et al. (2007) define a paradigm as:

A network of coherent ideas about the nature of the world and the functions of researchers which, adhered to by a group of researchers, conditions their thinking that underpins their research actions.

(Cohen et al. 2007, p.45)

Likewise, Thomas (2009, p.72) defines paradigms as “shared ideas in a particular community of inquiry, ‘thinking habits’ of researchers, ‘rules of procedure’”. I am a humanistic person-centred psychotherapist and clinical supervisor. Ontologically, I am in the constructionist camp, and epistemologically, I am comfortable (though not complacent) with my interpretivist instincts. Furthermore, one of the primary assumptions of humanism is that individuals are capable of knowing their own nature and consequently their own needs. This assumption sits well with my own philosophy and therapeutic stance, which views the client (and supervisee) as the experts on their respective needs, and that they know what is best and works for them.

Carl Rogers (1951, 1961, 1969, 1974, 1980) espouses this belief consistently throughout his writings. His assertion that client growth will automatically happen in a therapeutic encounter if the right conditions are present (congruence, empathy and unconditional positive regard of the therapist for the client) suggests some influence of behaviourism in this thinking. However, his belief that creating a supportive environment helps the person develop is not disputed.

Although I adopt a subjectivist, interpretivist stance as a researcher, psychotherapist and clinical supervisor, I am also aware that this position is one of many competing (and sometimes differing) views on what constitutes reality and how we can gain knowledge of it. I find it difficult to accept the positivist belief that there is knowledge that is absolute, fixed, and real and is amenable to discovery and verification in a positivist empirical manner. Adopting a subjectivist paradigm rather
than a positivist one enables me as a researcher to understand better the perspectives participants have of the phenomenon I am researching.

Creswell (2007, 2009) and Thomas (2007) outline the main features of interpretivist and positivist paradigms. Forrester (2010, p.22) uses the terms “relativism” and “realism” in describing and differentiating between these viewpoints. He also charts the development of “critical realism” (Ibid., p.30), which is an attempt to get beyond the difficulties and limitations contained in traditional forms of interpretivist and positivist paradigms and be an almost halfway house between both. Lund (2005, p.118) summarises some of the more salient features of this position, and asserts that “the phenomena studied in…research are not completely constructions…but correspond to real entities or processes which exist independently of us”.

Briefly, positivism argues that knowledge of the world is out there, objective, and can be obtained, observed, and studied scientifically. Knowledge is subject to laws in the same way as the laws of physics. August Comte, regarded by many as the father of positivism, asserts that things belonging to the social and psychological world can be measured and laws of behaviour developed from this. However, Langdridge (2007, p.3) notes that “positivism has, for most social researchers been superseded by a post-positivist paradigm”. This assumes the existence of a real objective world, but our knowledge of it is incomplete and fragmented.

On the other hand, interpretivism offers an alternative view to positivism. Interpretivists argue that, as individuals, we each make sense of our world in our own way. We ‘construct’ our world and we give it meaning. The key ideas here are the meaning and understanding individuals give to their world, how they interpret events, and how this interpretation is constructed by individuals. How individuals understand and make meaning of their world is the defining characteristic of this paradigm.

Similarly, Max Weber argues that the aim of social research is to understand how people interpret and make sense of their worlds. The emphasis ought to be on texts and not on numbers (numbers being a feature of positivist quantitative research.). Positivism emphasises behaviour, whereas interpretivism looks at the motivation and meaning behind the behaviour. My critical awareness of my positionality is best summed up by Thomas as follows:
Knowledge is frail, not fixed and that you should approach everything you read and hear with a questioning mind, always asking yourself whether something could have been done differently.

(Thomas 2009, p.43)

3.4 Conclusion

A key aim of this research is to explore how participants experience their power in clinical supervision. Their understanding of how it impacts on themselves as supervisors, the supervisee, and on supervision is something that I want to advance. I want to find out and interpret how they, as individuals, experience this. Interpretivism, with its emphasis on the meanings individuals make of events, cuts right to the heart of what I am trying to find out in this research. I am not seeking to make a generalised statement about supervisor power and clinical supervision. This is the limited aim of my research. Nothing more is to be expected. IPA provides a robust framework to achieve these research aims. The aim of IPA is not to generate a theory, but to hear and make sense of individual participant’s experience of the phenomenon being researched. IPA desires to get an insider perspective and is idiographic in its focus.

3.5.1 History of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

IPA was established by Jonathan Smith in the 1990s and developed into a recognised and distinct qualitative methodology used by researchers in psychology and allied health areas. IPA has strong philosophical underpinnings in phenomenology, ideography, and hermeneutics.

Within phenomenology, there are two major schools of thought that are often referred to as descriptive phenomenology and interpretative phenomenology. These are associated with the philosophers Husserl (1859-1938) and Heidegger (1889-1976) respectively.

I will first look at what phenomenology is all about and then explore the difference in emphases between descriptive phenomenology and interpretive phenomenology.

3.5.2 Phenomenology

The focus of phenomenology is on studying the lived experiences of a phenomenon with individuals who have first-hand experiences of it. According to Darren (2007,
p.4), it is “on people’s perceptions of the world in which they live and what it means to them: a focus on peoples lived experiences”. Anderson and Spencer (2002) note that the focus of phenomenological studies is on the meanings of experiences that people have of a phenomenon. It is an idiographic approach. Creswell (2009, p.13) defines phenomenological research as “a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identified the essences of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by the participants”. He adds that the emphasis on understanding the lived experiences of participants marks phenomenology out as both a philosophy and a method of enquiry. He also points out that “a phenomenological study describes the meanings for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell 2007, p.57). He goes on to state that:

Phenomenology is not only a description, but it is also an interpretative process in which the researcher makes an interpretation of the meanings of the lived experience.

(Creswell 2007, p.59)

In other words, we bring our own beliefs, experiences, perspectives, assumptions and interpretations to what we are studying.

Phenomenological methods are designed to illuminate the experiential lifeworld ‘Lebenswelt’ of the individuals (research participants). Its emphasis on how meanings and meaning making, perceptions, and understandings are constructed by individuals separates it from the more traditional philosophies. At its core, phenomenology is a set of beliefs about how individuals understand reality and their grasp of their world. Ashworth (2003, p.5) emphasises this aspect of phenomenology, noting the focus on the personal lifeworld and the role of the researcher in attempting to interpret this.

Finlay offers six essential aspects of any research that must be present if the researcher is ‘doing phenomenology’. They are:

(1) A focus on lived experience and meanings;
(2) The use of rigorous, rich, resonant description;
(3) A concern with existential issues;
(4) The assumption that body and world are intertwined;
(5) The application of the ‘phenomenological attitude’;
(6) A potentially transformative relational approach.

(Finlay 2011, p.15)
Ashworth (2003, p.12) states that “human meanings are the key to the study of lived experiences, not causal variables”. Giorgi and Giorgi (2008 p.33) point out that phenomenologists insist “it is the object itself that is grasped by consciousness not some representation of it”. What we see is real and constitutes reality, there is no other hidden objective ‘out there’ reality to be discovered or discerned.

Yet within phenomenology, researchers and academic scholars differentiate between transcendental (descriptive) phenomenology, and existential (hermeneutic) phenomenology. I will now briefly overview both of these and illustrate how they informed and supported my decision to use IPA in analysing this research.

3.5.3. Transcendental (descriptive) phenomenology

The descriptive phenomenology approach is one of the earliest approaches to phenomenology and is closely aligned with Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), who is regarded as the father of phenomenology. It emphasises describing the phenomenon in great detail in order to uncover its essence. Although descriptive phenomenology acknowledges the role that interpretation plays in “the way in which people perceive and experience the world” (Willig 2008, p.54), it asserts it is possible to significantly reduce interpretation in order to get to “phenomenological purity” (Husserl 1913, p.262). Husserl highlights the paramount role of description in phenomenology. He is associated with descriptive phenomenology, which seeks to reveal the universal essence of a phenomenon. Finlay states:

The descriptive phenomenological approach seeks to describe and clarify the nature of the phenomenon being studied in a broadly traditional, normative and scientific sense. It aims to describe the structure of the experiences and the manner in which they are given consciousness. It does not attempt to interpret meanings by bringing external theory to bear.

(Finlay 2011, p.94)

If a phenomenon (experience) is examined thoroughly and rigorously, such examination will uncover the core essence (defined by Husserl as the ‘whatness’ of things) of the phenomenon and everyone will experience it in a similar way. In order to do this, we must engage in “bracketing” or “putting aside our habitual ways of perceiving the world” (Ibid. p.23).
Yet Chan et al. (2013, p1.) note “the application and operation of bracketing remain vague and often perplexing”. Gearing (2004) and Wall et al. (2004) suggest that there is no single process for undertaking bracketing. Although Chan et al. (2013) suggest that bracketing should begin at the beginning of the research, Crotty (1996) recommends that both researcher and participant bracket their preconceptions. However, Crotty recognises the difficulties a researcher might have in attempting to determine if participants are also bracketing their preconceptions. Part of this difficulty stems from the number of definitions used to describe bracketing. Ahern (1999) states that the purpose of bracketing is to demonstrate the validity of the data collection and analysis aspects of the research. Likewise, Tufford and Newman suggest that:

Bracketing is a method used by some researchers to mitigate the potential deleterious effects of unacknowledged preconceptions related to the research and thereby increase the rigour of the project.

(Tufford and Newman 2010, p.81)

In a similar vein, Gearing describes bracketing as:

A scientific process in which a researcher suspends or holds in abeyance his or her presuppositions, biases, assumptions, theories or previous experience to see or describe the phenomenon.

(Gearing 2004, p.1430)

A key feature of Gearing’s definition is the emphasis it places on the capacity of the researcher to becomes aware of their biases and then to take the necessary steps to bracket them. Husserl and Heidegger offer divergent opinions on the extent to which it is possible to engage in bracketing. Husserl contends that we all possess a ‘natural attitude’ towards our world. This helps us engage with the world, but it also hides from us the real meaning and real understanding of the world. Therefore, in order to get at and understand the real meaning of a phenomenon, it is necessary for us to put aside, or break free, from any preconceptions we may have of the phenomenon so that we can investigate it as it appears. Husserl appears to be advocating that, in order to truly understand a phenomenon in its purity, a shift in our ‘natural attitude’ has to happen so that the real meaning, the essence of the phenomenon, becomes available to us. We must suspend our ‘natural attitude’ and bracket any preconception we have in order to get at the essence of the phenomenon.
Husserl proposes a number of actions we can engage in in order for this to happen so that we can move from our ‘natural attitude’ to a ‘phenomenological attitude’. He identifies three stages in this process (eidetic abstraction). They are: epoché, phenomenological reduction, and imaginative variation. I will now briefly describe each of these stages.

3.5.3.1 Epoché (bracketing)

This involves putting aside (bracketing), or temporarily ‘forgetting’ whatever knowledge I have about the phenomenon, in order to be open to new ways of seeing the phenomenon.

This ability to bracket, or set aside, is a key hallmark of Husserlian phenomenology, and as a researcher, it is crucial that I do this to a sufficient degree to adequately understand the meanings that participants make of their reality. Husserl argues that it is possible and necessary to transcend (or bracket) our biases. According to Willig (2008, p.53), the aim of this is “to experience a state of pre-reflective consciousness, which allows us to describe phenomenon as they present themselves to us”.

Husserl (1931) believes that bracketing is not just being aware of conscious sources of biases, but also being aware of unconscious (preconscious) biases and taking steps to put them aside in order to get a clear and untainted experience of the phenomenon. Yet Langdridge (2007, p.18) rightly points out that “how much we can truly bracket off our preconceptions is debated hotly within phenomenology”.

The emphasis on the researcher’s ability to ‘bracket’ biases and ‘forget’ their knowledge of the phenomenon is potentially a weakness in this approach. Though Husserl argues that it is possible to engage in bracketing, this ability is contingent on the researcher being firstly aware of their biases and having the ability and desire to take steps to minimise the influence of this bias in working with research participants.

In order to attain ‘phenomenological purity’ as a researcher, I have to bracket, or almost forget this knowledge, so that I do not interpret the participant’s descriptions through the lens of my existing knowledge. How do I do this, or even attempt to with some measure of certainty? Giorgi and Giorgi suggest a number of actions to follow in order to achieve this aim. They are:
1. Obtain a concrete description of the phenomenon of interest;
2. Adopt the phenomenological attitude towards the phenomenon;
3. Read the entire description to gain an impression of the whole;
4. Read the description and identify ‘meaning units’ that capture different aspects or dimensions of the whole;
5. Identify and make explicit the psychological significance of each meaning unit;
6. Articulate the general structure of the phenomenon.

(Giorgi and Giorgi 2008, p.55)

Even if I faithfully follow these steps, I can never fully bracket and un-know what I already know. However, in attempting to know what I already know and how I came to know it, by an ongoing process of critical reflection I can, in some way, increase my awareness of how my process of knowing evolves. This involves holding in tension my wish to forget what I know (or think I know) about the phenomenon in order that I am more fully open to learning and understanding what my participants make of the phenomenon. I can also declare and acknowledge my biases and preconceptions.

I will now turn to the second solution suggested by Husserl to deal with biases, namely phenomenological reduction.

3.5.3.2 Phenomenological reduction

Phenomenological reduction aims to identify the essential features of the phenomenon. This is done by ‘careful description’ of every facet (physical and experiential features) of the phenomenon. Husserl was aware of the potential problem of trying to accurately describe these experiences. He acknowledges the potential for bias, in particular what we often regard as the ‘common sense’ meaning and interpretation of the phenomenon. This bias can be conscious and unconscious.

Phenomenological reduction incorporates various levels and methods of analysis. It asserts:

Objects or states of affairs being considered are taken to be presences not realities! They are what they present themselves to be, but no additional claims are made to suggest they in actuality are that reality.

(Giorgi 2008, p.33)
The key to phenomenological reduction, according to Langdridge (2007, p.19), is “repeated looking [at an interview transcript] to uncover the layers of meaning inherent in the phenomenon”. In the context of my research, I spent considerable time reading and re-reading the interview transcripts in order to go some way towards achieving this.

3.5.3.3 Imaginative variation

The task of the third stage, imaginative variation, is described by Moustakas as follows:

The task of imaginative variation is to seek possible meanings through the utilization of imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions. [...] Describing the essential structures of a phenomenon [...] In this there is a free play of fancy; any perspective is a possibility and is permitted to enter into consciousness.

(Moustakas 1994, p.98)

In other words, I am encouraged to ask myself some ‘what if?’ questions about the phenomenon. This robust engagement, with a variety of endless possibilities, will further help discover the essence, the core of the phenomenon.

3.5.4 Conclusion

Husserl wanted to move away from the dominant ideas of positivism and the natural sciences that prevailed at that time. He thought these would ultimately dehumanise society (Finlay 2011). He sought to establish the ‘pure’ nature of a phenomenon by avoiding any distortions that might present themselves through our ‘common sense’ view of the phenomenon. To eliminate these distortions (or at lease reduce them significantly), he outlines a number of steps that can be taken to achieve this aim. Husserlian phenomenology asserts that if these steps are followed (epoché, phenomenological reduction, and imaginative variation), then it is possible that an experience, a phenomenon can be directly described as it is experienced (Moran 2000).

The emphasis on describing phenomenon from the perspective of the participants, in order to identify its essence, is a marked feature of Husserlian phenomenology. However, dissatisfaction with the strong descriptive focus of early phenomenology
resulted in a turning in a more existential (hermeneutic) direction, as championed by Heidegger.

### 3.6.1 Existential (hermeneutic) phenomenology

Existential (hermeneutic) phenomenology is strongly associated with Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). He suggests that it does not make any sense to think of the world as out there, distinct from us, “self and the world belong together in the single entity dasein” (cited in Finlay 2011, p.50). We are of, within, and at one with the world. According to Moustakas (1994, p.28), this means that “self and world are inseparable components of meaning”. ‘Dasein’ (there-being) is the term associated with Heidegger’s notion that we are not separate from the world, but intrinsically in it in various cultural, historical, and existential ways. Our existence in the world is always temporal, perceptual, and relational. Heidegger believes that the way an individual experiences a phenomenon is unique. This experience is by a number of universal qualities which he identifies as: (a) ‘temporality’ (we exist in time), (b) ‘spatiality’ (we exist in space), (c) subjective embodiment (we exist in bodies), (d) inter subjectivity (I and others), and (e) personal project (what I want) moodiness, emotions and discursiveness (language-talk).

Heidegger claims that it is impossible to bracket our biases or knowledge or step out of our world in order to engage in the form of ‘phenomenological attitude’ advocated by Husserl. Heidegger maintains that, as a consequence, all of our observations are interpretations of a world that we cannot transcend. “The phenomenological method of description is really interpretative” (cited in Mohanty 1970, p.93). As a consequence, he turned to hermeneutics (a method originally used to interpret biblical texts) to develop his phenomenology (Smith and Osborn, 2008). For Heidegger “language and understanding are inseparable” (cited in Finlay 2011, p.52). The role of interpretation is elevated to a prominent place by Heidegger.

This emphasis on interpretation does present some difficulties, as all interpretation is based on previous knowledge or “fore-sight, and fore conception” (cited in Finlay 2011, p.53). In order to get around the difficulties of having fore-knowledge, Heidegger introduces the notion of a hermeneutic circle.

By continually challenging our initial understandings (pre-understandings) and expanding our personal horizon so that we become aware of our prejudices (which
we can now discard), we can gain a further insight into the text, or phenomenon. This process which involves a constant interpretative revision of our fore-understandings (Finlay 2011), deepens understanding by continuously repeating this action.

The hermeneutic approach acknowledges and supports the role of the researcher in interpreting participants’ interpretation of the phenomenon being studied. The ‘hermeneutic circle’ is a central concept of a hermeneutical phenomenological approach. By investigating the dynamic relationship between the part and the whole of the phenomenon, understanding is obtained (cited in Smith et al. 2009).

The role the researcher plays in the interpretation of the data is a key feature of hermeneutic (interpretivist) phenomenology. It places less emphasis on description and more on interpretation of the data. It stresses the importance of language use as a means of interpretation, and it is influenced by Gadamer (1975/1996). It talks about the hermeneutic circle, which involves “moving in a circular fashion between part and whole with no beginning or end” (cited in Langdridge 2007, p.122). It also refrains from prescribing a method of analysis, fearing that following a method may exclude potential ways of understanding the data. As Langdridge (2007, p.55) notes “it involves a thematic analysis of data that also builds on the later lifeworld philosophy of Husserl”. Langdridge (Ibid., p.128) further notes that hermeneutic phenomenology is influenced by the works of Gadamer (1996) and Van Manen (1990). It involves using a similar thematic analysis as used in IPA and in Template Analysis (TA). Van Manen outlines a six-step overarching perspective for conducting hermeneutic research:

1. Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
2. Investigating experiences as we live it rather than as we conceptualise it;
3. Reflecting on the essential themes which characterise the phenomenon;
4. Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
5. Maintaining a strong and oriented relation to the phenomenon;
6. Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole.

(Van Manen 1990, p.31)

Research findings from hermeneutic phenomenological studies are usually presented in a qualitative format, similar to that of IPA and TA. However, as Langdridge (2007), Smith (2008), and others have noted, this approach lends itself to a rich
creative writing style whose aim is to illustrate in a vivid and comprehensive manner the ‘lifeworld’ of the participant.

A concern with the lived human experience is a feature of interpretative hermeneutic phenomenology. I will now turn my attention to two common approaches which emphasise interpretation and meaning: IPA and TA. These will be looked at in the context of my research aims. Reasons for declining to use TA will be given, and I will advance arguments in support of using IPA as a research methodology.

3.6.2 Template analysis

Although TA has many similar features to IPA, Langdridge (2007, p.56) and others point out that a key difference is the use of a coding frame of preselected codes (template) devised before collecting the data. These codes may either have come from previous research or a template developed by the researcher. This template can be used as a reference to compare the research findings with previous findings. The process moves between examining the meaning in the template data and examining that of the research participants’ data. It is therefore deductive and inductive at the same time. In addition, TA emphasises hierarchical coding of the data. While this can also be a feature of IPA, it does not receive the same emphasis in IPA. Research findings are presented in a similar manner to those using IPA.

Proponents of TA argue that it allows the researcher to explore important aspects of participants’ experiences, while at the same time it still allows participants’ meanings of these experiences to emerge. A limitation in this method, from my own perspective, is the use of pre-selected codes constructed before collecting the data. By creating a template, it generates some ‘knowns’ which are used as a reference and built-on for subsequent themes, thereby increasing the possibility of excluding or ignoring subsequent emergent themes that do not conform to the template. This may not allow for the unfolding of participants descriptions of their experiences in a natural way. As a consequence, I rejected this approach and instead chose to use IPA as my method of analysis.

3.6.3 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Creswell (2007, p.79) outlines a number of characteristics of IPA which make it a suitable and apt conceptual framework for my research. They are:
1. The focus of IPA is on participants understanding and interpretation of the experience and the subsequent interpretation by the researcher of the participant understanding of the phenomenon. This espouses a subjectivist/interpretivist stance and is in keeping with my own philosophy and positionality;
2. It is suited to describing the essence of the phenomenon that I am researching;
3. Its philosophy draws from psychology, philosophy and educational theorists;
4. Its unit of analysis is focused on a number of individuals who have shared similar experiences of the phenomenon;
5. The most often used method of data collection in IPA - individual interviews and observations, - are a good fit with the way I work. Most participants will be familiar and comfortable with interviews as a means to gather data;
6. Phenomenological data analysis strategies, with its focus on significant statements, participant meanings and the generation of themes, resonates strongly with my desire to use a research methodology that values the meanings that participants place on phenomenon as they experience and describe it, while at the same time, acknowledges and encourages researcher interpretation of the material. The written account with its emphasis on individual participant meaning-making of the phenomenon and researcher interpretation helps capture this in a narrative style.

Having advanced reasons why IPA is a suitable methodology for my analysis, I will now explain what IPA is all about and why it is a popular method in human sciences.

Langdridge (2007, p.127) asserts that IPA “is now one of the most popular forms of phenomenological psychology in the UK”, primarily due to the emphasis it places on “how people perceive an experience: a focus on the lifeworld” (Ibid.). Smith (2015, p.2) states that IPA is “concerned with exploring the lived experience of the participant, or with understanding how participants make sense of their personal and social world”. Smith further argues that an additional stage of interpretation occurs in which the researcher attempts to interpret or make sense of the participants’ making sense of their experience. Biggerstaff and Thompson (2008, p.217) note that “the researcher usually identifies themes from within each section of the transcript”. This double hermeneutic brings to the fore the researcher’s own positionality. Evans contends:

The most robust argument for using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is that it seeks to provide an in-depth exploration of individuals lived experiences and how they make sense of them.

(Evans 2016, p.34)
Willig (2008, p.52) states succinctly and clearly that phenomenology “is concerned with the world as it presents itself to us as humans”. Importantly, Willig adds that “its aim is to return to things themselves as they appear to us as perceivers, and to set aside, or bracket, that which we (think) we already know about them” (Ibid.). Or, as Evans (2016, p.31) notes, “the primary aim of IPA is for the researcher to understand participants’ views and meanings of their experiences and then foster an ‘insider perspective’”. Smith Flowers and Larkin (2009, p.16) state that “IPA has the more modest ambition of attempting to capture particular experiences as experienced for particular people”.

IPA is idiographic in its methodology. It does not attempt to generalise its findings, or to make broad claims about its findings. This makes it highly compatible with my own philosophy and research aims. Smith’s (2008, p.47) timely reminder that “there is no perfect method” is worth remembering if a specific methodology is being advocated. Likewise, Willig (2008) states that:

IPA…accepts the impossibility of gaining direct access to research participants’ lifeworlds…The phenomenological analysis produced by the researcher is always an interpretation of the participant’s experiences.

(Willig 2008, p.56)

Nonetheless, Smith and Osborn (2008) believe that:

IPA (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis) is a suitable approach when one is trying to find out how individuals are perceiving the particular situation they are facing.

(Smith and Osborn 2008, p.55)

From a phenomenological perspective, a word of caution is needed here. Smith (2013, p.32) notes that when participants are talking about experiences or phenomena, interview data becomes “retrospective descriptions”. Participants are talking about the phenomenon as they recall how they experienced it, not as they may be experiencing it in the here and now. As a researcher, I am interpreting my participants’ interpretation of the phenomenon.

IPA, like many of the talk therapies, relies a lot on the cognitive and the recall ability of participants to describe their experiences of a phenomenon. It shares this aspect of its analysis with many dominant methodologies of mainstream psychology. It is the
emphasis in IPA on conducting in-depth qualitative analysis which sets it apart from mainstream psychological research.

This emphasis on in-depth qualitative analysis means that IPA studies tend to be undertaken with a very small number of participants. Some (Smith, 2004) have argued strongly for the merits of a single case study. In general, IPA tends to focus on low numbers. In my research, I interviewed fourteen active clinical supervisors who are current members of the IACP.

One of the best ways to collect data that lends itself to IPA analysis is to conduct semi-structured interviews with participants. Smith (2009) suggests that this is the most appropriate way to collect data in an exploratory manner and where there has been little previous research undertaken. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), point out that semi-structured interviews have a long tradition as a method of data collection in qualitative studies.

Structured, unstructured, and semi-structured interviews are all suitable for data gathering. Structured interviews, as their name implies, are conducted in a defined and predictable way. Both the researcher and participant stick to a set of questions, and the participant may be given the questions or made aware of them before the interview. Proponents of this type of interview suggest that, by sticking to a format, the focus remains tightly on the matter under investigation. Smith and Osborn (2007, p.58) somewhat cynically cite that the “alleged advantages of the structured interview format are control, reliability and speed”. The structured interview, with its tight format and narrow focus, is not an appropriate way to obtain data that is consistent with the philosophy of IPA.

Likewise, Langdridge’s assertion (2007, p.67) that unstructured interviews “offer the potential to explore people’s experiences, perhaps even more so than semi-structured interviews”, may be problematic. Firstly, both the researcher and participant will have little to guide them in terms of areas for discussion in the interview apart from a broad overarching theme. Secondly, the presence of a research objective on the researcher’s part may inhibit what otherwise might be a naturally free-flowing and wide-ranging discussion on a particular topic. Thirdly, in order to explore topics and areas in greater detail, additional interviews may have to be arranged. This has serious implications in terms of time, participants, costs, and the amount of data gathered. The subsequent analysis of large amounts of data may prove unwieldy and
may not be useful in generating additional themes from the data. I think Langdridge (2008, p.68) is right when he asserts that “it is surprisingly difficult to engage in a conversation in a very natural way with a research agenda in the background”.

Therefore, the semi-structured interview provides a good balance which allows the researcher to keep the focus on the subject of the research, while at the same time, allowing participants the necessary latitude to go in depth on areas of interest to them. Smith’s (2007, p.63) contention that “the interviewer’s role in a semi-structured interview is to facilitate and guide, rather than dictate exactly what will happen during the encounter”, is something I agree with. Also, it affords the participant a chance to explore what the phenomenon means to them. Similar sentiments are expressed by Willig (2008 p.57) who reminds us that “it is extremely important that the questions to the participant are open-ended and non-directive”.

Yet the use of semi-structured interviews as the default position for data gathering in qualitative research is not without its critics. Potter and Hepburn (2005) point out that most of the analysis of data obtained from qualitative data interviews pays little attention to the context in which the interview is taking place. In my own research, the audio recording of the interviews was a valuable method of ensuring that an accurate record of what participants talk about was obtained. However, it did not give me the opportunity to note and record participants’ body language when answering questions. I overcame this limitation to some extent by recording my observations immediately after the interview on how the experience had been for me and how I believed it had been for the participant.

Using semi-structured interviews combined with an IPA analysis offers a robust conceptual framework within which to undertake this research and accommodate my interpretivist/constructionist positioning. Although IPA offers both a framework and methodology that is in keeping with my philosophy and suitable for meeting the aims of my research, its limitations need to be acknowledged.

3.6.4 Limitations of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Willig identifies some limitations of IPA:

- Talking about an experience may not be describing the experience;
- Availability of language for a participant means language precedes an experience and thus shapes the experience itself;
IPA may result in excluding participants who do not have appropriate language and thus incorrectly point to their experience being dismissed;

An exclusive focus on appearances without causal context – not seen as part of IPA – limits our understanding of phenomena;

IPA is concerned with cognition (Smith 1996), and this implies a Cartesian view of the world.

(Willig 2008, pp.66-68)

Brocki and Wearden (2006) critically evaluate the use of IPA in health psychology. While supportive of its aim “to explore in detail the processes through which participants make sense of their own experiences” (Ibid., p.3), they also refer to potential limitations of IPA. In particular, they caution that “a focus on researcher characteristics may not necessarily benefit readers’ interpretations of an analysis and might perhaps even represent a misleading diversion” (Ibid., p.16). In addition, they acknowledge that not all IPA research aims for generalisability (Ibid., p.26).

Despite these limitations, IPA can be positioned in the phenomenological philosophical tradition. Its focus on the exploration of the ‘lifeworld’ of participants is sufficient to mark it out as a phenomenological method. The fact that it does this by using participants’ cognitions does not prohibit it from being classified as a phenomenological method.

Creswell (2007, 2009), Langdridge (2007), Smith (2009), and Willig (2008) all emphasise the focus of IPA is on the meanings created by research participants. These meanings are subsequently interpreted by the researcher, who strives to preserve their essence while recognising how they are influenced by their own positionality.

Holloway and Gavin (2016, p.3) point out that qualitative researchers “focus on the ‘emic’ perspective, the ‘inside view’” of research participants. This emic perspective (Harris, 1976) is constructionist in its ontology and seeks to understand the phenomenon from the perspective of participants without the researcher imposing their own conceptual structure on what participants are saying. The researcher refrains from doing this by engaging in reflexive bracketing. Holloway and Gavin (2016, p.1) state that reflexivity in research “makes explicit the stance of the researcher, who is the main research tool”.
Methods of bracketing include researcher memos (Cutcliffe, 2003), the researcher taking part in interviews in order to become aware of their preconceptions (Rolls and Relf, 2006) and the keeping of a reflexive journal by the researcher. Tufford and Newman assert that bracketing:

Can also protect the researcher from the temptation to foreground certain voices while relegating others to a background position, particularly as these voices may confirm or not the researcher’s preconceptions about the phenomenon under study.

(Tufford and Newman 2010, p.91)

Chan et al. argue that bracketing should begin at the beginning of the research and not just during the data collection and analysis phases. They propose four strategies for data bracketing. These are:

- Mentality assessment and preparation before deciding the research paradigm;
- Deciding the scope of the literature review according to the prevailing gatekeeping policy;
- Planning for data collection using semi-structured interviews guided by open-ended questions;
- Planning for data analysis using Colaizzi’s method.

(Chan et al. 2013, p.1)

I will now critique each of these strategies starting with mentality assessment. This involves seeking confirmation that we can put aside our knowledge concerning the phenomenon being researched. Can we adopt an attitude of “conscious ignorance” (p.4) about our area of research? Yes, but only if we acknowledge and keep in tension our views, beliefs, and attitudes that stem from what we already know, with potential new insights gained from bracketing this knowledge, in order to be open to new insights gained from interviewing participants.

Determining when to conduct a literature review and the scope of such a review is potentially problematic. In conducting a literature review, we are looking at what has been published on a topic and what gaps exist in relation to knowledge on the topic. This will help frame our research question and ensure that it does not research an aspect of the phenomenon that is already researched. However, in conducting research, we are adding to our preconception knowledge of the issue under investigation, thereby making it potentially more difficult to engage in reflexive bracketing.
Planning for data collection by using semi-structured interviews is relatively straightforward. Care must be taken by the researcher to allow participants the space to talk about their understanding of the phenomenon and to avoid closed questions. Developing an interview schedule in advance can significantly aid this process.

The fourth and final strategy for bracketing, data analysis, using Colaizzi’s data analysis method, where validation of the results is achieved by returning the results to the participants, is not without its difficulties. In this study, all interviews with participants were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by me to contribute to the validation of the results.

Gearing (2004, p.1431) justly points out that “the philosophical concept of bracketing was never fully clear, nor was it uniform in definition”. Consequently, what constitutes bracketing could be interpreted by individuals in accordance with their philosophical positioning. Gearing (Ibid., p.1432) asserts that there are three distinct phases in bracketing: (a) abstract formulation, (b) research praxis, and (c) reintegration. Each of these phases contains a number of elements and foci. Gearing argues that as bracketing has evolved over time, a typology of bracketing consisting of six types of bracketing is needed:

- The six types of bracketing in this typology are ideal (philosophic) bracketing, descriptive (eidetic) bracketing, existential bracketing, analytical bracketing, reflexive (cultural) bracketing, and pragmatic bracketing.

(Gearing 2004, p.1435)

Each of these types can be interrogated through the three distinct phases in bracketing.

Gearing’s critique of bracketing offers a conceptual framework within which the researcher can engage in reflexive bracketing. The strength of this approach is that it provides a useful template for the researcher to interrogate their bracketing strategy. However, as there is not absolute clarity on the essence of bracketing, Gearing’s work should be seen as one of many available ways to highlight awareness of the need to be comprehensive around the scope of bracketing. Indeed, this is something that is acknowledged by Gearing, who notes:
There is no one shared form of bracketing with an accepted understanding, nor can researchers assume that other universally share their conceptualizations of operationalization of bracketing.

(Gearing 2004, p.1449)

A feature of IPA is researcher interpretation of results and generation of a number of superordinate and subordinate themes from the data. As a result, Sale (2007) maintains that researchers need to bracket their preconceptions during data analysis. Primeau (2004) states that reflexivity involves the researcher engaging in an honest examination of how their own values, biases, and worldview impacts on their research. Engaging in reflexive bracketing can help researchers heighten their awareness of their own positionality. Whether bracketing aids the researcher to become aware of their biases, values, and positionality to the extent that they do not impact on their research is a moot point. I believe that it is impossible for a qualitative researcher’s positionality not to impact on the research. What is important is that the researcher be aware of this and acknowledge how it impacts on their research.

Nonetheless, in offering strategies for engaging in reflexive bracketing, it is important to draw attention to the inherent tension that exists between Husserl’s understanding of bracketing and phenomenological reduction and the stance taken by Heidegger, who rejects outright the concept of phenomenological reduction. Heidegger (1962 argues that bracketing out preconceptions is an impossible exercise. Instead, he argues that because we are always in-the-world (das-is) our stance, our worldview, is always an interpretation of and engagement with this reality. Gearing (2004, p.1431) points out that Heidegger rejects phenomenological reduction because “to understand or research lived experiences was inherently an interpretative process”. This tension persists in the various schools of phenomenology that exist today.

Bracketing as a means of engaging in critical reflexive practice, in order to become aware of our researcher biases and at the same time get an undistorted account of participant meaning of the phenomenon under investigation, is something every researcher must engage in when conducting research. Yet, the notion of bracketing our biases and values to the extent that we are completely disconnected from them, or that they are somehow contained and isolated from ourselves, is an unsustainable concept. What bracketing does is highlight the need for researchers to engage in
ongoing critical reflexivity in order to maintain a heightened awareness of their own positionality. A consequence of this heightened state of awareness is the ability to get to the in-depth meanings of participants meanings, of the phenomenon under study. One way to unearth these in-depth meanings is to conduct a case study.

3.7.1 Case study

Creswell (2007, p.73) points out that “the case study is familiar to social scientists because of its popularity in psychology”. Thomas (2009) notes the aim of a case study is to get a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of one case, or a small number of cases. Bromley (1986, p.8) describes case studies as “natural occurrences with definable boundaries”. A case can be one single entity, organisation or person, or a number of persons who satisfy specific criteria. Importantly Thomas (2009, p.115) adds that “there is no intimation that you will be generalising from this case to others”. Hammersley (1992) points out that this desire for in-depth, rich, thick, description enables the researcher to get more detail on the area of their research, while conversely, severely limiting the ability to generalise the findings.

While case studies may appear at first to be a broad and diverse approach to research, Willig (2008, p.75) offers a number of defining features of a case study which are helpful. These include: an idiographic perspective, where researchers focus on the specific rather than the general, attention to contextual data, the use of triangulation, and concern with theory.

Stake (1994, 1995, 2005) and Yin (1994, 2003, 2009, 2014) stress the importance of selecting the appropriate unit of analysis that is the case. Bromley (1986) draws attention to the context in which all cases exist and the need to illuminate and acknowledge it. In my area of research, I want to find out how a number (fourteen) of IACP accredited clinical supervisors practicing in Ireland perceive their power, its impact on themselves, their supervisees, and the supervisory process. In keeping with my ontology (constructionist) and epistemology (interpretivist), a case study approach is appropriate.

Creswell (2007, p.74) identifies three types of case study that can be defined in terms of intent. They are: the single instrumental case study (Stake 1995) (in which the researcher focuses on one issue of concern and one case), the collective or multiple case study (one issue but multiple cases), and the intrinsic case study (focus on the
case itself, e.g. a person having difficulty with eating). My research falls into the middle category (one issue multiple cases).

Yet using case studies as a means to conduct research is not without its drawbacks and limitations. Willig (2008) states that:

> It is important to remember that case studies are of necessity partial accounts of a person or a situation; they can never capture the individual in his or her entirety.

(Willig 2008, p.80)

While Creswell (2007, p.75) reminds us that “one of the challenges inherent in qualitative case study development is that the researcher must identify his or her case”.

Several people offer procedures for conducting case studies (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995, 2005; Yin, 2003). They all set out the steps that the researcher needs to take in order that the process is transparent, robust, and provide a clear ‘audit trail’ to the reader. One of the first steps is the selection of participants for the research.

### 3.7.2 Selection of participants

Participants were sourced from the publicly available list of accredited clinical supervisors in Ireland, available on the IACP web-page (www.iacp.ie). There is not universal agreement about the ideal number of participants to use in an IPA case study. Dukes (1984) suggests that one may be enough, though he recommends involving between three and ten participants in any study. Polkinghorne (1989) believes it could be up to 325. Smith et al. (2008) argue that choosing less than three data sets might not produce enough themes for discussion, while on the other hand, cautions against having too many data sets, which could lead to the researcher being overwhelmed by too much data. Brocki and Wearden (2006, p.22) argue that there is “no right sample size” but add that “small sample sizes are the norm in IPA”. As the focus of IPA is to generate in-depth accounts of participants’ experience of the phenomenon being researched, the emphasis has to be on the quality of the data rather than on the quantity. They caution (Ibid. p.52) against viewing greater numbers of participants as indicative of better work. They go further and state that with regard to professional doctorates, somewhere between six and ten participants are sufficient. Having identified potential participants, I decided on the following inclusion and exclusion criteria.
3.7.3 Inclusion criteria

A search of the publicly available IACP webpage (www.iacp.ie) for accredited supervisors generated a list of IACP supervisors in Ireland. I did not enter any particular search criteria (e.g. location) and the search engine listed all IACP accredited supervisors in random order. I printed out the first 40 names on the list. This was to allow for potential participants declining to take part or withdrawing later in the process. IACP accredited supervisors were chosen for a number of reasons:

(a) Their names and locations were identifiable and easily accessible;
(b) As IACP accredited supervisors, they would have had to meet and satisfy the IACP requirements to be accredited as clinical supervisors. These criteria include, among other things: completing an approved course in clinical supervision of at least 90 hours duration, being an accredited counsellor with the IACP for a minimum of five years, and being in good standing with the IACP;
(c) In all cases it was possible to identify the type of work environment participants were in;
(d) It would contribute to the homogeneity of the sample;
(e) As an IACP accredited supervisor myself, I felt participants might be more willing to take part in the research if they viewed me as ‘one of their own.’ They might view me as engaging in insider research;
(f) The IACP is one of the largest representative bodies of therapists and supervisors in the island of Ireland. In February 2017 it listed 2,250 therapists as members and over 580 accredited supervisors on its website (www.iacp.ie).

3.7.4 Exclusion criteria

Supervisors who were not members of the IACP were not chosen. Neither were supervisors who were members of the IACP, but who were not currently active and practicing as clinical supervisors in Ireland, chosen. The reasons for not choosing these were:

(a) The potential difficulty of getting names and locations of participants without considerable time consuming research;
(b) The difficulty I might encounter in trying to determine their level of training and qualifications;
(c) The lack of standardisation regarding the training and qualifications of counsellors and supervisors in Ireland presented significant logistical difficulties in accessing participants, whose training, experience, and qualifications met common criteria;

(d) My own unfamiliarity with membership criteria of other therapist representative bodies;

(e) I was not seeking to obtain a representative sample of my target population, as understood by quantitative researchers.

Having established the above inclusion and exclusion criteria, the next stage was the recruitment of participants.

3.7.5 Recruitment of participants

The first fourteen names on the list generated were sent an Invitation-To-Take-Part letter (Appendix Two), together with a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix Three) and an Informed Consent Form (Appendix Four), inviting them to participate in the study. A week after sending the letter, I telephoned potential participants to discuss and further explain my invitation to take part in the research. Some participants declined to take part in the study, so I then sent an Invitation-To-Take-Part letter (Appendix Two) to the next name on the list of the original forty names generated from the IACP database of clinical supervisors. These were invited sequentially to take part in the research, and this process continued until fourteen participants had agreed to take part in the research.

The average time between sending letters to participants and agreeing on a date, time and location for interviews, was five weeks. This was due to availability of participants to conduct interviews. The fourteen interviews were conducted over a ten-month period. Each interview was transcribed by me before the subsequent interview. It took an average of eight hours to transcribe each interview. By doing this, I was able to get a sense of what understanding participants had of the phenomenon and to critique my own interviewing style.

In total, twenty-eight participants were contacted and invited to take part in the research. Fourteen of these agreed to take part in my research and interview dates, times, and locations were agreed with participants. Fourteen declined to take part. Of the fourteen who declined, eight did not reply to my follow up phone calls inviting
them to consider taking part in the research. A further two declined verbally, stating they were too busy, another declined when they were informed that participation was voluntary and unpaid, and another declined without offering a reason. The remaining two participants expressed concern about the part of the Participant Information Sheet which indicated that if ethical issues were encountered, they would be referred to the IACP or another appropriate body. They sought a guarantee of absolute confidentiality regarding the contents of interviews, which I was unwilling to provide. To offer such a guarantee would be unethical.

Participants were informed in advance by telephone that the expected duration of the interview would be up to sixty minutes and with their permission, interviews would be audio recorded for verbatim transcription by me. Interviews lasted on average fifty minutes. Discussions with participants were held regarding the location of interviews. All participants opted to have interviews conducted in their counselling rooms rather than at an alternative venue of their choosing. Participants were not given the Sample Interview Questions (Appendix 5) interview schedule in advance. I chose to do this because the purpose of the sample interview questions was to act as a guide for me and a means of initiating a conversation, rather than as a prescriptive format to be followed in all interviews. Furthermore, I was very aware of the need to have fluidity in the content and direction of the interviews. Furnishing sample questions to participants in advance would be too prescriptive and move the interview format from semi-structured towards structured interviews.

Of the fourteen participants interviewed, three identified as male and eleven as female. Nine of them had been practising supervision for over ten years. Seven indicated their age to be in the 56-60 year age range. Academically, four of the participants possessed qualifications in supervision at Master’s level and the remaining ten at Diploma level. Table 2 below, offers a visual representation of this data.
Table 2: Profile of participants

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Table 3: Number of years practising supervision

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Table 4: Gender of participants

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As data collection was by way of interviews, I would like to offer a rationale for choosing this method.

### 3.8.1 Rationale for using interviews

Smith (2008) notes:

> Probably the best way to collect data for an IPA study and the way most IPA studies have been conducted is through a semi-structured interview.

(Smith 2008, p.57)

Similarly, Langridge (2007, p.65) acknowledges that “the most common interview used in phenomenological research, and indeed in all qualitative research, is the semi-structured interview”. Willig (2008, p.23) expresses similar sentiments and adds that the semi-structured interview “is compatible with several methods of data analysis”.

Willig (Ibid.) talks about the advantages of semi-structured interviews as a means of collecting data, while stressing the need for the interviewer to work with what is happening in the moment with participants and not try to stick to a set of pre-prepared questions. Creswell (2007, p.131) reminds us that “the most important point is to describe the meaning of the phenomenon for a small number of participants who have experienced it”. However, interviewing is not without its challenges and pitfalls.

The need to critically reflect on the relationship that exists between interviewer and participant is highlighted by Kvale (2006) and Nunkoosing (2005). Kvale and
Brinkmann (2006), in particular, assert that the interview is a hierarchical engagement with an asymmetrical relationship between interviewer and interviewee, researcher and participant. By choosing the topic of the interview, I am exercising power and control over the agenda. Furthermore, I found myself, when interviewing, to be constantly trying to keep the interview focused on areas I wanted to cover, despite participants’ desires to bring it elsewhere at times. In conducting semi-structured interviews about the phenomenon, I wanted participants to stay closely to the subject matter. Yet at the same time I needed to allow space for them to talk further about the phenomenon should they wish to do that.

Creswell (2009) makes reference to Kvale’s (2006) comments that:

The interview is being ruled by the interviewer, enacting a one-way dialogue, serving the interview, containing hidden agendas, leading to the interviewer’s monopoly over interpretation.

(Creswell 2009, p.140)

In essence, Kvale appears to believe that no matter how an interview is conducted, there are always issues of power in the relationship between researcher and participant. In the context of my research, the participant has the ultimate power of refusing to take part in the interview.

Creswell (2008, p.140) acknowledges the views expressed by Nunkoosing (2005) on the need to explore the impact that the interviewer’s own position and status (gender, culture, race) may have on the interviews. In conducting my own interviews, I noticed that all participants were white, middle-aged, and Irish. I am also white, male, middle-aged, and Irish. Thomas (2009) stresses the importance of the appearance and demeanour of the interviewer. In addition, the influence of the sex, age, and cultural and socio-economic background of the researcher have on the interview process are acknowledged by Creswell (2007, 2009), Smith (2008), and Willig (2008). Having established a rationale for using interviews, I will now give an account of how I conducted the interviews.

3.8.2 Data collection - interviews

Data was collected by way of one-off semi-structured interviews conducted with fourteen participants. Semi-structured interviews are “the exemplary method for IPA
and the vast majority of work published using IPA follows suit” (Brocki and Wearden, 2006, p.10).

As I was using a qualitative methodology, I decided that face-to-face semi-structured interviews were the most appropriate way of collecting data. I did this for a number of reasons. Firstly, in westernised societies we are familiar with the concept and structure of one-to-one interviews. Secondly, they were conducted in naturalistic settings. Furthermore, the interview format facilitated participants in explaining the meaning they attached to their experiences and afforded them an opportunity to talk about their experience of power in clinical supervision as they understood it. It also offered me, as interviewer, the option of further exploring avenues of potential interest and moving the interview away from areas not relevant to my research topic. I had a research agenda and I wanted my participant to stay as close to it as possible.

Holloway and Wheeler (2010) stress the importance of preparing thoroughly for interviews. Creswell (2009, p.183) highlights the importance of using an interview protocol for conducting interviews. I devised my own Interview Protocol (Appendix One) which I adhered to when conducting interviews with participants.

Creswell (2009), Thomas (2009), Smith (2008), Willig (2008), and Yin (2002) all acknowledge the need to prepare adequately for conducting semi-structured interviews. Willig (2008, p.24) reminds us that, from the outset, “it is important to acknowledge that it is the researcher whose research question drives the agenda”.

Regarding the general characteristics of the interview, Willig (2008) stresses the importance of the researcher establishing the meaning of the interview for participants. When discussing data collection techniques with potential participants, all indicated a preference to be interviewed in a familiar setting (in all cases their own counselling room) and did not express any undue concern regarding the interview itself. They did ask about the length of the interview and what additional input might be required from them. Once the nature of their involvement in the research was made explicit (both in the Invitational Letter and face to face before the interview commenced), they appeared to be more at ease with the process.

Verbatim transcriptions of all interviews were produced by me. No attempt was made to sanitise or to clean up the data. It was presented in its raw state, with all pauses, ‘emms’, and any other utterances whatsoever recorded and transcribed. I
choose not to follow the Jeffersonian transcription convention, with its emphasis on recording and timing to the exact second, all pauses, etc. Langdridge (2007) argues that such detail is not necessary for analysis using phenomenological methods (unlike discourse analysis which works at the micro-analysis level) which focuses on understanding the meaning the phenomenon has for participants.

Semi-structured interviews were suitable for this research, as my research population was a small homogeneous group. All of them were IACP accredited clinical supervisors currently practising in Ireland. Furthermore, I was trying to get in-depth information from a specific group of people on a very particular topic. The interviews were conducted in a narrative conversational style, and a set of prepared open-ended questions (Appendix Five) was prepared and used by me to guide and focus the interviews. These questions were non-prescriptive and, as noted earlier, they acted as a background resource rather than a template that had to be followed in any particular order with participants. Spradley (1979) has produced a guide which categorises four types of question that can be used in semi-structured interviews; descriptive, structural, contrast, and evaluative. My research questions incorporated these features in their structure.

In order to ensure accuracy, all of the interviews were transcribed verbatim by me. This task was not assigned to a third party in the interests of maintaining confidentiality and helping immerse myself in the transcripts. The interviews proved to be a reliable and accurate way to engage with participants, though they did have limitations, which I will now discuss.

3.8.3 Limitations of interviews

Interviews have their limitations as a means of gathering data. These include: interviewer influence, interviewer bias (known or unknown), the presence of power, and their potential for lack of structure. Likewise, they depend heavily on participants and researchers to be cognitively and linguistically fluent in their ability to discuss the meaning that the phenomenon has for them. As Creswell points out:

For one-to-one interviewing, the researcher needs individuals who are not hesitant to speak and share ideas… The less articulate, shy interviewee may present the researcher with a challenge and less than adequate data.

(Creswell 2007, p.45)
Krueger (1994), Morgan (1988), and Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) note that, in one-to-one situations, individuals may be reluctant to provide information, and they suggested consideration be given to using a focus group. I did give this some consideration, but ultimately rejected it as being too cumbersome and complicated to administer and not in keeping with the idiographic focus of my research. Quite simply, there is no one right way to collect data.

### 3.8.4 Conclusion

Interviews are not a power-neutral encounter. Both interviewer and interviewee possess power. Yet, interviews remain the preferred method of obtaining data for a number of reasons. They take place in naturalistic settings; they are familiar to many people brought up or exposed to westernized culture; they are live; they use narrative; and both researcher and participant can be flexible in dealing with the subject under discussion.

During interviews with participants, I also observed participants’ behaviour as another way to bring ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) to my findings. Such observations can be used to reinforce a particular point or to highlight the meaning participants attribute to a particular event. Langdridge (2007, p.169) adds that “if carried out well [observations]… can give valuable insights into the lifeworld of one’s participants”. However, as Willig (2008) points out, what is being observed is overt behaviour. The need to establish participants’ understanding and meaning of the behaviour is important. I recorded my observations immediately after the interviews after I had said goodbye to the participants.

### 3.9 Confidentiality

The need to define and delineate the nature of confidentiality in any research is of critical and vital concern to all involved. The default position should be that, in so far as it is legally and ethically possible, data gathered should remain confidential (with the names of the researchers who will have access to the data being explicitly stated), and instances where confidentiality may have to be broken should be acknowledged. However, Creswell (2009, p.90) stresses the need to take account of the wishes of “participants who do not want to have their identity remain confidential”, adding that they need to be aware of the risks attached to non-confidentiality. The Information-for-Participants document, which accompanied the invitational letter sent to
participants, outlined the nature of confidentiality and the names of researchers who had access to the data.

Willig (2008, p.19) concludes that the role of researchers is to “protect their participants from any harm or loss, and they should aim to preserve their psychological well-being and dignity at all times”. In a similar vein, the British Psychological Society (BPS) and the IACP guidelines make it clear that the primary responsibility to ensure participants’ well-being lies with the researcher.

Confidentiality also extends to how data is gathered and stored. Bryman (2004) talks at length about the critical importance of keeping records in such a way that the identity of participants is not evident. In the case of my research, data was collected with the written consent of participants using a digital audio recorder. This was turned on at the beginning of the interviews with participants and remained recording until we both agreed the interview was over. Each interview was transcribed verbatim by me within seven days of its taking place. This transcribing was done by me in order to get familiar with the contents of the interview and in the interests of maintaining confidentiality. All the recordings were transferred to an encrypted, password-protected laptop computer which was kept in a locked filing cabinet in my locked office. The data on the digital audio recorder was then destroyed. Verbatim interview transcripts were kept in a locked cabinet in my office. I was the only person who had the key of this cabinet. Potential participant identifying data was removed from the verbatim transcripts after consultation with the Principal Investigator. No names, people, or places appear in the written transcripts of the interviews.

Participants were identified by alphanumeric codes and pseudonyms on the first page of the transcripts. A master list matching alphanumeric codes and pseudonyms to participants was kept on a separate file in an encrypted, password-protected laptop computer, in a locked filing cabinet in my office. Participants’ pseudonyms were used when referencing quotations from them. Participants were advised that all data collected was subject to the legal limitations on confidentiality.

3.10 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval for my research was granted by the University of Limerick Faculty of Education and Health Science Research Ethics Committee (EHSREC) on 19th
March 2014 (Reference: 2014-03-05-EHS). I undertook my research in accordance with the University of Limerick’s Code of Ethics. In addition, my research was conducted in compliance with the codes of ethics of the IACP (Appendix Six) and the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) (Appendix Seven). Creswell (2009, p.88) points out that “ethical practices involve much more than merely following a set of static guidelines”. The need to plan for and anticipate any ethical dilemmas that may arise in research is stressed by Berg (2001), Carroll (2009), Punch (2005) and others.

As a counsellor and clinical supervisor, I subscribe to the codes of practice of the IACP and the ACI. They emphasise desired personal qualities “to which counsellors are strongly encouraged to aspire” (ACI 2012, p.2). These include: empathy, sincerity, integrity, respect, humility, competence, fairness and wisdom. The IACP (2012, p.1) Code of Ethics and Practice for Counsellors- Psychotherapists articulates four ethical principles under which practitioners are expected to operate. They are: (a) respect for the rights and dignity of the client, (b) competence in the manner in which they conduct their work, (c) responsibility – practitioners are required to act in a trustworthy and reputable manner towards clients and the community, and (d) integrity – practitioners take steps to manage personal stress, maintain their own mental health, and ensure that their work is professionally supervised. These codes help me establish my critical positioning and provide my clients (and supervisees) a benchmark by which to assess my professional competencies. They also offer my clients and supervisees a right of redress should they have concerns about any aspects of my practice. As Larrivee (2000, p.294) points out, effective counselling (and clinical supervision) is “more than a compilation of skills and strategies. It is a deliberate philosophical and ethical code of conduct”.

Elmes et al. (1995) identify a number of basic ethical considerations which apply to participants in research. They include: informed consent, no deception, right to withdraw, debriefing, and confidentiality.

My overarching ethical concerns were that: (a) no harm would come to participants, (b) they would give full and informed consent to take part in the research, (c) their anonymity would be preserved, (d) confidentiality would be maintained, (e) they would have a right to withdraw at any stage for any reason (or no reason at all), and (f) interviews would be conducted in a sensitive manner.
With this in mind, I designed a participant Informed Consent Form (Appendix Four) that sought to balance my research objectives with participants’ rights. Creswell (2009, p.89) refers to Sarantakos’s (2005) checklist of elements which a consent form should contain. These include the identification of the principal investigator, the researcher, and the institution overseeing the research. My Informed Consent Form meets these criteria.

3.11 Reflexivity and the role of the researcher in IPA

In qualitative research, no attempt is made to portray the researcher as a disinterested objective person who is seeking to find an objective truth from a research subject. Quite the opposite is, in fact, the case. Smith and Osborn (2008, p.53) note that IPA “emphasises the research process is a dynamic process with an active role for the researcher in that process”.

Reflexivity acknowledges the role of the researcher in the research process. This role is explicit and obvious and is stated at the outset of the research process. Furthermore, it acknowledges that the researcher is not a neutral objective investigator, removed from the research process. As a researcher, I am an integral part of the research process, and I influence and am influenced by the research. Most qualitative research assumes that the researcher will influence and be influenced by the research. Creswell (2007, p.18) is very explicit in this regard. He asserts that “all researchers bring values to a study, but qualitative researchers like to make explicit those values”. As I research, I ‘position’ myself in the research, and this position is explicit. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005, p.961) state that researchers “do not have to try and play God, writing as disembodied, omniscient narrators claiming universal and temporal general knowledge”. Creswell (2007, p.179) goes further in this regard, noting that “how we write is a reflection of our own interpretation based on the cultural, social, gender, class, and personal politics that we bring to the research”. As a researcher, it is incumbent on me to be aware of my own position and illustrate clearly how I believe it impacts on me and on my research. In a similar vein, Smith (2009, p.21) talks about viewing research as “a joint product of researcher and researched”. He defines reflexivity as “the term used for explicit consideration of specific ways it is likely that the study was influenced by the researcher” (Ibid., p.250).
Likewise, Langdridge believes that the researcher can be neither neutral nor objective and is intimately involved in the co–production of knowledge with research participants. This is in keeping with the spirit of phenomenological approaches (including IPA), where knowledge generation is a collaborative and ongoing process. Langdridge (2007, p.59) offers a set of questions which he believes all researchers should ask “before beginning the study, during the study and once the study has been completed, but the research not yet written up”. Langdridge stresses the absolute importance of the researcher engaging in thorough and ongoing reflection and interrogation of their motivation for undertaking the research in the first instance.

In addition, Langdridge (2007) refers to the work of Wilkinson (1988) who uses the term ‘disciplinary reflexivity’ to describe taking a critical stance towards the research itself in light of ongoing debates about methods and theories. What is important is that I as a researcher engage in reflexivity on an ongoing basis in all aspects of my research. This stance should be explicit and stated at the beginning of the research so that the reader knows the positionality of the researcher. Thomas (2009, p.9) reminds us that “there is nothing ‘unscientific’ about this use of your own self” in your research. What is more, he further suggests that as a researcher you should not ignore “your own ability to reflect on a problem and don’t minimise its significance in helping you understand the problem” (Ibid.).

Dewey (1920/2004, p.23) argues that “reflective thought… is truly educative in value”. He advocates the need to be suspicious of thoughts and beliefs that are based on tradition and authority. We should always be looking for and interrogating the evidence that is behind these thoughts and beliefs. Our default position should be critical and sceptical about peoples’ claims to knowledge. Ongoing engagement with ‘reflective thought’ is the cornerstone of a good research project. Haldane (1928, p.224) passionately argues the merits of “the duty to doubt”. So too does Thomas (2009, p.44), who exhorts us to: “doubt everyone’s findings, even [our] own”.

Bearing this in mind, I will now focus on my research findings, and I will outline the steps I took in analysing the data, which were in keeping with those recommended by IPA practitioners.
3.12 Data analysis

Using IPA as a means of data analysis is about interpreting participants’ making sense of their experience of the phenomenon. Langdridge (2007) and Willig (2008) emphasise this aspect of IPA data analysis. Smith and Osborn (2008, p.66) note that “meaning is central and the aim is to try and understand the complexity of those meanings, rather than measure their frequency”. They add that these meanings may not be readily available to the researcher. Constant and frequent visiting and revisiting of the text is necessary by the researcher. IPA does not claim to be a prescriptive methodology. It is a way of doing analysis that appears to work for many researchers.

While they are all keen to point out that there is no one way of carrying out data analysis using IPA, they all identify a number of distinct phases in the analysis. These phases, or stages, provided the conceptual framework within which to carry out my analysis. I will now outline the stages I used in analysing the data.

In keeping with the iterative nature of my analysis, each transcript was subject to all the stages of analysis. This was fully completed with each transcript before I moved on to the next transcript. No attempt was made by me to use the themes generated from the first transcript to form a template to use on subsequent transcripts. Appendix Eight charts in detail all the stages of analysis carried out on the transcript of one participant and how this contributed to the development of superordinate and subthemes. It is included to provide an ‘audit trail’ of the rigorous process I engaged in in analysing the data and to add credibility to my findings. The following stages were followed in analysing the data:

1. Initially, each transcript was read and re-read by me, while at the same time I listened to the audio recording of the interviews. This is in keeping with an idiographic approach, where transcripts are read in isolation and no attempt is made at this stage to compare and contrast themes between transcripts. While doing this, I made comments on the wide left-hand side margin of the page. (Pages were divided into three vertical sections. The left section for comments, the middle section contained the text, and the right section was used for themes). This division of the page into three sections is in keeping with a commonly used IPA analysis methodology (Smith 2008). The purpose of these comments was to accurately capture participants’ understanding of the phenomenon as contained
in the text. It was almost a paraphrasing of what participants said. Langdridge (2007) states that the function of these comments is:

To simply state what is going on in the text, generally staying close to the meaning inherent in the text and less frequently making interpretative remarks.

(Langdridge 2007, p.111)

I conducted this listening and reading exercise on numerous occasions, in order to get as close as I could to the meaning in the text. I was immersing myself into the text.

2. After many readings of the text, emerging themes were then written into the right-hand margin, and as I engaged with the text in a reflective manner, further observations were noted by me, also in the right-hand margin. At this stage, no attempt was made by me to exclude any particular data or to omit themes for any reason. Langdridge (2007), Smith (2008), and Willig (2008) refer to this as the second stage of analysis. This transformation of the initial notes (from the left-hand margins) to themes (in right-hand margins) is a feature of this stage. (Appendix Eight – Data analysis phase 1-2 contains sample references of this process).

3. Subsequently, I moved on to the third stage of analysis, with its four distinct phases. All of the themes from the right-hand margin were listed in the chronological order as they appeared in the text (Appendix Eight, phase 3a). I identified common links between themes and clustered them into superordinate and subordinate themes (Appendix Eight, phase 3b). Establishing these common links was achieved by writing each theme on a piece of paper and putting it on the floor in my office. These strips of paper were grouped into clusters with a common overarching topic. I left them on the office floor in these groups and walked away from them (usually for a cup of tea) and returned to re-examine these groupings and determine if they were an accurate reflection of what participants had said. As a result of further reflection, I made some changes to the clusters until I was satisfied that each strip of paper which represented a specific issue was in a cluster that had an overarching theme. (Otherwise, they were classified as orphan themes). Once this had been achieved, I pasted each
strip of paper onto a sheet of paper on which I wrote the overarching theme. Every strip of paper had a line and page reference attached to it, so I could always refer back to the exact place in the text from which I extracted it. This was done to ensure that I did not stray from the original text, and to provide an audit trail of the clustering process.

Langdridge (2007), Smith (2008), and Willig (2008), stress the importance of this. As Willig (2008, p.47) remarks, “it is important to ensure that clustering of themes identified at this stage makes sense in relation to the original data”. So began an ongoing dialogue between my interpretation of the text and what participants actually said. I was drawing from the text, interpreting and making sense of it, while at the same time checking this against what the participant was actually saying (Appendix eight, phase 3c).

Subsequently, I completed a four-column template for each transcription (Appendix Eight, phase 3d). The left-hand column contained the main theme and all the sub themes. The second column contained the text reference to these themes and the third column contained the actual text. The fourth column contained my own reflections, thoughts, interpretations, and insights that came to mind as I was reviewing the themes and the original text. This process of reviewing the text and my own initial thoughts proved to be highly informative and helped me gain a deeper understanding and a more meaningful and insightful interpretation of the text. This process was completed for the first transcript, and I then proceeded with my analysis of second and subsequent transcripts. Themes emerging from the first case were not used to guide or inform subsequent cases. Completing this process for all transcripts was time consuming and involved considerable engagement with the transcripts. Yet in doing this, I was rewarded with a considerable amount of in-depth rich data, which provided solid foundations for the emergence of the various themes.

4. I developed a list of themes across all transcripts (Appendix Eight, phase e). Themes with a common thread were clustered to form superordinate themes and subordinate themes and developed into a table. Care was taken to include themes which might not be frequent, but had significant importance in the context of individual transcriptions. Themes were omitted if I felt they were not a good fit with the overall research aim, or if they did not appear to have significance for
participants. All themes were traceable to specific pages and lines of the transcriptions with supporting text. This helped provide an ‘audit trail’ from the original verbatim transcription text to my interpretations of how participants understood and experienced the phenomenon.

Langdridge (2007) and Willig (2008) talk extensively about the purpose of this stage of analysis. Willig (2008, p.58) describes it as “the production of a summary table of the structured themes, together with quotations that illustrate each theme”.

5. A master list of these themes was completed and sent to my supervisors for critical appraisal and scrutiny. Some amendments were made, so that subordinate themes were clustered under the appropriate superordinate theme.

6. These themes formed the basis of the narrative explanation and interpretation by me of the data. This is concerned, as Smith (2008, p.76) notes, “with translating the themes into a narrative account”. Evidence to support links between participants’ explanations and my interpretation was provided by using extracts from the verbatim accounts of participants and comments from my own journal which I kept throughout the research process. This helped me to record ideas and my own interpretations of participants understanding of the phenomenon, as evidenced in the transcriptions.

Emergent themes are presented in the form of superordinate and subordinate themes in the results chapter. My critical engagement with the data and my own interpretations of it are detailed in the Critical Reflections sections (5.5) of the discussion chapter. Appendix Eight contains extensive and detailed information of all stages of the data analysis used in this research. The use of verbatim extracts is a key aspect of this and it ensures that all themes are grounded in participants’ words.

In conducting my analysis, I was aware of the need to demonstrate quality and rigour in the use of my methodology. I outline below the verification procedures I used to do this.

3.13 Verification procedures

Quality or rigour in research is of paramount importance. Yardley (2015) asserts that:
It is essential for qualitative researchers to be able to show that their studies are sound and rigorous and yield findings that are as valuable as those from quantitative research.

(Yardley 2015, p.260)

How this is present and measured in qualitative research is a subject of considerable discussion. This has been emphasised in establishing validity, reliability, and to a lesser extent, generalisability in qualitative research. Smith et al. (2009), Thomas (2009), and Yardley (2008) argue that these concepts may not be appropriate, as understood in the context of quantitative research, in their use and application in qualitative research.

Roller and Lavrakas (2016) outline a number of distinctive features of good qualitative research. Using these as a template, I will demonstrate what I did to conduct good qualitative research.

**Absence of truth:** By explicitly stating my ontological and epistemological position, I was not looking for a universal truth. Instead, the focus was on the credibility of my interpretations and results.

**Importance of context:** All interviews were conducted live in participants’ counselling rooms in a one-to-one format. The context for the interviews was framed by my research question.

**Importance of meaning:** I focused on the meaning that participants made of the phenomenon being researched. In my subsequent interpretation of these meanings, I outlined the potential for bias (participant and researcher), language use, and researcher-participant relationship to influence these meanings and interpretations.

**Researcher-as-instrument:** I acknowledged and embraced my role as researcher-as-instrument. I was at the centre of the data gathering and my role throughout the research process was highlighted. I was intimately involved in all aspects of the research.

**Set skills required of the researcher:** I used my counselling and supervision skills, honed as a result of many years practice, to build rapport with participants and to actively listen to what they were saying in an empathic and non-judgemental manner. I also read extensively on the use of IPA, noting its strengths and limitations.
Flexible research design: I chose to use semi-structured interviews to gather data. They offered the level of flexibility needed to give structure to the interviews, while allowing me the opportunity to ask follow-up questions of participants when necessary. Using IPA as a method of analysis enabled me to stay focused on the meaning participants were making of the phenomenon, while at the same time allowed me to develop overarching themes.

Issues addressed by qualitative research: I researched a number of potential research paradigms and after considering the strengths and limitations of a number of them, IPA was chosen by me as the best ‘fit’ to satisfy my research objective. In doing this, I demonstrated thoughtfulness in selecting a research methodology that was capable of providing a suitable framework for conducting my research.

Messy analysis and inductive approach: At the outset, I acknowledged that qualitative research data analysis is messy, multi-layered, illogical and appears inconsistent. As a researcher, I acknowledged this to be an integral part of qualitative research. This ‘messy analysis’ aspect of IPA is commented on by Brocki and Wearden (2006) as follows:

Whilst the provision of guidelines to analysis serves to foster the accessibility of IPA, such guidelines are intended for adaption and development rather than stagnating the development of the approach (Smith 2004).

(Brocki and Wearden 2006, p.27)

McLeod (2011, p.82) echoes Denzin and Lincoln’s (1994b) belief that “the challenge for qualitative researchers … is to negotiate their own personal route through this methodological terrain”. This “personal route”, while informed by guidelines for engaging in IPA research suggested by Smith (2015), is what I refer to as the messy aspect of the research. Messy, insofar as a tenet of Smith et al. (2015) is that it is not appropriate to offer a formatted prescriptive way for conducting IPA.

In addition to the above qualities identified by Roller and Lavrakas (2016), I gave a full (‘thick’) description of all the stages of my research. This enabled the creation of an ‘audit trail’ of the steps I took. My research was written up in a transparent, coherent and intelligent manner. I took specific steps to demonstrate validity, credibility, and trustworthiness in my research findings. These steps are outlined in detail below. Also, difficulties in applying quantitative methodologies to qualitative
research (Creswell 2007, McLeod 2011, Thomas 2009, and Yardley 2000, 2008) are discussed. The first of these is the concept of validity.

3.14 The concept of validity

Thomas (2009, p.106) declares there are two meanings to validity in the social sciences. He notes that as a concept, it has its origins in experimental designs and psychometrics and tellingly adds that “it can distract you from the proper purpose of your research” (Ibid.). He refers to the two types of validity as instrument based validity, where validity is “the degree to which the instrument measures what it is supposed to be measuring” (Ibid., p.107) and experimental validity. Thomas talks about this in terms of minimising “threats to its conclusions” (Ibid.). He points out that, as social scientists, we are dealing with live situations in which people may quit and life gets in the way. We are open to unexpected turns, with our participants and ourselves, that may not be present or can be all but eliminated in laboratory based validation strategies.

McLeod (2011 p. 265) notes that “there is a well-defined and well–known set of validity criteria which are employed on a routine basis by quantitative researchers”. He furthermore adds that in quantitative research, ‘validity criteria’ refers to the “capacity to measure accurately, capture or reflect some characteristic or objective reality” (Ibid., p.266). He points out that this notion of validity is heavily influenced by positivism. For constructionist philosophers, all experiences of reality are subjective and constructed, and as such, an objective reality does not exist.

Quantitative research criteria, with the emphasis on objectivity, reliability and generalisability, are not always appropriate for qualitative research. This has been pointed out by Creswell (2009), Langdrige (2007), McLeod (2011), Smith et al. (2008), Thomas (2009), Yardley (2000, 2008) and others. Equally, qualitative interpretivist researchers strongly assert that the researcher does influence how knowledge is produced and assessed. They argue that researcher positionality is never neutral, and therefore, it should be made explicit from the outset of the research. In this way, researcher bias is acknowledged and seen as part of the process.

According to Yardley (2015):
The validity of research corresponds to the degree to which it is accepted as sound, legitimate and authoritative by people with an interest in research findings.

(Yardley 2015, p.257)

Yardley expands on this concept of validity by suggesting that validity can be enhanced by showing how your research meets the criteria of a particular framework. For this reason, Willig (2008, p.16), while acknowledging “validity can be a problematic concept for qualitative researchers”, offers a number of ways in which qualitative methodologies can deal with these challenges. Similarly, Langdridge (2007, p.154) notes that “there is considerably more debate about the criteria for judging validity with qualitative research”.

Polkinghorne (1988, 2007) offers five guidelines for determining validity which are useful in descriptive phenomenology. These are dismissed by Langdridge (2007), who believes they hold little weight in interpretative approaches. Langdridge does suggest that Yardley (2000) offers a more appropriate set of guidelines for determining validity in qualitative research, viz.: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance.

In my own research in interviewing participants, I explicitly stated my positionality. In pre-interview, non-recorded discussions with participants, I made my ontological and epistemological positions very clear. In support of this, Yardley (2008) argues that:

Attempting to eliminate the influence of the researcher would make it very difficult to retain the benefits of qualitative research such as the disclosure of subjective experiences, in an in-depth interview.

(Yardley 2008, p.237)

This point is taken up by McLeod (2011) who argues:

There is no way in avoiding the fact that the process of qualitative inquiry is powerfully influenced by the personality, interests, assumptions, expectations and so on of the researcher and that the findings of a study are inevitably related to these factors.

(McLeod 2011, p.45)
Similar sentiments are expressed by Smith (2015, p. 242) who states that “this process [qualitative data analysis] is inevitably influenced by the assumptions and interests of the researcher”.

Generally, qualitative researchers are more interested in investigating what is happening in particular situations rather than obtaining a representative sample that is ‘statistically significant’, or replicable. Yet, as Yardley (2008) observes:

There would be little point in doing research, if every situation was totally unique and the findings in one study had no relevance to any other situation.

(Yardley 2008, p.238)

What is needed, therefore, is a set of procedures for enhancing validity in qualitative research that are robust, clear and credible, while at the same time, honour and acknowledge the epistemological and ontological foundations of qualitative research.

Establishing credibility in qualitative research is something that has occupied the minds of many prominent researchers and those with an interest in qualitative research. McLeod (2011) argues that:

The credibility issue for a discursive study therefore, centre not on the representativeness of samples of interview text, but on the level of detail with which a segment of language is displayed.

(McLeod 2011, p.271)

Mangione, et al. (2011, p.158) maintain that, in their research, credibility of data was achieved “through prolonged, substantial engagement, taping of sessions”. In this research, all interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by me. According to Brocki and Wearden (2006, p.30), “the use of verbatim transcripts is central to IPA”. Evidence of the analysis process conducted on one transcript with supporting extracts is contained in Appendix Seven.

Along with achieving credibility, the need to establish and demonstrate trustworthiness is a feature of qualitative research. These correspond to the quantitative concepts of validity (credibility) and rigour (trustworthiness) respectively. Holloway and Galvin (2017, p.309) state that “trustworthiness in qualitative research means methodological soundness and adequacy”. However useful this definition is, agreeing what constitutes methodological “soundness” and
“adequacy” is not straightforward. There is no universal agreement on what precisely these terms mean in qualitative research. The validity (credibility) strategy used in this research is outlined in detail later in this chapter.

3.15 Establishing validity

The concept of triangulation is one such procedure that can be used in establishing validity in qualitative research. Originally used in navigation, its purpose is to establish a person’s exact location by reference to three known reference points. However, Flick (2002) notes that if used this way, its focus is on enriching the understanding of the phenomenon from different perspectives rather than obtaining one definitive account of a phenomenon. Furthermore, I would contend that the concept of triangulation is positivist influenced, as it suggests that there is an objective reality out there that is amenable to discovery and triangulation. For an interpretivist, no such objective reality exists, so using triangulation as a means of establishing the validity of my findings is unsound from a paradigm perspective and incompatible with the philosophical underpinnings of my research and IPA.

Similarly, the practice of comparing the coding of data by two researchers working independently of each other is sometimes undertaken to eliminate researcher bias and errors. However, it has hints of the philosophy of “objectivity and inter-rater reliability” (Boyatzis 1998, p.241) associated with quantitative research.

Moreover, in order to meet the criteria for statistical analysis, a large number of case studies are required. This makes the research unwieldy and lacking in the essential ‘thick-description’ (Geertz 1973) and in-depth perspective that is the hallmark of good qualitative research. Because of this, Yardley asserts that if using an interpretative approach to analyse data, there is no point in carrying out an inter-rater reliability test and the result would be meaningless. Inter-rater reliability “merely produces an interpretation agreed by two people rather than functioning as a check of objectivity” (Yardley 2008, p.249).

In using an interpretative approach, IPA, I am already acknowledging that an objective approach is not achievable, desirable, or needed to interpret the data. Interpretative qualitative data is not designed to test a hypothesis. Nevertheless, there must be ontological and epistemological compatibility between the research question, philosophy, methodology, data collecting, fieldwork, data analysis, results
and recommendations throughout my research. This level of compatibility is necessary to establish credibility, reliability, and coherence in my research methodology and findings.

Silverman (2005) advocates participant feedback (respondent validation) in order to enhance the validity of qualitative research. I considered this option in designing my research but decided against it. As I audio recorded and transcribed all interviews, the availability of verbatim transcripts ensured there was no loss of data and no misrepresentation of participants’ views. All participants were offered verbatim transcripts of the interviews. Two requested (and were given) transcripts, although neither commented on the transcriptions.

Also, my analysis of the data using IPA goes beyond what participants may be aware of when they are interviewed. For example, using thematic analysis may uncover participant biases and contradictions that were not evident during the interviews. This may involve subjecting them to theories that participants may not be aware of. There is potential here to get bogged down in a mire of misunderstandings and misinterpretations and engage in an endless dialogue between researcher and participant which stymies the research process. This dialogue can spiral into ever increasing micro analysis on meanings and biases, while losing sight of the overall aim of the research.

Likewise, Creswell (2009, p.191) talks about the need for researchers to incorporate multiple “validity strategies” into their research. These include: triangulating different sources of data, the use of participant checking, and the use of rich thick descriptions to convey findings. In qualitative research, this might include a thorough description of the setting in which the interview took place. Clarifying the bias the researcher is bringing to the research is a feature of IPA. This is done mainly by the researcher engaging in an ongoing dialogue with the research findings and their own position. The dialogue helps create “an open and honest narrative that will resonate well with readers” (Creswell 2009, p.192). I need to be explicit and acknowledge how my interpretation of the research is shaped and influenced by my gender, socio-economic background, beliefs, my ‘worldview’, and by my life experiences.

The need to present “negative or discrepant information that runs counter to the themes” is also stressed by Creswell (Ibid.). This is important, as he acknowledges that real life “is composed of different perspectives that do not always coalesce”
(Ibid.). By presenting data that runs counter to the main themes, the researcher is attempting to portray an accurate account of what is uncovered and consequently has a generic validity and credibility in its own right.

Creswell (2009) also talks about the advantage and value of spending prolonged time in the field as a way of obtaining an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. While this gives value and enhanced credibility to the research, it would be cumbersome and intrusive in my area of research. It would generate extremely large amounts of data, which would make it difficult to get in-depth details of the phenomenon under study.

3.16.1 My validity strategy

There are numerous criteria available for assessing quality and reliability in qualitative research. Yardley (2000) developed a set of core principles for evaluating the validity of qualitative psychology. I used these in assessing the validity of my research. They are: (a) sensitivity to context, (b) commitment and rigour, (c) transparency and coherence, and (d) impact and importance.

3.16.2 Sensitivity to context

Sensitivity to context is marked by relevant theoretical and empirical literature, a description of the socio-cultural setting in which the research takes place, a focus on participants’ perspectives and ethical issues and empirical data. In this regard, I conducted a thorough critical review of the literature to determine what had previously been written and to identify gaps in the knowledge about my area of research. Earlier in this chapter, I outlined in considerable detail the way in which I had obtained and analysed the data. Furthermore, by using verbatim extracts from participants to support and evidence my arguments and interpretations, I never strayed too far from the original text, and my interpretations of the material could always be verified and substantiated by reference to the original verbatim extract. It also ensured that the participant’s voice was always heard and was never lost in the process. Participants’ perspectives were acknowledged, and no attempt was made by me to undermine them. At all times, I was ethically sensitive to the topics discussed in conversations with participants. How issues that might give rise to ethical concerns were to be addressed was contained in the Participant Information Sheet, which accompanied the Invitation-To-Take-Part Letter sent to all participants. Also,
my in-depth explanation of IPA and the justification for it as a method of analysis, coupled with my critical reflexivity, supported this principle.

### 3.16.3 Commitment and rigour

The second principle articulated by Yardley, commitment and rigour, was demonstrated through my data collection, my depth/breadth of analysis, my methodological competence/skill, and an in-depth engagement with the topic. Participants were recruited from a carefully selected database, and interviews were conducted to a consistently high standard. I was unwavering in my pursuit of high-quality data from all participants. This commitment in conducting quality semi-structured interviews was aided by my extensive training and experience in psychotherapy and clinical supervision. As part of my desire to demonstrate commitment and rigour, I read widely on IPA and the use of verification strategies in qualitative research. I attended workshops to develop my skills in conducting qualitative IPA analysis on the data. I engaged with my supervisors on an ongoing basis. They were consulted at all stages of the data analysis (outlined above), from the production of verbatim transcripts of the interviews, to the development and categorisation of all superordinate and subordinate themes. They challenged and critically interrogated my categorisation of themes in order to ensure they were supported by the evidence in the verbatim interview transcripts. They sought and were given details of all stages of the data analysis and verification strategies used in the research. Their suggestions and recommendations were incorporated into the final list of themes.

### 3.16.4 Transparency and coherence

Yardley’s third principle, ‘transparency and coherence’, is evidenced in this research by the clarity and power of my argument and the fit between theory and method. My explanation for choosing a specific paradigm and data presentation strategy and engaging in reflexivity is evidenced in this research and is clearly articulated. The transparency of my research is evident by my clear description of all the steps taken by me in conducting this research. There is a cohesion and fit between the way in which I carried out this research and the underlying assumptions of IPA. The referencing of all extracts enabled them to be traced back to the initial transcript, thereby providing context and verification for the use of the quotation and its emergent theme. All of the initial transcripts were available, and quotations from
them were embedded in large transcripts in order to give them context and further support the emerging themes. Langdridge (2007) asserts that demonstrating transparency and coherence is one of the most important aspects for establishing validity in qualitative research. Throughout the research, I was careful to engage in ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1973). Thick description was engaged in by giving detailed accounts of all aspects and of all stages of my research.

3.16.5 Impact and importance

Yardley’s fourth and final principle, ‘impact and importance’, was achieved by demonstrating the practical, theoretical and socio-cultural value of the research. The way my research will be evaluated should centre on whether or not the reader has found it useful, interesting and relevant to the practice of clinical supervision. In the discussion section of this thesis, I argue that my research is useful, interesting and relevant to the practice of clinical supervision and I offer suggestions which support this claim. How it impacts in the field is discussed in further detail in Chapter 5, with particular reference to the practical, theoretical and socio-cultural impact of the research findings.

3.17 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is about reflecting on how I as a researcher impact on the research process (Spencer et al. 2003, Yardley 2000). Qualitative research views the researcher as an integral part of the research process. It acknowledges that the assumptions and positionality of the researcher play an active influence in the manner in which I collect, interpret and analyse data. It is for this reason that I have devoted a chapter to my own positionality and the series of reflections I engaged in during the different stages of this research.

Nonetheless, despite all these validation strategies, I agree with Thomas’s assertion (2009, p.19) that “you will never in social research get conclusive evidence of something being the case”.

3.18 Generalisability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) use the term transferability instead of generalisability when talking about qualitative research. They acknowledge that research findings from one study could be transferred to similar research elsewhere. It is possible that the
findings of this study will be relevant elsewhere. It seems to me that the concept of transferability, while similar to generalisability, is more appropriate, given the philosophical underpinnings of and significant role of the researcher in qualitative research.

Gibbs (2007) and Yin (2003) stress the need to be cautious about the generalisability of qualitative research. They urge extreme caution in attempting to do this. They suggest that the focus on qualitative research is on in-depth research on a small number of cases and the results of the research should be confined to these cases. They are what they are, and no attempt should be made to generalise them. Yin (2003) suggests that there might be a case for generalisability to a broader theory in qualitative studies if research is carried out on a large number of cases. In a similar vein, Pinnegar and Daynes (2006, p.126) remind us that, in general, there is no intent or desire in qualitative research to generalise the information.

Thomas (2009, p.101) is adamant that “it is not expected that you can generalise from interpretative research...your ‘sample’ gives you insights rather than generalisations”. Also, Thomas declares that even the notion of a sample is a misnomer in qualitative research, as there is no attempt to portray the sample as representative of the wider population it is taken from. These results stand for themselves. They have integrity in their own right. Thomas (Ibid., p.109) sums it up nicely in saying that “generalisability is of importance only when you want to generalise”. However, Willig (2008, p.17), while noting that qualitative data does not as a rule work with representative samples, argues there might be a case for seeking to attempt to generalise the results of case studies. Willig argues that, if the aim of the study is to explore a phenomenon that is of interest to more than the people in the study, “then representation is an issue” (Ibid.). He states that in such circumstances “we are likely to want to be able to generalise from our study” (Ibid.). Equally, Carradice et al. (2002) contend that the generalisability of findings in qualitative research is something that needs to be addressed by researchers. They argue (2002, p.25) that “the research should be evaluated by the applicability of the concerns to other situations and to others involved in the phenomenon”. Brocki and Wearden (2006, p.26) contend that “while an IPA analysis should not strive for generalizability, neither should it be a retelling of respondents’ accounts”. Furthermore, Salmon (2003) suggests that researchers who oppose generalisability of qualitative research findings are uncertain as to what to replace it with.
In my case, I do not seek to generalise or extrapolate findings from this study. I want the findings to stand for themselves for what they are: that is, how I am making sense of my participants making their own meaning of the phenomenon being studied. This is in keeping with one of the primary aims of IPA, which is “to select participants in order to illuminate a particular research question and to develop a full and interesting understanding of the data” (Brocki and Wearden 2006, p.23).

As a researcher, I acknowledge the “limits to the representational nature” (Ibid., p. 22) of the data in my research. I am not arguing for generalisation of the results of this research, though I do appreciate that my research findings will have an element of generalisability. I also acknowledge that the data I have analysed could equally be analysed from other qualitative analysis perspectives. This is something that McLeod (2011) also acknowledges.

3.19 Reliability

Thomas (2009) defines reliability as referring to:

   A test’s ability to measure something consistently... the extent to which a research instrument such as a test will give the same results on different occasions.

(Thomas 2009, p.191)

Willig (2008, p.16) states that “a measurement is reliable if it yields the same answer on different occasions”. Thomas (2009, p.105) adds that the notion of reliability has been imported into qualitative studies from psychometrics and states forcefully: “In my opinion, psychometrics is where the notion of reliability should have stayed”. He asserts that the concept of reliability as understood and used in quantitative, psychometric personality testing belongs there and not in the social sciences. In the case of my own research, I agree with his assertions. It is extremely unlikely that test-retest reliability, or inter-rater reliability, would provide useful information for my research. The focus of my research and its underlying philosophy stress the importance of working with the meaning the phenomenon has for the participants in the research. It is their understanding as expressed in their own words, which gives the research its reliability in a qualitative context.

Likewise, Willig (2009, p.16), while acknowledging that “reliability is an important aspect of qualitative data collection”, adds that “qualitative researchers are less concerned with reliability”. He bases this opinion on his observation that the focus of
Qualitative research is the exploration of a phenomenon in great detail, rather than seeking to measure it in large numbers. Smith (2009, p.59) notes that the semi-structured interview provides a format where:

The respondents can be perceived as the experiential expert on the subject and therefore should be allowed the maximum opportunity to tell their story.

He goes on to say that the advantage of the semi-structured interview is that:

It facilitates empathy, allows a greater flexibility of coverage, allows the interview to go into novel areas and tends to produce richer data.

(Ibid.)

Qualitative and quantitative research strategies come with sets of assumptions which are appropriate to their conceptual paradigms. While comparisons between both positions are inevitable, parity of esteem should also be maintained. Different methodologies serve as different tools to do different jobs in their own way. Nevertheless, Willig (2008) notes that there is disagreement among qualitative researchers about the weight that should be given to establishing reliability in qualitative research.

3.20 Conclusion

Establishing a robust validity framework is an essential feature of all modes of research. This is important in qualitative research where there is less agreement on what constitutes validity and how it should be established. In conducting my research, I fulfilled the principles for establishing validity as outlined by Yardley (2000). The need to have standards in qualitative research that are comparable with those existing in quantitative research is a concern of Yardley, who points out:

It is essential for qualitative researchers to be able to show that their studies are sound and rigorous and yield findings that are as valuable as those from quantitative research.

(Yardley 2008, p.238)

Yet, it appears that qualitative validation strategies are still operating under the shadow of quantitative techniques and using terms and concepts derived from quantitative research to validate findings in qualitative studies. Quantitative validations are perceived to be the default standard, and qualitative researchers are asserting their own utility and validity by stressing their differences from quantitative researchers. Qualitative validation tools and techniques do not need to look over their
shoulder at their quantitative colleagues. They already possess stand-alone robust principles which, by themselves, are fit for purpose.

Finally, the use of what Yardley (2008, p.242) describes as “disconfirming case analysis” is useful in this context. It is a process of once having established confirming themes and patterns, the researcher then undertakes a process of identifying “disconfirming cases”, or instances where themes do not fit with or support those already identified. Creswell (2008) and Pope and Mays (2000) also suggest this course of action, noting as Yardley (2008, p.242) does that “this can be considered the qualitative equivalent of testing your emerging hypothesis”.

These instances of disconfirmation can lead to further research or a refocusing of subsequent interviews with participants on this particular theme. It is something that I have paid particular attention to in my research and data analysis and it is commented on in the discussion chapter. What will be discussed are the results of this research which is something that I will now turn to.
Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction

In this section, an overview of each superordinate theme is presented, followed by a critical analysis and interpretation of each of the four superordinate themes and their seventeen subordinate themes, as derived from the verbatim interview transcripts. These superordinate and subordinate themes are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Superordinate and subordinate themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superordinate Themes</th>
<th>Subordinate Themes</th>
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<tr>
<td>(1) The impact of power.</td>
<td>(1a) The roles that supervisors take on and act out of (e.g. mentor, wise elder, resource person, teacher, more experienced practitioner).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1b) How participants’ philosophy of supervision informs these actions.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(1c) Creating a safe space through contracting.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(1d) Monitoring and gatekeeping role of the supervisor.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) Awareness of power in supervision.</td>
<td>(2a) How power is present in supervision, (e.g. as energy, a supervisor stance, style of interaction between participants and their supervisees).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2b) Language as power.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2c) Stroking the ego.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2d) Use and misuse of supervisee power.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(3) Power as an entity in supervision.</td>
<td>(3a) The power-dance in supervision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3b) Supervisor power as something positive.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(3c) Supervisors’ fears regarding the consequences of their power.</td>
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</table>
I will now turn to the first of the four superordinate themes and, using carefully selected and relevant extracts from the transcripts, provide supporting evidence to substantiate participants’ interpretation of the phenomenon and the development of themes. All transcripts are referenced. This allows the context in which they are spoken to be understood and evidenced.

4.2.1 Superordinate theme (1): The impact of power

One of the most striking features of the research is the various ways in which their positional power impacts on participants. This superordinate theme will be explored in this section, as will the subordinate themes. The subordinate themes are: (1a) the roles that supervisors take on and act out of, (1b) how participants’ philosophy of supervision informs these actions, (1c) creating a safe space through contracting, and (1d) monitoring and gatekeeping role of the supervisor.

It is remarkable how many of them describe their power in terms of responsibility, “I see my power as responsibility” (Anna, P. 2, L. 11-13). This notion of supervisor power as responsibility is further expanded on by another participant:

I mean, sure everybody in life has positions of power and influence. (R. We all have yeah.) I would think of it like as a responsibility, I suppose you know. It’s a responsibility.

(Ciara, P.12, L.28-29)

Many participants talked about the “huge responsibility” (Debbie, P.12, L.8-10) that lies with them as supervisors. This sense of responsibility suggests that participants have a keen awareness of the power in their role. Yet, there appears to be a
difference in how participants view this power/responsibility and how its use impacts on them. For example, one participant (Hazel, P.8, L. 21-23) states:

> And I am very clear that as a supervisor I have a responsibility in…. it’s more about, I’ve always thought it as responsibility more than power.

What this participant is saying is that, although supervisors are very aware of their role and responsibilities, they demonstrate a marked reluctance to ascribe a power element to their responsibilities. Could it be that this concept of power is not something that many of them are comfortable with, yet they are aware of and willing to exercise what they describe as their responsibilities? Is this a contradiction or a denial, or a keen discernment among participants of differences (perceived or actual) between power and responsibility? Or is it unease about power itself which is generating this distinction? One participant captures this brilliantly:

> There’s something. I don’t know. It’s the word power itself, that somebody is somehow lording it over somebody else (R. OK) in a way, or it’s imposing their will on them, as “I know better than you” sort of a thing.

(Debbie, P.5, L.36-39)

This comment seems to be indicative of the ambivalent understanding participants have of the power (responsibility) of their position, as supervisors:

> The word power doesn’t actually sit comfortably at all, and I don’t see it in my lexicon of language at all. I prefer to use the word responsibility, because that’s what I believe I have.

(Olive, P.1, L.9-12)

Some participants are uncomfortable in understanding their role in terms of power, for whatever reasons. One insight into why this might be is offered by a participant (Ciara, P.17, L. 5-7) who remarks:

> I suppose when you think of power, I think of the power that can be abused. (R. Mmm.) I don’t think about responsibility as being abused so much.

Similarly, another participant (Fiona, P.3, L. 22-24) notes:

> You know that it is sometimes an uncomfortable power and authority that you have. (R. All right.) Now it doesn’t occur very often, but it’s certainly there.
This would seem to suggest that many participants view power as something that is distasteful and that can be abused. Whereas participants are saying responsibility is seen as something positive and an enabling part of their role as supervisors.

However, this distinction is not universal among participants. One (Debbie, P. 13, L. 49-51) states bluntly and succinctly: “When you carry responsibility, you carry power, whether you like it or not”. Another participant (Colm, P.6, L. 15) states that there is potential for positive use of supervisor power by naming and helping supervisees with difficulties in their lives.

Even though some participants were reluctant to view their role in terms of power, they were more forthcoming in identifying the responsibilities associated with their role. Participants frequently referred to their role as experts. What being an expert means to them, and how this expertise is to be utilised, is not consistent. Several participants were quick to point out that their supervisees:

…looked to [them] as the expert. (R. Right) The one who knows everything, the one who would be able to put them right.”

(Steve, P. 8, L. 14-17)

At the same time, some of them are keen to challenge this view and invite supervisees to understand their supervisory role as a facilitator, joint explorer, and collaborative in intent, rather than the source of all knowledge and wisdom on issues. One participant remarked with an insightful candour on the situation they faced when they first became a supervisor:

When I first started as a supervisor, expecting myself to move into that more expert role. I should have something to offer, and sometimes we can be pushed into it, feeling pushed into it by supervisees wanting us to take up that power of the more experienced person.

(Joan, P.1, L.25-32)

What participants may be saying is that there is a need for supervisors to engage with their supervisees in a discussion on how both supervisor and supervisee view their roles and responsibilities. They should be upfront about the role power plays in supervision and how this can be addressed. Ignoring it is not an option if supervision is to be empowering and challenging for both the supervisor and supervisee.
All of the participants talk about their ethical responsibilities to the client and the profession. They are equally unambiguous in asserting that they would act if they had ethical concerns. As another participant (Gemma, P. 3, L. 21-23) put it:

*But if it’s a matter of ethics or a matter of things that have to be done, I wouldn’t be backwards in coming forward.*

Participants demonstrated they have variable levels of awareness of the power they possess, but at the same time are unclear as to the exact role it plays in supervision. An ambivalent relationship appears to exist between some participants and power. Some of them embrace and accept it. Others find it a troubling and nebulous notion. More stress the importance of acknowledging the role it has in supervision, while at the same time not letting it interfere with getting on with supervision.

I shall next explore the subordinate theme 1(a) and present relevant extracts to support the importance of this concept as it arose in the research.

### 4.2.2 Subordinate theme (1a): The roles that supervisors take on and act out of (e.g. mentor, wise elder, resource person, teacher, more experienced practitioner)

In the course of interviewing participants, it became evident that participants had definite views on their position as supervisor and how they interact with supervisees. A role that female participants talk about (of the fourteen interviewed, eleven were female and three were male) is that of being a parent and mother to their supervisees, and in doing so, offering them psychological support, sustenance, and nourishment in their role as supervisor. A strong image of mother-daughter, parent-child is evident:

*Well you see the, the way, way, I would, the way I deal with that is, I, I see ah, am they have to feed off me, and the reason they are coming to me is that I am a little a bit ahead of them.*

(Anna, P.3, L. 20-24)

The image of a supervisee “feeding off” a supervisor is a powerful maternal one. You have a nurturing and protecting parent taking care of a dependent child. Though this image is warm and comforting, it also suggests the presence of a significant dependency by the supervisee on the supervisor. Furthermore, the obvious power imbalance in this image is a cause for concern. This maternal instinct in working with supervisees is also acknowledged by another participant when reflecting on the
role she assumes when working with her supervisees. She notes with a smile (Olive, P. 5, L. 9-10):

Yeah, yeah, and so yes, certainly, I am sort of being, there is the bit of the mummy in me coming in with the trainees.

Later in our conversation, the same participant compares her enthusiasm about supervisee growth to that of a parent watching a football game from the sideline and noting an improvement in their child’s football prowess compared to previously.

The parental role that some supervisors assume is also commented on by another participant:

Yeah, and I suppose I see it as maybe the friendly grandparent, or all of those (R. That’s a nice yeah, yeah), who is kinda a little bit more experienced, has been around a little bit longer, but help them to identify their strengths (R. Ok) you know, as, and maybe their weakness, and what needs doing.

(Debbie, P.6, L.8-15)

These strong parental roles are evident with female supervisors when working with trainees or inexperienced therapists. The male participants do not talk about a nurturing parent role when describing their role in supervision.

Participants also talk of the restorative role of the supervisor. This is seen as trying to get their supervisee clean again, to decontaminate them from the dirty work that counselling can be. One participant (Gemma, P. 4, L. 31-32) talks about this role as: “washing off the grime…and hugely necessary”. This participant seems to be saying that the role of the supervisor is that of a more experienced practitioner who helps their supervisees. One of the strongest examples of the restorative role of the supervisor is offered in the following quotation:

It’s like you go down to the chemist on high street, and you buy yourself a sponge, and the sponge is dry and light and bouncy, and you go in and you mop it up. And you mop up all the water and it’s….the sponge is dripping. Well you have to squeeze the sponge out again (Starts laughing, and then both of us laugh), so that it can be used again (R. The squeeze theory of supervisory relationships!) Yeah, and that’s it in a sense.

(Debbie, P. 5, L. 39-47)

The role of the supervisor as a resource and carer for the supervisee is stressed. It supports a benevolent relationship between supervisor and supervisee, though this
relationship is always unequal, with the supervisor firmly remaining in the role of expert-mentor.

This expert-mentor role impacts differently on the supervisors. Some of them seem to view it as an opportunity to help their supervisees. As supervisors, they have accumulated more clinical experience than their supervisees. Their life and professional experiences have given them skills they are willing to share with others. They have experiences and expertise that they are willing to share and which they hope will benefit their supervisees:

The skills and knowledge, and em, experience I have (R. Ok), and that I have through many, many, years of working, brought together at this stage in my life, and I feel like, it’s kinda like, like being a mentor or something helping others (R. Ok). I like the idea of being able to help other people you know, in their training, in there, and I feel I have accumulated a certain amount of knowledge and skills and things. So and that involves some, some, some, power as well as all kinds of other aspects.

(Bernie, P. 13, L. 32-37)

They do acknowledge that having more experience and skills does bring a power element to the supervisory relationship. However, not all participants appear to be comfortable with this power differential. As (Fiona, P. 1, L. 14-16) notes:

So I think that em it’s uneven. You will be more seen as the expert (R. Yeah) whereas they’re seen as the learner.

Some of the supervisors are adamant that they do not wish to be seen in this expert role. Instead, they are saying they wish to be more collaborative and exploratory in their role as supervisor with their supervisees:

I’m not here to be the expert (R. Great, yeah), right. I’m here to be a third eye, a neutral person, provide a space, where we throw out stuff, help the person reflect. I can maybe see it from a different angle because I’m not involved. That doesn’t mean that I am more of an expert. I’m just in a different position to do it.

(Fiona, P. 15, L. 32-37)

In this instance, it looks as if the participant’s philosophy of supervision is influencing their role and the way they conduct supervision. It also appears to be an attempt to lessen the power inequality between the supervisor and the supervisee.
The amount of power that participants exercise appears to be related to their level of experience as a supervisor. They believe that if they have more experience than their supervisee (not always the case though) this additional experience confers additional powers on them as supervisors. As this vignette illustrates:

*I suppose there would be a sense of power, in the respect that, you need to be a little bit more experienced, perhaps than the client, than the supervisee, (R. Right) to start with.*

(Debbie, P. 1, L. 9-11)

This power and how to manage, or hold it, is perplexing for some participants. They talk about holding power, providing the container for it, as part of their supervisory role. In this context, they appear to be viewing power in Foucauldian terms, as an entity in itself, which they hold (or try to contain), as supervisors:

*I suppose I would be aware of that everybody has power, but I would be aware of my role of being the facilitator and upholder. (R. Ok.) So I'm basically the container for it.*

(Ciara, P. 7, L. 5-11)

Yet despite this awareness, getting a complete understanding of how power is present and influences the supervision process is surprisingly difficult:

*Am, I suppose it’s something, it’s subtle, it’s there and it can be used or abused I suppose. Power in any situation, you know. So that, em, I like power in supervision to me is just holding, like, it’s not, I don’t know how to answer it (we both laugh).*

(Hazel, P. 1, L. 8-12)

Participants are saying that power is subtle, temporary, slippery, difficult to grasp and challenging. Yet all of them are aware of the power aspect of their role and its impact on them.

Another factor that impacts on how participants engage in supervision is their own philosophy of supervision. This is something that I will now address.

**4.2.3 Subordinate theme (1b): How participants’ philosophy of supervision informs these actions**

One of the trends to emerge in my conversations with participants is the way in which their philosophy of supervision is influenced by their own training as therapists and supervisors. This in turn, informs how they work with their own supervisees and how they expect the supervisees to engage in supervision.
All participants are very firm in their views on how supervision should be conducted, and they are prepared to challenge, or not engage, with supervisees if they feel the supervision is not being carried out in accordance with their philosophy. What does this mean in practice? On the one hand, it could be seen as reassuring that the supervisor has a strong sense of how they work, have a rationale for it, and is clear on the merits of their particular way of working. Conversely, it could also be seen as somewhat intransigent (especially if a supervisee has no choice in the supervisor assigned to them) and lazy if a supervisor is unprepared to consider other ways of working that might challenge their philosophy and firmly held beliefs.

Supervision therefore means different things to different people. A sentiment that (Joan, P. 1, L. 24-26) recognises, “When we say ‘supervision’ it means so many different things to different people”.

The variation among the styles of supervision used is to be applauded and welcomed as a sign of plurality and diversity. While none of the participants explicitly mention theorists in our conversations, it is evident in their philosophy of supervision that they are influenced by particular theorists or schools of thought on supervision.

Many participants talk about creating a learning relationship in supervision: “But, em, the situation is, I suppose you are trying to create a learning relationship from the very beginning” (Colm, P. 3, L. 3-7). This learning element seems to be uppermost in the minds of supervisors when working with trainee therapists or inexperienced ones. They appear to be saying that learning is at the heart of supervision.

Yet, if learning is at the heart of supervision, there is considerable variation between participants in the way they understand how this happens. Interestingly, supervisors who are involved in the design and delivery of training programmes advocate a collegiate and transformative model of supervision, in which the supervisee and the supervisor view learning as a mutual process. This mode of supervision can be bewildering at first for supervisees, who may expect the supervisor to take charge (as in an apprentice or mentor model). As one participant notes: Because you know, almost the, the trainee almost, almost expects you to use it, [positional power]” (Joan, P. 7, L. 7-10).
In spite of this, the collaborative learning nature of supervision emerges as a dominant theme in the conversations with most participants:

> How I view supervision as a collaborative role (R. Right), is that there is learning for both sides, that there be a difference of opinion, that there might be challenging.  

(Irene, P. 2, L. 2-7)

Likewise, Joan (P. 6, L. 35) notes: “It’s a collaborative learning space for me, supervision”.

In advocating this collaborative, transformative, learning philosophy of supervision, proponents also state the power dynamic between supervisor and supervisee cannot be ignored and it needs to be acknowledged and respected:

> ...because, em, I suppose my own experience is sometimes the power, the reality of the power can get lost with the collegial more experienced supervisors. (R. Ok). The power is still there.

(Joan, P. 6, L. 35-38)

All participants acknowledge that the asymmetrical power element in the supervisory relationship is present and cannot be ignored. At the same time, it raises the question of how the supervision can be authentic and open while respecting the rights and responsibilities of the supervisor and the supervisee. It goes back to the core question: What is supervision all about? Or more bluntly, as stated by one participant the question is: “to what extent do you as my supervisee need to pay attention to what I say to you?” (Steve, P. 7, L. 35). Some participants are very clear on how they deal with difficulties in the supervisory relationship. Debbie notes that they might have to revisit the contract (P.8, L.39) to find an answer to this question. She indicates that she would terminate the supervision on the basis that:

> I can’t work with that, (R. Ok) you know. It doesn’t sit comfortably with me. So I’m not being authentic or genuine.

(P. 8, L. 50-51)

This is interesting, as it suggests that the supervisor sees their refusal to work in a certain way with supervisees not primarily as an exercise of their power, but as them not being their true self. They are saying they need to be true to their philosophy of supervision as part of being their authentic self.
The influence of participants’ training and of their philosophy on what they consider to be their authentic self is a recurring element mentioned by all participants. In the case of some participants, they appear to be modelling their style of supervision on how they received supervision themselves earlier in their career, as exemplified by the following quotation:

*It is interesting that you say that from the past. And I’ve trained in a certain way, and you know I am a stickler. Set the record straight. I suppose there is a control point of view there as well, you know. I’m transparent. I’m very transparent and to my detriment.*

(Eileen, P. 5, L. 29-33)

Ultimately, power plays a significant role in philosophies of supervision, whatever they may be. Furthermore, there is a creative tension between discharging the role and responsibilities of a supervisor with the desire to empower the supervisee to grow in a professional capacity. The very notion of empowering supervisees informed by a distinct philosophy is all about managing and getting creative with the concept of power. Holding on to this kernel of wisdom can help the supervisor and the supervisee get the very best out of supervision. Or as Joan (P. 14, L. 1-4) remarks:

*I suppose I play around with the idea of power, especially in supervision, because the power and the empowering are so important in supervision.*

You can’t empower without power. You need power to empower.

Part of the power to empower is ensuring that an appropriate contract is in place between the supervisor and the supervisee in supervision. This provides a safe space within which supervision can take place. The rationale for creating this space as articulated by participants is something that I will now explore.

### 4.2.4 Subordinate theme (1c): Creating a safe space through contracting

The idea of contracting as a means of the supervisor providing a ‘safe space’, a ‘container’ for supervision to take place, is one that is articulated by many of the participants interviewed. The importance of creating this ‘safe space’ is emphasised by many participants. Joan notes (P. 4, L. 41-42): *“Well it keeps everybody safe you know, and I would be very strong on boundaries, you know”*. All of them place great importance on talking with their supervisees at some length in order to get a supervisor-supervisee contract that meets the needs of the supervisor and the
supervisee. The importance of contracting in this regard is highlighted by the following quotation:

So I would place a great emphasis on contracting and on flagging the expectations of the supervisee and the expectations of the supervisor.

(Colm, P. 7, L. 18-21)

This emphasis on contracting, usually at the behest of the supervisor, is seen by many participants as a positive use of their power in order to make the supervision a ‘safe space’. This safe space helps to provide clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the supervisor and the supervisee. This is stressed by Anna (P. 15, L. 40) who notes that “there are no surprises, yeah you know. I don’t pull the rabbit out of the hat”.

The notion that contracting provides containment and a recognisable structure for supervision are strongly articulated by participants. Anna expresses an almost palpable fear that, unless contracting is robust and clear, the supervision would go all over the place:

You know because without some kind of containment…like where you would you go with anything, would anything go? (R. Yeah.) You know what I mean.

(Anna, P. 7, L. 26-28)

The notion of contracting, as providing what Joan (P.3, L.31) calls a “safe, learning space, an adult space” with the aim of empowering supervisees, is emphasised by participants.

What this means is that all participants see contracting as providing containment and a safe space for the supervisee. Although none of the participants see contracting as an exercise of power, it would be surprising if the contract they use with their supervisees did not reflect their own philosophy of supervision and how they view their role as supervisors. Furthermore, none of the participants mentioned amending their contracts of supervision to accommodate supervisee’s philosophies. Contracting is seen as the responsibility of the supervisor. It is almost a statement of philosophy and practice. Participants are saying: this is me, and this is how we are going to work. If there are any difficulties in the way we work, we can refer back to the contract.
Overall, participants appear to view contracting as an essential component of proper supervision. They state that its primary purpose is to create a safe space in which supervision can take place and provide containment for what emerges. Good contracting acknowledges the monitoring and gatekeeping role of the supervisor. Participants’ perceptions of these roles will now be looked at.

4.2.5 Subordinate theme (1d): Monitoring and gatekeeping role of the supervisor

Though all participants interviewed expressed the wish to be seen as willing and wanting to help their supervisees on their professional journey, they all acknowledged the monitoring/gatekeeping role of their position. The monitoring/gatekeeping role of supervisors has been commented on by many observers, and all acknowledge it to be an essential part of the supervisor’s role. Furthermore, they all agree that this monitoring/gatekeeping aspect of their position has an impact on the supervisor, the supervisee, and the supervisory relationship. It is not surprising therefore, that the research participants expressed an awareness of this role and its impact on themselves, their supervisees, and the supervisory relationship.

This gatekeeping role is acknowledged by all participants. Hazel (P. 1, L. 41-42) notes: “We are in a responsible position, we are gatekeepers for the profession when we are doing supervision”. This gatekeeping role involves ensuring that trainees are ready to progress to full membership of a professional body, and that practicing therapists are working within their competencies to an acceptable standard. It is not clear how the supervisor determines what these competencies are and what criteria the supervisor uses to assess these by. Furthermore, it is not clear (unless it is mentioned in contracting) if these requirements are made explicit to the supervisee, or if they have to wait in hope for a positive summative sign-off on their fitness to practice by their supervisor. If the latter is the case, then there is considerable power vested in the role of the supervisor, and the supervisee may be working in the dark, unsure of what the supervisor expects of them and how these expectations are to be measured.

This sign-off power of the supervisor is one that all supervisors are all too aware of, along with the impact it has on them as supervisors and the impact it may be having on their supervisees. So, what do they do about it?
We have a conversation about power and really open it up and say ‘What’s your sense of my power over you in this situation? Do you think I have any? And if you do, what do you think it is? And if you don’t think I have any, well now I better tell you (laughs) (R. There is a sign-off function) Yeah. Let me draw your attention to the power I actually have (R. Ok) and see how that sits with you.

(Steve, P. 11, L. 2-8)

What an open, honest, and refreshing way for a supervisor to acknowledge their positional power with their supervisee. In the above example, the supervisor is not trying to minimise their power. Instead, they are putting it out in the open for discussion with their supervisee so that both understand its presence and impact on the supervisory relationship. By acknowledging its existence and bringing it into the room at an early stage, the supervisee and the supervisor can open up a discussion about the power of the supervisor in supervision. The supervisor is not apologising for or trying to minimise their power. They are drawing the supervisee’s attention to the power they actually have. The supervisor is holding and owning their positional power. At the same time, their style is invitational, as the supervisor is saying that they want to explore, with their supervisee, how their supervisory power sits with the supervisee and to acknowledge its presence, especially in the sign-off role:

I would want to emphasise the positive nature of the power in the relationship. While the other stuff is there and there is the possibility that you could be worried that I’m going to be signing-off on you, so you have to play ball, and you have to be a good boy, (R. Play the game almost). I really want to try and not let that happen.

(Steve, P. 11, L. 10-15)

The final part of this extract is interesting, “I really want to try and not let that happen”, as it means that not all aspects of the positional power of a supervisor sit comfortably with the supervisors themselves. Conversely, some participants do not feel their power “gets in the way” of supervision:

There is a power in it, and yes you have a sign-off on people. But I don’t think, but for me anyway, it doesn’t get in the way. (R. Ok yeah) to put it that way.

(Rob, P. 7, L. 11-14)

Participants are saying that there is a variation in how they view and experience the impact of their power on supervision.
This is why one participant states below that most of their power is gone after they sign-off on their supervisees. This causes a certain amount of frustration on the part of the supervisor, as the following conversational extract illustrates:

    P. I felt I could, that’s as much as I could do, em, but it’s annoying me now as we talk about it. R. I am hearing that you have power but also, almost frustration at the, it’s quite circumscribed in terms of, once the sign–off happens. P. That’s it.

    (Eileen, P. 4, L. 37-40)

Signing-off on supervisees is not therefore associated with the exercise of supervisor power, but in this example, a lessening of supervisor power. This participant is indicating that, as a supervisor, they have no further influence on their supervisee once they are accredited. The comment “I felt I could, that’s as much as I could do,” is intriguing, as it could suggest that the supervisor has no obvious reason not to sign-off on the supervisor, but at the same time, has some unease about signing them off. This discomfort can be where there is a tension between instinct and reality, where a supervisor has an unspecified unease about signing-off on a supervisee, but cannot find a concrete reason for not signing them off:

    You are left with the conflict of, this person is putting in a lot of work, they’ve invested a lot of money, they’re very anxious to get it, and yet I wonder, you know.

    (Fiona, P. 3, L. 1-3)

Participants are saying that the impact on themselves of their sign-off power is significant as evidenced by the above extracts. This power does have a significant impact on the supervisor. Something that is acknowledged by Gemma (P.1, L. 33-34): “Well I suppose a big thing is having to sign-off people for their reaccreditation”.

The monitoring-gatekeeping role, as expressed through the sign-off function of the supervisor, also impacts strongly on the supervisee. Fiona’s comment in this regard is insightful:

    I would say for some around, for some [supervisees] there is a high anxiety around; are you going to sign-off if you are challenging certain things.

    (P.1, L.39-43)

Nonetheless, all participants acknowledge that this is an integral part of their role and look to discharge it in a transparent and fair manner.
I will now turn my attention to the second superordinate theme, participants’ awareness of power in supervision.

4.3.1 Superordinate theme (2): Awareness of power in supervision

One of the principal aims of this research is to explore what awareness supervisors have of their power and how this becomes evident in supervision. I will now examine the superordinate theme (2) and present relevant supporting extracts which highlight the importance of this concept as it emerged from the research.

In a similar vein, I will explore the subordinate themes: (2a) how power is present in supervision, (2b) language as power, (2c) stroking the ego, and (2d) use and misuse of supervisee power. I will present relevant extracts from participants’ comments which will underline the importance of these concepts as they developed in the research.

The fact that power is present in every supervisory relationship is something all participants willingly acknowledged. Because it is taken as a given, it is surprising that it appears not to be explicitly discussed between supervisor and supervisee. Furthermore, a typical response among participants when interviewed about the research topic was that they had not thought much about it until prompted by my invitation-to-take-part letter. As they reflected on the invitation, they started generating an awareness of and reflecting on the significant role that power plays in clinical supervision. More specifically, how it impacts on them as supervisors, their supervisees, and the supervisory relationship. During the interviews, many participants were reflecting on their power for the first time. Inviting participants to take part in the research kicked off a reflective process in them regarding power which some of them had not previously engaged in to any significant degree:

*I am more aware of it obviously now at the end of the interview than I was well we’ll say when I received your letter. I suppose I am particularly conscious of it, both from my own experience of it as a supervisee, for the supervisees who are in training *(R. Yeah.) And I am very conscious of it in the run in to the application for first time accreditation and reaccreditation for my supervisees.*

*(Colm, P. 11, L. 4-10)*

This is a significant statement, as it confirms that taking part in the research caused some participants to critically reflect on the role power plays in supervision and their
relationship with it. This varying awareness among supervisors of their power seems to be dependent on the experience of the supervisees they are working with, as evidenced by the following extracts:

...and this conversation leaves me with a sense that every supervisory relationship has a power element. A number of power elements. And I think I still believe the fact they are different, at what levels they are at.

(Steve, P. 10, L.30-33)

I would say that I’m always aware of it actually. I’m always quite aware of it. I would be, I’d be comfortable with it. I’d be, I suppose, it’s, I’d be thinking about it at the beginning with supervisees.

(Rob, P. 1, L. 10-13)

Participants are saying that they are aware of the presence of power in supervision and the role it plays in the supervisory relationship. This means that its presence cannot be ignored. Interestingly, some participants expressed their awareness of power in terms of responsibility and not power.

Yet, supervisors may not be fully aware of the extent to which they project power. It could be in the layout of the room, its contents, the seating arrangements, or the presence on the walls of the supervisor’s qualifications. This lack of awareness of some aspects of the power inherent in the role of supervisor is noteworthy. How do supervisors become more aware of their power and uncover the unknown regarding this element of their position as supervisors? What are the consequences for the supervisor, the supervisee, and the supervision session itself regarding this lack of awareness? We all have a lack of awareness of many things. How do we become aware of that which we do not know? An unwillingness to be aware of this is cited by Debbie (P. 8, L. 19-24) as the most significant mistake we can make.

It is evident that participants are saying that their awareness of their power is greatest when supervising trainee supervisees, or less experienced therapists:

I suppose, I think maybe I notice it [their power] more, say, with depending on the very sort of new supervisees, that I’d feel, em, I you know, having more of the power thing would come into it a bit more.

(Bernie, P.11, L.20-23)

In a further confirmation of this, Fiona (P.1, L.8-10) acknowledges:
I think probably. I think the power in supervision is more evident if you are working with students or those going for accreditation.

Why might this be so? When working with student and pre-accredited therapists, do supervisors assume the role of expert/mentor mode in a conscious or unconscious way? The classification of supervisees as students and pre-accredited therapists readily confers positional power (or responsibilities) on the supervisor. This means that, in acting out their respective roles, both supervisor and supervisee may in many instances be also acting out the power positions associated with these roles. The power difference is therefore very obvious in a supervisor-student relationship, primarily due to the respective positions, roles, and responsibilities of the participants. Colm (P. 1, L. 17-19) remarks: “So in each of those, I suppose I would be particularly conscious of the power dynamic with a trainee”.

All participants commented on the fact that, in peer supervision, the power differential between the supervisor and supervisee is more equal: “I would see in the peer supervision, it’s much more equal” (Bernie, P. 3, L. 45). Furthermore, participants view peer supervision more as a sharing of the power, and as a consequence, they do not feel the same burden of responsibility they believe is present in non-peer supervision. Yet in all forms of supervision, there can be an element of blindness to some aspects of our own power as supervisors.

A developing theme among participants concerns the amount of power (or responsibility) they can, or should assume as supervisors. This appears to be of greater concern for supervisors when working with students or pre-accredited supervisees than when working with their peers. This is generating uncertainty among supervisors. How much power is enough? What is an appropriate level of power to assume as a supervisor? Or as Bernie wondered: “Maybe I am taking on too much (laughs), too much responsibility of it [power]” (P. 4, L. 21).

Participants have an awareness of their power as supervisors, but there is a variation in the level of awareness depending on the type of supervisee they are working with. Their conversations suggest that it is the status or position of the supervisee, (i.e. student, trainee, inexperienced, or seasoned practitioner), which triggers this awareness of power. Or more accurately, an awareness of the differential power gradient between the supervisor and the supervisee in supervision.
Supervision is a shared space. Within that shared space, power is present. I will now turn my attention to the concept of power in supervision, by referring to extracts from participants which illustrate their understanding of the phenomenon as it occurs in the research.

4.3.2 Subordinate theme (2a): How power is present in supervision (e.g. as energy, a supervisor stance, style of interaction between participants and their supervisees)

That power is present in all relationships and in supervision relationships is recognised by all participants. Furthermore, they all believe that it is essential to acknowledge and discuss the presence of power in the supervisory relationship (and in all relationships) with their supervisees and reflect on how it impacts on them as supervisors, their supervisees, and on the supervision engagement itself. All participants talk about how power manifests in supervision.

Yet, in all cases, they speak about their frustration in trying to describe exactly how this might happen. In many instances, they describe the essences of power, but struggle to give it a precise definition:

*Em, I suppose it’s something, it’s subtle, it’s there and it can be used or abused I suppose. Power in any situation, you know. So that, em, I like power in supervision to me is just holding, like, it’s not, I don’t know how to answer it (we both laugh).*

(Hazel, P. 1, L. 8-12)

This extract illustrates the difficulties many participants have when talking about the role and presence of power in supervision and what it means to them. They remark that power is subtle and it can be used or abused. This insight is followed by the realisation they do not have the words to adequately answer the question. They have an incomplete and underdeveloped understanding of the concept of power.

Despite this underdeveloped understanding of power, a common theme emerging from participants is that power is present in all forms of supervision:

*But in talking about it, I feel there is no, no supervision without power. That it is woven into it like a tapestry in the nuances as well as in the actual, em, pieces that you have to call on.*

(Gemma, P. 9, L. 47-50)
This is a very powerful image and profound statement. Power imbues all aspects of supervision. It is an essential and integral part of it. What it is saying is that participants believe that without power, supervision cannot take place. If this is the case, it is all the more surprising that greater attention is not paid to the role power plays in supervision, by supervisors and supervisees alike. Additionally, the difficulty experienced by many in articulating the influence of power in supervision suggests that it is an area that needs further exploration.

Ciara (P.9, L.22-24) talks about power as “an energy there that, you know, the energy is there. It is not easy to put words. It comes and goes.” This suggests that participants see power as something that is present in the supervisory relationship on an intermittent basis, and that there are times when it is not there; it comes and goes.

These comments reflect how participants view power. It may always be present in supervision, but there are times when they are unaware of it or how its presence is felt. I was struck by Gemma’s remark, (P. 6, L. 50-51):

*It goes without saying, it actually is there. And maybe a look on my face could be power that I am not even aware of.*

This is a good summation of how many participants view power. They are saying it is always present in supervision, but as supervisors we may not always be aware of how the power is present and when it becomes visible it can be a shock:

*When it’s pulled out of the hat it can be a shock, because it got all collegial and nice and suddenly, we are getting real around, there is an asymmetrical relationship here. The power is always in the room.*

(Joan, P. 6, L. 38-41)

This reality can often get lost, and participants may be indicating it is important to acknowledge the existence of power at all times in the supervisory room. It is important that supervisors never lose sight of its presence, as asserting it in supervision can come as quite a shock to supervisees and supervisors alike. There is an onus on the supervisor to manage this power relationship. There may be differential gradients in the power relationship between supervisor and supervisee, but ultimately it is an asymmetrical relationship.

Other participants talk about a power relationship and suggest that power circulates between supervisor and supervisee. Power becomes an entity in itself, something that
is possessed by different actors in a relationship but never owned by either one. This is akin to the Foucauldian concept of power. This concept is articulated very cogently by Gemma (P. 9, L. 50-51) who states that: “it’s an intrinsic piece almost from our biology, that from my own background, rank has to come into everything”. What all participants have in common and what they are saying is that they do recognise that power is everywhere, and they are not insulated from exercising it or from its effects. This is especially true in clinical supervision, where power use by the supervisor is sanctioned by the profession.

Comments by participants seem to suggest that how supervisors understand and become aware of their power is very much an individual matter. Collectively, they all stress the need to have conversations with their supervisees on how it is managed in supervision and what impact it may have on the supervisory process. The need to be vigilant regarding the presence of power is also stressed. A collegiate approach to supervision does not diminish the responsibility that rests primarily with the supervisor to state their own understanding of power and what this means in the supervisory relationship. Power is part of supervision, it cannot be ignored.

As supervision is mainly conducted through the medium of language, I will now explore subordinate theme (2b) where the concept of language as power is an important one as it occurred in the research.

4.3.3 Subordinate theme (2b): Language as power

Language is power. This may seem an obvious statement, but I think in our conversations with our supervisees, the words we use are power laden and symbolic. Even the words ‘supervisor’ and ‘supervisee’ are replete with power as illustrated in the following extract:

So language can be power. And watching and reflecting on my language. Even when I start calling the supervisees by supervisees. Language alerts me there is something here, happening in the power gradient.

(Joan, P. 13, L. 19-22)

This participant talks about their awareness of the power of the language of the person in authority to colonise the supervisee or the person in the position of less authority. This is a remarkable insight, as language can be used to include or exclude.
Joan is drawing our attention to the misuse of power that happens when the supervisor uses their own particular language, or their version of it, and they are “not willing to come into the language of the supervisee” (Joan, P. 12, L. 11).

This aspect of language was not commented on by any other participant. I believe that I exercise power through the spoken language. Language is not neutral. What this means is that we must reflect on and be aware of the language we use, how we use it, and how it might impact on our supervisees. Our language is part of our culture. It shapes and emerges from our culture and represents it. This participant is expressing their concern about an aspect of language use that is unintended and unacknowledged.

Language use and its meaning play a critical part in the formation of power relations. The fact that language can be used to stroke the ego of the supervisor and supervisee is something that emerges from the research. I shall explore how this is present in supervision by using supporting quotations from the participants as evidence.

4.3.4 Subordinate theme (2c): Stroking the ego

As supervisors, we are present in supervision as individuals, despite the ‘supervisor’ title. All that we do, our positional power, how we interact with our supervisees, impacts on us in different ways. We influence and in turn are influenced by our supervisees. When discussing the ego in this context, I am referring to the sense of self I have as a person and as a supervisor.

It would be unwise and foolish not to recognise that our supervisees impact on us at a number of levels and vice versa. Also, our position and the conferring of the title ‘supervisor’ or ‘clinical supervisor’ can and does stroke our ego. The impact of this is aptly captured in the following conversational extract:

_When he [the supervisee] got accredited, he immediately sent a text saying he got accredited and so much thanks to you and I felt Huh! (R. Nice one) I felt my ego was being stroked you know. It’s only now as em, talking about it, I would see that as any sense in a power issue. (R. OK) Am, so but it is._

(Steve, P. 8, L. 38-42)

This extract draws attention to a core issue: to what extent is the way in which a supervisee interacts with their supervisor an exercise of power? Also, to what extent are we, as supervisors, aware of this exercise of power by the supervisee? As
supervisors, do we want our supervisees to flatter us? How does that make us feel? How do we feel if we believe we are not being given the respect and authority we feel is our right as supervisors? Is there something in us which attracts us to the power in the supervisor role? What is that something? What does all of this ego stroking mean?

This in turn raises the question: How much of me, how much of my ego, myself should there be in supervision? Is there a danger, as noted by Steve (P.5, L.1-4): “the danger is ... that it might appeal to one’s grandiosity (both laugh) I don’t think”. What are my motivations for being a supervisor in the first instance? My conversation with Eileen underlined the potential tension that is mentioned by many participants regarding their power. Eileen states:

... am when I have power I like to know that I don’t get off on power. I’m not one of these people that likes to be in charge.

(P. 8, L. 44-46)

In our conversation, she also remarks that “where it comes to working with people, the bossy boots comes out in [her]... [She gets] very intolerant” (P. 4. L. 24-27). Contrasting comments were made by another participant regarding the amount of power they feel they have as a supervisor. They talk about being both “comfortable” and “uncomfortable” with the amount of power they had.

The suggestion here is that there are aspects of the role of supervisor that appeal to supervisors and aspects of the role that are less attractive. There is a degree of ambiguity around the meaning participants attribute to this aspect of their power. Are we as supervisors honest with ourselves and our supervisees in examining our motivation for doing this work? Also, what does power mean to them, and how is this meaning constructed? Regrettably, none of my conversations with participants discussed their motivations for becoming a supervisor in the first place.

Another participant talks about their ego in terms of their presence and influence in the supervision space, as illustrated in the following extract:

But the difference, when I am in the other one, the niggle is that I actually take a breath, and called to pull back, and a, free up the space. That it’s like, there is too much of me in there. I can sense the ego coming in.

(Joan 15.14, P. 2, L. 7-21)
What Joan is suggesting is that her ego wants to dominate, be in control of the supervision session and there is a danger of this happening unless they pull back. Her comment, “there is too much of me in there”, is telling, as it indicates that she is aware of the danger of overwhelming the supervisee with her presence. She needs to be aware of this and take steps to manage it. Joan does not offer an opinion as to whether the ego is a positive or negative influence (though negative could be inferred). Instead, she stresses the importance of attending to it and being aware of how it impacts on the session.

Despite this, Rob (P. 4, L. 40-42) observes:

_ I don’t think I ever had an ego thing. (R. Right) But I think in all my life, like in my previous work, I never went for promotion. Power never was an ego thing for me._

Again, this is interesting, as it suggests this participant is associating their ego state with a desire to dominate and be pleased. It is as if the ego is some form of basic aspect of our essence as humans that need to be nourished. The ego stroking aspect of the role of supervisor is something that has the potential to get in the way of developing a healthy supervisory relationship between supervisor and supervisee.

This means that, somewhere in the supervisory space, there is awareness on the part of the supervisor and the supervisee of the need for the supervisee to please the supervisor, or else it might have negative consequences for the supervisee when it is time for the supervisor to sign-off on the supervisee. In the following extract, Steve is acknowledging this need for the supervisee to please the supervisor. Although it is not explicit, it is real. Steve is aware of it as a supervisor:

_ And they need to please me because if they don’t. Now none of them have said this to me (R. Right) but I have a sense that that’s there. I remember myself when I was a student, being quite, you know, I wasn’t going to, I wasn’t going to rock the boat. I do the best I can and a, struggle to admit to making a hash of things and I worry about judgement, and all of that stuff, you know and how will this go down._

(Steve, P. 1, L. 31-37)

All supervisors know what it is like to be a trainee, a student, and a supervisee. Here is a dilemma that I think Steve is saying needs to be addressed. As a supervisor, I know that I have power over the supervisee. I have the ultimate power not to sign-off on a supervisee if their work is not of a sufficient standard to merit progression. The
supervisee also knows this. How do we use this knowledge? How does it impact on the way we work?

I encourage my supervisees to engage with me in a collaborative style of supervision and to present issues for exploration irrespective of the light in which they may show the supervisee. Yet, I am also aware that this may be a risky step for the supervisee. If they present issues that demonstrate unacceptable practice, then I as their supervisor am forced to take appropriate action. It is far better for them to flatter me, use me as an experienced mentor, thereby highlighting the knowledge gap that may exist between us and putting the supervisor on a pedestal, in a position of power and prominence.

Supervisees are also aware of this, and I am aware that my supervisee knows that I am aware of this. So, do I play it safe and let them flatter my supervisor’s ego? After all, I am aware that my students probably do not want to draw attention to aspects of their counselling that might not reflect favourably on them. They want me, as their supervisor, to sign-off on their fitness to practice or reaccreditation.

Participants are saying that how supervision plays out and the quality of the supervisory relationship is the responsibility of both the supervisor and the supervisee. They have different responsibilities. The supervisor’s responsibilities relate to their gatekeeping function and ethical responsibilities to ensure that the supervisee maintains good practice. The supervisee has an obligation to engage in supervision authentically.

The use and misuse of power by supervisees is a concept that I shall now explore. This subordinate theme emerges strongly from the research, and I shall provide quotations from participants’ comments as evidence to support how they experience and make sense of this.

4.3.5 Subordinate theme (2d): Use and misuse of supervisee power

One of the more intriguing issues that emerged in conversations with participants is their perception of the power of their supervisees and how it is used and misused by the supervisees. Eileen (P. 6, L. 22-23) notes that: “they [the supervisee] can choose which and em, I think the client, or the supervisee, at times can hold most power”. 
Similar sentiments are expressed by Fiona (P.15, L.50) who observes as follows: “I believe the power lies with the supervisee at a certain level, around, do you know”. She adds (p.19, L.2) that “they have lots of power at the end of the day”. Participants tend to see the exercise of power by their supervisees as a negative use of power. Not coming to supervision prepared is mentioned by one participant (Hazel) as an abuse of power by the supervisee. They can withhold information or choose not to bring issues to supervision. Or, they can refuse to do something that was agreed in supervision with their supervisor. As Anna wryly (P.14, L.21-25) remarks:

Well you know something, they can play the game. (R. laughs) They could say, “Yes I will do all of that” and do nothing.

Another kind of supervisee action that some participants viewed as objectionable was when the supervisee denied their own power and handed it to the supervisor. Participants seem to be saying that they are resentful and frustrated by supervisees who behave in this manner, as they believe they have been given power and responsibility that is not theirs in the first instance. The supervisor sign-off power is being interpreted as a form of insurance to practice, and if there is a problem, then the supervisee will hold the supervisor responsible:

Yeah, but that was clearly handing power to me and saying, if it goes belly up, I’ve taken a note of what you have said. Now that’s handing power to me, but reneging on their own power who say, I have signed and said in my, I believe I am competent to work with clients.

(Fiona, P. 8, L. 40-45)

These vignettes suggest that supervisors are aware of potential power misuse by their supervisees. The extent and the frequency of it remains unknown, as some of this power misuse can be difficult to detect. As Steve (P.8, L.39) states: “It is an interesting form of passive aggression that doesn’t look like anything, but it is”.

This is thought-provoking, as it suggests that supervisors are aware when a power that they do not want is being foisted upon them by their supervisees. There is a low-level power struggle going on between the supervisor, who does not want this unwelcome power, and a supervisee, who is reluctant to take responsibility for their own actions. As Debbie (P.14, L.44-45) points out: “the supervisee has to take that responsibility for themselves too, you know”.

These comments appear to be saying that supervisors do not believe that they possess all of the power in the supervisory relationship. They are aware of the power that their supervisees have and how it can be used negatively in supervision. Furthermore, the comments show a marked reluctance on the part of the supervisor to assume powers that they believe are best exercised by their supervisees.

This means the power relationship in supervision is more fluid than had been previously thought (at least from the perspective of the supervisor), and the dynamic is not always about a powerful supervisor exercising untrammelled authority over a compliant and acquiescent supervisee.

What this means in the context of my research question is that power is always impacting on the supervisory relationship. This is reflected in the superordinate theme of the impact of power as an entity in supervision, a theme I will now explore.

4.4.1 Superordinate theme (3): Power as an entity in supervision

How the power dynamics present in supervision play out is something that I shall now explore in detail. The concept of power as an entity, something dynamic and active in the supervisory relationship, is one of the major themes to emerge from the research. In addition, the subordinate themes of: (3a) the power dance in supervision, (3b) supervisor power as something positive, (3c) supervisors’ fears regarding the consequences of their power, (3d) supervisors’ fear of their supervisees, and (3e) how supervisors perceive their power impacts on their supervisees will be explored. Evidence to support these will be presented by way of relevant extracts of comments by participants.

The level of awareness of the influence and presence of power dynamics in supervision varies among participants. Some expressed uncertainty and at times conflicting views on the power dynamic and its impact on them as supervisors. The following vignette is typical of how this is expressed:

I don’t see power, (R. All right) I don’t let power influence. I think. But then I’m kind of controlling power (silence). I don’t know I, I’m finding it hard you know.

(Rob, P. 11, L. 13-15)

Another participant acknowledges its role and is quite comfortable with it:
It doesn’t sit uncomfortably or heavily with me. It’s there, it’s part of the role and I suppose I have been involved in it for quite a long time (R. Ok) so that it, yes, it, it, sits comfortably with me.

(Olive, P. 3, L. 17-23)

These two extracts illustrate the different levels of awareness that participants have of the power dynamic in supervision and how it impacts on them. From the perspective of the supervisee, Steve (P. 1, L. 16-20) notes: “I have a huge amount of power”.

What emerges from the responses of participants is that some of them are aware of the power dynamic in supervision and the amount of power they possess, while others do not appear to have this heightened level of awareness of these power dynamics. Trying to understand the nature of power and its presence in the supervisory space has provoked a lot of reflection and thought among participants, as evidenced by the following comment:

When I work with students I am very conscious. I am very conscious of it. (R. Right.) It’s out there. It’s in the room. And it’s in the room, even if it’s not in me when I walk in the room. … So if I am not aware of it in advance, I become aware of it very quickly because it’s present, it’s right in there.

(Steve, P. 4, L. 1-16)

Is he intimating that his level of awareness of the power dynamics is contingent on the status of the supervisee? Is the power differential more marked when the supervisee is a student or a new and relatively inexperienced supervisee? There is a sign-off power in the role of supervisor, regardless of the status of their supervisees (even in peer supervision). Could he be saying that there is something about the language use, the classification of a supervisee as a student, pre-accredited or other, which generates awareness among them of the power dynamic in supervision and a realisation of the asymmetrical nature of their relationship with their supervisees?

What this means is that supervisors exercise power, and it does impact on them and their supervisees. This creates a dynamic which needs to be acknowledged and managed. An awareness of this dynamic appears to occur when they critically engage with themselves and their supervisees in exploring all aspects of their supervision practice. This making the invisible visible and amenable to scrutiny is something that
is not a regular aspect of some participants’ supervisory practice. The need to reflect before using one’s power is mentioned as a means of ensuring that its use is ethical:

*I feel there is an at-risk issue, for there is something there, as you say, ethical for me, I would have to come into my own power. And to do that I would have to reflect beforehand.*

(Joan, P. 6, L. 7-10)

What does this say about how Joan views the dynamics of power? It could be that she is aware of it. The phrase: “I would have to come into my own power” is unclear in its intent. Does she view power as something that can be exercised and controlled as needed, or is it about exercising power in a more forceful way? Is it putting on a power mask in order to deal with the at-risk issue? What it indicates to me is that Joan is very aware of her positional power. It is also a reminder of the need for all supervisors to be aware of the consequences for themselves, their supervisee, and the supervisory relationship if power is exercised in an obvious manner.

Exercising power involves dealing with something that is always present in all aspects of all relationships, including the supervisory one. In the Foucauldian concept of the word, power is ever present, ever active in the supervisory and all other relationships. It can be temporarily possessed by a particular person in that relationship, but it is never owned. It is ephemeral. It is its own agent (Foucault 1991).

No matter how participants’ view power, all of them comment extensively on the impact that the dynamics of power have on them as supervisors, their supervisees, and the supervisory sessions. The variety of participants’ responses regarding the way in which this power dynamic impacts on them is considerable. For some, this means their power sits comfortably with them. Others are frightened by it and see its use as “having to grasp the nettle” (Anna, P. 7, L. 45-53), and they talk about struggling with it: “it wouldn’t rest easy with me” (Gemma, P.1, L.43). Conversely, other participants talk about being comfortable holding and exercising their supervisory power: “Does it frighten me? (R. Yeah.) No, No. R. Ah, good. So you’re comfortable with the power? (P. Yeah.)” (Bernie, P.12, L. 4-5.). They accept that it is part of what supervision is all about.

The fact that nearly all participants struggle with their power is something that emerges strongly from this research:
Power doesn’t sit well with me at some level and sometimes I feel I’ve got a power that I’m a bit resentful about, because I think some of these should have been addressed already.

(Fiona, P. 3, L. 29-31)

This is a very telling and insightful comment and captures very well how many participants view their power. The resentment appears to come from the fact that, in many cases, supervisors are asked to sign-off on supervisees’ fitness to practice and to answer questions about their supervisees that they do not have the knowledge or authority to do. This is viewed by many supervisors as an imposition of an additional responsibility on them by training institutes or accrediting bodies that they do not want.

This feeling of being pushed into assuming unwanted supervisory power is something that Joan (P.1, L.25-30) expresses:

Sometimes we can be pushed into it, feeling pushed into it by supervisees wanting me to take up that power of the more experienced person.

It is quite an interesting comment, as it reflects the commonly held view of a clinical supervisor, as a more senior and experienced member of the profession, who by virtue of their expertise, is often expected to assume a more expert and powerful role and act out of this role. These supervisor role expectations, whether they come from the supervisor themselves, the supervisee, a training organisation or governing body, have the potential to impact in various ways on different supervisors.

So for this reason, many supervisors feel they are being made accountable for their supervisee’s actions, despite the fact that do not have full knowledge of how their supervisees operate. This is captured in the following extract:

And I think it’s the misunderstanding of the actual professional of the term, that often it’s given a lot more power than most supervisors wanted to have.

(Joan, P. 14, L. 5-9)

This comment reflects the view expressed by many participants, i.e. that there is a lack of understanding of the role of supervisor among people and organisations who do not engage in supervision.

There are other influences that impact on the power of the supervisor. One participant remarks:
For some accrediting bodies, as for some training institutes, the amount of, that’s left to the supervisor to, to sign-off on, is very significant.

(Colm, P. 11, L. 20-24)

This participant, in common with others, might be suggesting that this is an unwanted and onerous power and it has significant consequences for both the supervisor and the supervisee. This sharing of the power with training institutes or governing bodies increases the supervisor’s awareness of the power they have. For some of them, it is not always a pleasant or welcome experience. In fact, one participant states (Joan, P. 5, L. 30): “It is a lonely space for the supervisor who is taking on some responsibility.” Participants seem to be saying that as supervisors, they can only work with the information they are presented with in supervision and on their observations of the supervisee in supervision.

In addition, participants could be inferring that training institutions or governing organisations may have expectations of supervisors that are unreasonable and impossible to fulfil. They are not the only ones involved in the professional development of the supervisees:

*What I feel I am trying to bring into the conversation is ‘you are not the only one’ because the accrediting body is in the room, the training college, the organisation where the trainee is working. Don’t take all that power. You are taking too much power.*

(Joan, P. 5, L. 30-36)

In a similar vein, participants talk about the frightening aspect of the lack of delineation or limits on their powers as supervisors. (Steve, P. 5, L. 44-46): “I struggle a bit with the idea that I’d have the power to actually stop someone in their tracks.” This struggle around this sign-off power appears to take place with all supervisors. Part of the struggle may relate to the human element of the interaction between supervisor and supervisee. Having worked for a period of time with a supervisee, a refusal by a supervisor to sign-off on their supervisee would cause considerable stress to both supervisor and supervisee. One participant captures the impact of this dilemma very well. They state:

*I know I would find it very difficult. Very, very difficult to say, ‘No, in my opinion this person isn’t, shouldn’t go ahead’ (R. Ok) I mean I am. This is a theoretical kinda scenario, because it hasn’t happened. But I think I would, I would struggle. I know I*
would struggle, because I know myself, that I like to please people and all that stuff is there.

(Steve, P. 6, L. 14-18)

The reference to wanting to “please people” and “all that stuff” highlights the tension that is inherent in the role of supervisor and the power dynamics that are at play. All of the participants express a desire to help and empower their supervisees, yet at the same time, all of them acknowledge they have a positional power and responsibility in their role as supervisor. This power is especially evident when supervisors are working with newly qualified supervisees or trainees, where they feel they have an increased responsibility for their fitness to practice (Joan, P. 5, L. 1-3): “It’s my responsibility for their fitness to practice.” This may be a contributing factor in how supervisors view their power and how they perceive it to impact on them.

It is also worth noting that some supervisors express less concern about the impact of their power on them. Bernie (P.11, L. 2) remarks, “It doesn’t go to my head you know.”

What is more, another participant points out that owning their supervisor power and putting down parameters is a positive element of supervision. This is illustrated in the following conversation:

And what is it like to own that power, for yourself? P. That’s ok It allows me to do my work, you know. That allows me to do my work in the best interests of the supervisee who is coming to me. R. So can power be? Can it be positive? P. Yes I suppose, if you look at it that way. R. Because you put down these parameters, can that be a positive use of power? P. Yes it can yeah.

(Irene, P. 8, L. 10-20)

The importance of owning one’s power as a supervisor is also commented on by another participant (Gemma, P. 7, L. 47-49), who talks about the danger of not owning the power that is part of the role of a supervisor. “I think that’s something that might be a danger for me, a lack of owning my power.” This is an interesting contrast to opinions expressed by other participants regarding the impact of their power on them. Another participant, when reflecting on their attempts to share the power in supervision with their supervisee, thought that this attempt might be (Eileen, P. 5, L. 40): “a bit of a cop out” on their part.
What is most definitely present in the room is power. I will now explore how this power presence plays out in the way the supervisor and the supervisee interact with each other. As always, supporting extracts from the transcripts will be used to support any observations made by me.

4.4.2 Subordinate theme (3a): The power dance in supervision

A more consistent reaction to the impact of power is evident when participants talk about their power in terms of responsibility. This is expressed by one participant as follows:

*The word power doesn’t actually sit comfortably at all, and I don’t see it in my lexicon of language at all. I prefer to use the word responsibility em, because that’s what I believe I have.*

(Olive, P. 1, L. 9-12)

Furthermore, another participant talks about the “power and influence” (Bernie, P. 6, L. 11) they have as a supervisor. This power becomes evident if they feel they cannot work with a supervisee, or they wish to terminate the supervisory relationship. Exercising this termination power is seen as part of their responsibility, and its impact on them appears to be neutral. None of the participants interviewed see it as a negative action. Nor did it have a negative impact on them: “*It feels OK*” (Bernie, P. 13, L. 28).

Interestingly, a number of participants did talk about their awareness of taking on too much power or responsibility. They seemed to be very much aware of the power dance that takes place between themselves as supervisor and their supervisees. The movement between supervisee and supervisor, in terms of viewed and actual power and responsibilities, is something that all participants are aware of and acknowledge. But despite the power dynamic, one particular participant believes that “*overall kinda, maybe overall responsibility for the session I feel maybe resides maybe with me*” (Bernie, P. 4, L. 15-22).

Acknowledging the presence of power in the supervisory relationship is something that is touched on by all participants. The comment below is typical:

*But there obviously would be, there is a balance of power (R. Yeah) you know, and I suppose I have become more aware over the years of the responsibility of it, more than I might have been in the earlier days.*
This means that the increased awareness of the power dynamic in supervision between supervisee and supervisor is something that is prompting an increased reflection on their supervisory practice by all supervisors. Some supervisors believe that holding this responsibility of managing the power dynamic is not an onerous one. One participant does not see the exercising of their sign-off function as an exercise of power: “I don’t feel it as power” (Eileen, P. 3, L. 10). All participants acknowledge that there is a power relationship in supervision. This apparent contradiction is difficult to explain. How is this managed? One participant suggests that the answer is to look at these together (Olive, P. 14, L. 27). They talk about power as something ‘with’ rather than ‘over’ the supervisees. Yet it is not clear when other participants are talking about power whether it is ‘with’ or ‘over’ their supervisees. Participants do appear to be saying that they view their power as a form of responsibility to manage and maintain their relationships with their supervisees. This is a responsibility that both supervisor and supervisee have:

There is no right or wrong. You talk about the level of power or responsibility. We both have responsibilities, let’s look at them together. I think that’s important. It is the ‘with’, rather than the ‘over’.

(Olive, P.14, L. 23-29)

Within this belief in a shared responsibility, there is also recognition that in supervision, as commented on by a participant, “there is always a hierarchy” (Gemma, P. 6, L. 9). There seems to be ongoing dialogue and creative tension between supervisor and supervisee in an attempt to lessen the asymmetrical power relationship between them. This is usually instigated by the supervisors, who see it as part of their responsibility to manage the power relationship with their supervisees. A comment by one participant is illustrative of this:

The coffee machine. I found this interesting. When I got the coffee machine my son said oh, ‘does that mean you are going to be giving coffee to clients?’ I said, ‘oh no, that’s for me and supervisees’.

(Eileen, P. 7, L. 18-21)

Why might a supervisor give coffee to a supervisee and not to their clients? This suggests that the supervisor is making a conscious and deliberate effort to have a different relationship dynamic with their supervisees than with their clients. This
emphasis on promoting a more collegiate style of supervision cuts to the heart of the issue. All of the participants want to help their supervisees and be as collegiate as possible. At the same time, they cannot ignore the reality of the power in their position. They also note that, over time, the visible power differential lessens. It moves towards equality, but it never gets there. This means that power as a concept and as influence in supervision can never be ignored.

It is also important that, as supervisors, we own our power and do not give it away. Nor should we downplay its influence in the supervision room:

Well I would hope I would bring it [power] into the room myself, and I usually see that it is being glossed over, ‘Oh that’s ok we don’t need to’, but I try and bring it back again, and try and flag my own understanding of how I would hope the power would be worked out. That doesn’t mean I give my power away. I have my role, I have power and responsibilities, but I am very aware of the battle.

(Joan, P. 7, L. 17-23)

This battle, this dynamic, centres on the supervisor’s desire to share the power with the supervisee: “...you almost, you almost, want the, you want to share the power” (Rob, P. 16, L. 50-51). On the other hand, they are also saying: “...be strong, and hold my power (R. Mmm, right.) in an ethical way” (Rob, P. 2, L.10-12). Yet concern is expressed by some participants if the supervisee is giving power to the supervisor which they, as supervisees, should keep for themselves:

I felt the supervisee was handing me power that at some level, they should take themselves, and then being resentful about it.

(Fiona, P. 8, L. 20-23)

This means that in supervision, both the supervisor and the supervisee have power. It is shared responsibility and shared power. The task of managing the power in all relationships is a shared responsibility, belonging to both supervisor and supervisee. However, due to the significant level of power bestowed on the supervisor by virtue of their position, they have a greater level of responsibility in this matter.

That supervisor power is something positive is an idea expressed by some participants. This is something that I will now turn my attention to. I will use appropriate extracts from the research in support of this.
4.4.3 Subordinate theme (3b): Supervisor power as something positive

In general, participants view their power as something positive which they are aware of. They all acknowledge that it takes work:

It takes a lot of energy (both of us laugh heartily) No, it’s just again, it’s really, yeah. (R. It takes work) It takes work, it really takes energy.

(Rob, P. 11, L. 50-51)

What is interesting here is the energy dimension of power. This means that many participants experience power as a dynamic energy that is very present in supervision. Managing this active power element of supervision is something that participants do proactively.

The benefits of managing their supervisory power, as expressed by Irene in her own words are:

R. And what is it like to own that power for yourself? P. That’s ok. It allows me to do my work, you know. That allows me to do my work in the best interests of the supervisee who is coming to me.

(Irene, P.8, L. 10-20)

Participants view their power as something that enables them to establish and maintain parameters of supervision. In their eyes, this is a positive thing: “there is a kind sense in me, I suppose, if I put it this way; that power can be a positive thing” (Gemma, P.9, L.23). Similar sentiments are expressed by other participants who are keen to emphasise that, in the context of setting and maintaining the parameters in supervision, power is regarded by supervisors as a positive aspect and exercise of their role.

All participants make the point that they are aware of the balance that needs to be struck between using their power to challenge their supervisees in a positive way and the potential to misuse or abuse their power:

Em, yes, I am aware that there is that power, and very conscious of not abusing that power in any way, in terms of that.

(Debbie, P. 11, L. 36-37)

Furthermore, they all are keen to stress that they use it positively: “I use it in a positive way” (Anna, P. 9, L.21). Other participants concur with this view of their
power as supervisors: “As long as you use it in a kinda proper fashion” (Bernie, P. 6, L. 34). Using their power in a positive way is about empowering their supervisees to be better practitioners. Their positional power helps define aspects of their role for themselves and the supervisee.

A feature of all the interviews was the acknowledgement by all participants of an increasing awareness of aspects of their power. In particular, they talked about a shift in perception about their attitude towards power in general and their power as supervisors. The essence of this change is expressed powerfully in the following comment:

_I actually feel more positive about power now (R. Good, good) (and we both laugh heartily). Yeah and I think it’s necessary, because we are dealing with people’s emotions, and we are dealing with vulnerability._

(Hazel, P. 11, L. 40-43)

The consequences for supervisors in having this power are something that I shall now focus upon, as it emerges as an important concept in my research.

### 4.4.4 Subordinate theme (3c): Supervisors’ fears regarding the consequences of their power

Although all participants regard their power as a positive aspect of their role, they did express concerns and fears about some of the consequences of their power. In particular, that they would be held responsible by an outside body for the actions of their supervisees, especially in a legal context. One participant states:

_I said the first thing the judge is going to say is; ‘Where did she train?’ (R. Yeah, and who supervised her?) ‘Where did you train and yeah who supervised you, yeah?’_

(Anna, P. 8, L. 4-7)

This feeling of being held responsible for the supervisee’s actions as a consequence of signing-off on them is prevalent. Another participant asserts that the responsibility for the supervisee’s actions rests with the supervisor:

_In the sense that if something goes wrong, or if something is, that that responsibility does lie with you, to be honest, to tell, that the work is done properly, and safely, safely (R. Yeah) it’s about safety._

(Debbie, P. 12, L. 47-51)
Could this mean that participants are fearful they are taking on too much power and responsibility as supervisors? Are they saying they have concerns about taking power that belongs to the supervisee? In this context, one participant is adamant about the dangers of doing this and remarked that they have to remind themselves: “Don’t take all that power. You are taking too much power” (Joan, P. 15, L. 36).

Moreover, participants may be indicating the need to be cautious about the extent of their role and responsibilities as clinical supervisors. Outside organisations may ask supervisors to take total responsibility for their supervisees’ actions. This raises a very relevant question about the expectations and consequences for supervisors when they sign-off on their supervisees. Also, how does this impact on the supervisor? Participants talked about their fears around signing-off on supervisees’ fitness to practice and what they are responsible for. This fear of signing-off supervisees and being held accountable is a concern that is articulated by all participants. This means that they are cautious about responsibilities and roles they may be given.

Supervisors are saying that once the supervisee is signed-off, they have little control over what the supervisee does. If the supervisee subsequently engages in unethical behaviours, many supervisors feel that, due to them having signed-off on the supervisee’s fitness to practice, they are now in an invidious position.

Not only is there a sense of loneliness about signing-off on their supervisees, but also a palpable fear. What is this fear about? What is it saying about how supervisors feel about signing-off on a form that has been produced by another organisation? In it, the supervisor is being asked to confirm that the supervisee satisfies the organisation’s criteria for academic advancement. It could be argued that signing-off on these documents is disempowering the supervisor; rather than an exercise of power, it forces them to assess their supervisees by reference to a set of criteria developed by an external organisation, criteria which the supervisor may or may not agree with. Furthermore, these criteria are usually designed to meet the training needs of the organisation that issues them and not the needs of the supervisee. This supervisor fear of signing-off and its consequences for the supervisor is articulated cogently in the following extract:

But very often in that moment, the fear is palpable in the room for the supervisor, feeling oh, it’s my signature. And I’d say, it’s your signature on the report that has come in from
These concerns raise a fundamental question about the purpose and role of supervision. All of the organisations and people involved in the professional development of the supervisee have specific needs. Though these often overlap, it is the signature of the supervisor that is often viewed as evidence that the supervisee has met all of them. Participants are saying that this is putting unreasonable demands and expectations on the supervisor. It is also subjecting some supervisors to elevated stress levels regarding the sign-off function of their role.

Despite the apparent significant power vested in the role of supervisors, some supervisors are saying they are fearful of their supervisees. This is something that I will now turn my attention to. Evidence to support this will be taken from selected relevant extracts from conversations with participants.

4.4.5 Subordinate theme (3d): Supervisors’ fears of their supervisees

Although supervisors have expressed fears regarding the consequences of their powers, some participants also talk about the fear they feel of their supervisees. One (Debbie, P. 9, L. 43-48) notes that “there is an edge to her. So there is a part of me that’s a little bit afraid of her (laughs)”. Another participant (Ciara, P. 9, L. 40-41) feels she was being abused by her supervisee:

Another occasion where I had someone who didn’t, who abused the supervision. R. Ok, yeah. The supervisee, the supervisee? You felt you were being abused? P. Yeah I did.

The nature of this abuse is difficult to determine, but in the above extract it centres on a supervisee who does not engage in supervision in a meaningful way and causes the supervisor to get upset. The response to this by one supervisor was to dismiss the supervisee: “P. ... and I was actually quite upset and ... I just said off with you, you are wasting my time” (Eileen, P. 4, L. 12-14). The consequences of this are not explored in any great detail by the participants. However, one participant (Hazel) talks about being guarded for the remainder of the supervisory relationship, and how this put her at a disadvantage in her relationship with the supervisee.

McMahon and Errity (2014, p.264) point out that “effective supervision is now understood to be less didactic and more experiential” and has as its focus the
supervisee’s process. This understanding of supervision limits the potential for the supervisor to feel fearful of their supervisees, as it focuses on the supervisee’s process rather than the expert-power role of the supervisor.

Another finding that emerged as an important aspect of the research is how supervisors perceive their power to impact on their supervisees. I will now explore this subordinate theme as it is stated by participants in the research.

4.4.6 Subordinate theme (3e): How supervisors perceive their power to impact on their supervisees

Asking participants how they think their power impacts on their supervisees elicited a number of responses. One participant states:

*I think they [supervisees] would have an awareness of power, yeah. There, as I say, there. I suppose we have power in every situation.*

(Hazel, P. 8, L.12-14)

Another participant is up-front regarding this issue and declares that they would ask their supervisees directly:

*What’s your sense of my power over you in this situation? Do you think I have any? And if you do, what do you think it is?’ And if you don’t think I have any, well now I’d better tell you (laughs) (R. There is a sign-off function Yeah. Let me draw your attention to the power I actually have (R. Ok) and see how that sits with you.*

(Steve, P. 11, L. 7-8)

This upfront approach works well with supervisees according to this participant. By addressing the power issue in this manner, the supervisor is saying that discussing power is something that needs to take place with the supervisee. I think it is refreshing and liberating, both for the supervisor and the supervisee, that this approach is taken. Why not be upfront and explicit about an aspect of supervision (power) that permeates the supervisor-supervisee relationship? Furthermore, by naming it (i.e. supervisor power) in such a way, an opportunity is presented to the supervisor and supervisee to engage in discussions about how power informs their supervisory relationship and how it is best managed in supervision.

Participants are saying that there is a variation in how their power impacts on their supervisees, as is evident in the responses of participants. One participant, when asked about how they feel their power impacts on their supervisee replied: “I don’t
think it impacts very often (R. Right.). It’s when something comes up that’s serious” (Hazel, P. 2, L. 5-7). This suggests that this participant views their power as something that is intermittent and passive in the supervisory relationship and only comes into play when dealing with serious issues. Power becomes visible and is used when dealing with something serious, but otherwise, this participant could be suggesting that it is not present. Or perhaps, they are not consciously aware of its presence in supervision.

On the other hand, many participants point out that they believe that their power impacts significantly on their supervisee, if the supervisee is a trainee therapist:

*I would feel that the trainee, the person who is attending or taking part in a training institute or somebody who is, I would feel that they would be very conscious of the power of the supervisor.*

(Colm, P. 4, L. 13-16)

This reflects the views expressed by many participants, who think that new or inexperienced supervisees would be more aware of the power of the supervisor than would more experienced therapists. This may be due in part to the fact that the supervisor may have considerably more experience of practice and supervision than their supervisee. This means that the enhanced supervisor level of experience and knowledge accentuates the different stages along the professional journey that supervisor and supervisee are at. This, in turn, raises the level of awareness in both the supervisor and the supervisee of the power of the supervisor.

Another participant points out that not acting out the role of a supervisor in the way their supervisees expect can confuse supervisees. Why might the supervisee be confused? As Joan (P.7, L.7-10) points out:

*You know, almost the, the trainee almost, almost expects you to use it [your power as a supervisor], and you may use it infrequently.*

Awareness among participants regarding the impact of their power on their supervisees varies. All of them point out that they are sensitive to their positional power and how it impacts on their supervisees. Supervisors indicated that this impact heightens as supervisees approach accreditation and is illustrated by the following comments:
As they approach accreditation, and really at that situation, recognising that the accrediting authority are very much dependent, or taking your word, or are dependent on your, em, assessment of the candidate as to whether or not to get accreditation. And that varies from one accrediting body to another, the level of that. But I am certainly conscious of it there. I am conscious of it now from the point of view of being a supervisor.

(Colm, P. 1, L. 23-27)

This participant is saying what many other participants talk about regarding their sign-off power and what it means to them. They are aware of how dependent their supervisees and their training institutions (if relevant) are on using their assessment of their supervisee as a critical document in determining whether or not they get accredited (or reaccredited) or continue with their training.

It is reassuring that participants expressed an awareness of the need not to overpower their supervisees (Joan) and to create a culture in supervision where their supervisees do not feel inhibited (Colm).

Generally, participants appear to be saying that their power impacts on their supervisees to varying degrees depending on what aspect of the supervisory relationship is in play. Signing-off or not signing-off on supervisees does heighten both supervisor and supervisee awareness of the power contained in this act and the impact it will have on the subsequent career development of the supervisee.

It is important to recognise that supervision does not take place in isolation. There are various influences at play in the supervision room. Supervisor power is shared with a number of other entities. These entities and the influence they exert in the supervisory space have been noted and commented on by the participants. I will now examine these influences and with supporting text extracts and illustrate how these contribute to generating one superordinate theme (sharing power in supervision) and a number of subordinate themes.

4.5.1 Superordinate theme (4): Sharing power in supervision

The fact that supervision takes place between a supervisor and a supervisee should not blind us to the fact that there are many other influences at play in the supervisory space. Not only is supervision a shared space between the supervisee and the supervisor, many more influences compete for recognition in this space. It is also a
space ripe for parallel processes to occur. In this section, I will explore the overarching theme of sharing power in supervision and the other influences present in the supervision meeting, as described by the participants. In addition, a number of subordinate themes will also be explored. They are: (4a) the influence of governing bodies, (4b) the influence of the academic establishment, (4c) gender issues in supervision and (4d) the cultural context of supervision.

At the outset, I mentioned that supervision does not take place in isolation and various influences are present in the supervision room. These include governing bodies, training institutions and mandatory requirements, to name but a few. As one participant (Colm, P. 11, L. 26-30) points out: “You feel you are sharing it [power] with them [accrediting bodies], but for, sometimes, pretty all of it is left to the supervisor.” Another participant (Joan, P.10, L.18) notes: “…the reporting catches us,” when talking about the influence of training organisations in supervision.

How participants’ view these influences is revealing. One (Joan, P.5, L.12) is very clear that the “third presence in the room, it is usually about an accrediting body.” Participants’ responses to this appear to vary, from accepting this influence as a matter of fact, to viewing the influence of governing bodies as something that contaminates the supervisory relationship and they talk about the need (Rob, P. 3, L. 35): “…to be very careful of that contamination.” Could it be that some participants’ view supervision as a space uncontaminated by outside influences, in which supervisor and supervisee can work? If this is the case, then I think it is a misguided and incomplete view of what supervision is. Whatever the essence of supervision is, it is not something that is undertaken in isolation from practice and it is undoubtedly influenced by the environment in which it operates.

The reporting requirement, whether to training institutions, governing bodies, or other external agencies, does make supervision (Hazel) “tough work.” Participants are very much aware of the influences on them in supervision and the expectations these generate. These responsibilities are to several organisations and bodies. The range of responsibilities is captured very well by the following comments:

*I have a responsibility in general, in the role [supervisor] that I am doing, obviously in relation to the accrediting body that I am with, em, and in relation to the supervisee, in relation to the client, em clients, in relation to perhaps the organisation they are working with, or the training body that they are with, where I have a responsibility, you know, to,
to, obviously, assess a certain amount of the external supervision, which is really quite little, but, that’s there too. So that’s you know. And I suppose my responsibility to myself as well. Em you know in what I am doing.

(Olive, P. 1, L. 13-23)

How did they get to acquire these responsibilities? What do these responsibilities mean to them? Do responsibilities to different entities (e.g. accrediting bodies, training institutions) mean different things to different participants?

Regarding accreditation, participants are aware of the weight that accrediting bodies place on their report of their supervisees. These are differences in terms of what different accrediting bodies expect in a report from a supervisor. As one participant notes:

I suppose I am aware of it, and I suppose sometimes, some of the accrediting bodies place a greater responsibility on to the shoulder of the supervisor for whether or not the supervisee gets accreditation (R. Yeah) So I am particularly conscious of it there, and sometimes we’ll say that can be a little bit onerous.

(Colm, P.11, L. 13-17)

The influence of training institutions in supervision and the reporting obligations they place on supervisors is something that exercised the minds of all participants. Some participants refuse to work with particular training institutions, whereas others are resentful of what they view as the extensive reporting obligations they feel are being imposed on them by some training institutions.

What might be an issue here is the relationships between the supervisor, the supervisee and the training organisation. The supervisor has a dual relationship, one with the supervisee and another one with the training institution. Each of these relationships has its own set of characteristics, expectations and obligations, and at times they can be in conflict, as noted by one participant (Olive, P. 11, L. 33-36): “I am not the only supervisor, but I supervise, just it’s really on behalf of the organisation and they know that it’s a triangular situation.”

Managing these relationships can create a certain amount of tension within the supervisor; especially, if they feel they are taking on a responsibility they regard as onerous, or bringing them into areas that are not within their competencies or responsibilities as a supervisor, as illustrated by this comment:
I have got to beware then that with the trainees, I have got to write something you know, after they have done 50 hours. So I need to be just very careful that, that, that, I am getting into those areas that I know I will need to be able to do, rather than leaving some of them out.

(Olive, P. 5, L. 21-25)

Being asked to sign–off on supervisees’ competences that they are not responsible for, can put supervisors in a dilemma. What are they signing-off on and what are they not signing-off on? Supervisors need to be aware of how training organisations and other external bodies treat their signing-off on supervisees. What does this mean to participants? One sees these developments as a battle between the intellectuals and others, who are trying not to lose what they see as the essence of supervision. Their remark (Olive, P.13, L.11-13): “My fear is the intellectuals may win. The way everyone wants to be accredited.” misses a significant point. The drive to offer courses at primary degree level and beyond in counselling (and supervision) is a welcome development. In the counselling profession, it is vital that practitioners have attained measurable and recognised competencies in a number of areas. The requirement to have a degree level qualification to become accredited with many counselling organisations is welcome.

What I think is important is that these courses give sufficient attention to the personal development of students. This should be an integral part of any programme and not an optional add-on. Thankfully, more programmes in counselling and psychotherapy in Ireland are recognising the need to pay attention to the holistic development of the student, and insist that they undergo personal therapy and receive clinical supervision from a competent, accredited practitioner.

As welcome as this is, it places additional responsibilities on both the student’s therapist and supervisor. The supervisor is often presented with a detailed list of questions that the particular training institution wishes them to sign-off on. Seldom has the supervisor been involved in the construction of these questions. Their primary aim is often to meet the needs of the training institution and they may not be suitable for providing a framework for assessing supervisees. There is a three-way contract among supervisee, supervisor and training institution. Each has different goals. What is clear, is that the supervisor does not have unlimited power. They are in a relationship with their supervisee, a training institution (if the supervisee is a
student) and an accrediting body, if their supervisor is seeking accreditation for the first time or reaccreditation as a counsellor.

Less ambiguity and tension is expressed by participants regarding their duty to report issues under child protection legislation. For example:

*It’s not about using power but, at the end of the day, if there is a reporting issue there is a reporting issue. Yeah, absolutely, yeah.*

(Hazel, P. 1, L. 35-37)

In this instance, the participant is adamant and clear about their responsibility to report to the relevant authorities any child protection issues. And although all participants are clear in their duty to report child protection issues, a concern is expressed about the sometimes rigid reporting requirements which preclude room for discussion.

This is why many participants seem to struggle to make sense of some of the reporting requirements that training and accrediting bodies ask of them in their role as supervisors. They believe that should anything be found to be problematic about any aspect of their supervisees practice, then the spotlight will be put on them and the role they play in the professional development of their supervisees. On the other hand, participants seem to indicate they approach mandatory reporting of child protection issues as part of their responsibilities as supervisors and it is not negotiable with their supervisees. The supervision room is a crowded place!

Something that all participants show an awareness of, as evidenced by the transcripts, is the power of governing bodies. I will now explore this concept as identified by participants. As usual, appropriate supporting extracts from participant transcripts will be used to demonstrate this.

**4.5.2 Subordinate theme (4a): Influence of governing bodies**

Governing bodies play a significant role in the manner in which both therapy and supervision are conducted in Ireland. They are prescriptive in stating the training and practice requirements for therapists and supervisors and have developed a range of policies and protocols to deal with many aspects of training, therapy and supervision.

In spite of this, some participants expressed concerns regarding the lack of clarity they experience, when raising concerns about supervisees with their governing body.
They also voiced some trepidation, concerning the type of response they might receive from the governing body, for raising these concerns. How the governing body might use their power to deal with issues and subsequently possibly undermine the supervisor’s power, concerns them. As one participant remarks (Bernie, P. 14, L. 33-35):

> It’s funny you know. It’s maybe feeling that the association has power, you know. You, you, don’t know how they are going to use their power.

It’s as if participants believe that their actions will be viewed with suspicion by the governing body.

What does this mean? Does this mean that participants find involving their governing body in issues distasteful and unhelpful? Participants talk about believing that they and their supervision practice would be put under the spotlight, thereby drawing unwanted attention to themselves. They appear to be fearful of any involvement with their governing body, in case it shows them in a bad light as supervisors. The following extract illustrates this point:

> R. So would, would, you be worried, oh I may be in the spotlight? P. Yeah I think I would.
> R. Would that be your practice you, or that, did you abuse your power, misuse it? P. No, no, or that, not that you would misuse your power, but maybe your practice you, you know, you know, they might say well you know, the supervisee might be saying one thing you know, and that you be, you’re drawing attention to yourself.

(Bernie, P. 2, L.13-22)

This suggests that supervisors believe their governing body has significant power over them and they can use it in an unspecified, though significant manner, which might impact negatively on them as supervisors.

Though the influence of governing bodies in supervision is strong, that wielded by the academic establishment, especially in relation to student or trainee therapists who are in supervision, is also present in supervision. I will now explore these influences in some detail in the next section.

4.5.3 Subordinate theme (4b): Influence of the academic establishment

The concern about meeting academic requirements for therapists and supervisors raises another issue for one participant. It is alluded to in conversations with others, namely, what they see as the intellectualisation and credentialization of therapy.
Participants speak of supervisees who are academically competent and believe this in itself qualifies them to be therapists. The emphasis on academic achievement is often at the expense of the personal development of the supervisee or trainee therapist. As one participant (Rob, P.15, L. 17-20) said:

*There is a whole other thing going on around the academic end of it. And the academics ... they’re not interested in personal therapy, or anything to do with it.*

Some participants talk about this emphasis on the academic over the personal development aspects of counsellor (and supervisor) training, as a battle between the head (the intellectuals) and the heart (the instinctual). While this comparison may be going to extremes to make a point, it does pose questions about what makes a good therapist (and supervisor), and the role academic competencies and personal attributes play in this. Currently (2017) in Ireland, the minimum academic qualification to practice as an accredited therapist has moved from diploma to honours primary degree, among many accrediting organisations. As a consequence, an increasing amount of time is spent on the academic advancement of the student. The requirements to engage in personal therapy have largely remained the same. There is awareness among some practitioners of the potential gain in having enhanced academic qualifications. In some instances, supervisees are keen to establish a comparison between their qualifications and those of their supervisor, as this comment by a participant illustrates:

*Yes, and I mean he was still, it was always a case of, what are your qualifications? What are my qualifications? A little bit of that. It’s there, it’s there, obviously in the profession.*

(Olive, P. 9, L. 39-41)

The interplay between valuing academic qualifications and experience is an ongoing one. Different training institutions and governing organisations show considerable variation in the emphasis they place on the mix between academic competencies and the personal and professional development of the therapist and supervisor. Yet, I get a sense that some participants are uneasy about the emphasis on the academic development of supervisees, which they believe is at the expense of the personal and professional development of their supervisees as persons. Furthermore, if the supervisor’s academic qualifications are at a lower level than their supervisees, how does this impact on the relationship between supervisor and supervisee?
What some participants appear to be suggesting is that their supervisee views their academic qualifications as giving them more power in the supervisory relationship. As one participant (Olive, P.7, L. 19-20) notes:

They [supervisees] tend to build on them [academic qualifications], they tend to, maybe, they are the things that give them the power in that instance.

Perhaps supervisees with enhanced and significant academic qualifications believe they have an entitlement to more power in the supervisory relationship than might be the case if they had lesser qualifications. How does this impact on the supervisor? It means that they are somewhat wary about the stress on the academic and its consequences for them as practitioners. They lament the fact that the elders are forgotten about and as one participant remarks:

I think the elders are kinda forgotten fairly fast, because the young ones are all doing their courses, and they all have the power, and it’s like they are pushing out a lot of, of the elders and, and they are not listening.

(Rob, P. 14, L.160-19)

Participants appear to be saying that new entrants to the profession believe that qualifications trump experience, and it means that they no longer feel relevant or wanted by their more qualified younger colleagues.

It is hard not to hear the hurt and sadness in this statement. The “young ones” are using their academic power to push out the elders and have no regard for the experience and wisdom that is being lost. The participant could be referring to the fact that newly qualified therapists (and supervisors) may have a higher level of qualification than their supervisor. They view these higher qualifications as conferring on them the right to push out lesser qualified therapists and supervisors, in order that they advance in their careers as therapists and supervisors. This belief appears to irritate this participant, (Rob, P. 15, L. 36-38):

They [old people] all have sound minds and you know that they are not all in a nursing home by the time they get to 70.

On a separate though related topic, all participants talk about their unease in having to mark or grade their student supervisees. This aspect of their power does not appear to sit very well with them, though they acknowledge that it is required of them as supervisors by some training institutions. Also, there is a sense that this marking
somehow interferes with supervision. This is adroitly commented on by one participant who states:

For the two years they [training institutions] didn’t actually, though it was better because it was just about the supervision relationship and it wasn’t about the academics. There is that bit of I suppose, competition, or whatever it is. I am not comfortable with it anyway.

(Hazel, P. 5, L. 31-41)

The suggestion here is that supervision is better when it does not involve evaluation of the supervisee by the supervisor. It is not clear from the extract what “better” supervision means in practice. It might be inferred it has something to do with the absence of the supervisor evaluating the supervisee to ensure they met academic criteria. However, supervision without evaluation is not supervision.

Having to report to a training institution somehow interferes with the supervisory relationship. Also, as mentioned, this participant is not comfortable with this aspect of their supervisory role. This grading and marking power is seen by some supervisors as something that contaminates the essence of the supervisory relationship. It is something that is not welcome, though it does mean that if they work with academic institutions it is part of their role.

The influence of gender in clinical supervision is commented on by a number of participants. How this is understood by participants will now be explored. Extracts from the interviews will be used to support their statements.

4.5.4 Subordinate theme (4c): Gender issues in supervision

A less obvious influence in the supervisory relationship is the role gender plays in clinical supervision. The comment that sparked this observation was made by one male participant:

Actually one of the things I find most difficult is when I have a supervisee who is ultra-nice, and ultra-yes, and agrees with everything and nothing changes. (R. Ok, almost too smooth.) Yes and you say this and you say that and a month later, the same thing nothing has changed. Now I find that quite difficult and when you try to challenge it at all, ‘but I did hear what you said I did’. actually females more than males. I don’t want to... I find men much more... You rarely get that with men. I say, ‘listen you are acting, get off the [cross]’. But some, younger, maybe not that mature, are wanting to please; they will say whatever they think you want to hear.
This is quite a significant comment, as it suggests that there are gender power issues in clinical supervision in need of further research. There also seems to be an element of frustration on the part of the male supervisor in the above comments. Is he intimating that female supervisees do this so that he will be more likely to sign-off on their supervision? On the other hand, is he suggesting that male supervisees appear to respond more positively to being challenged?

The suggestion that female supervisees want to please their supervisor, whereas male supervisees do not behave in this manner is therefore intriguing. It is hard to extrapolate anything from the comments of one participant, but his comments draw attention to some of the issues that can emerge between supervisors and supervisees of different gender identification. Given that the supervisor-supervisee relationship is infused with power, the potential for this to happen is high:

And again, I suppose that’s about power. It made me aware of what he was doing with his client was what I was also doing. Was there counter transference again going on. (R. Ok, yeah). So the power around that, making me aware of my behaviour. What did I do in the way I presented that to him?

Gender tension is mentioned by some of the female research participants when talking about their relationship with male supervisees. The comment by Debbie (P. 10, L. 39-43) reflects this tension:

I felt he was actually, there were a few others, he was quite rude, em but I was also annoyed with my reaction which was immediately to be defensive.

Yet another female supervisor, when commenting on the reaction of her male supervisee to a challenge made by her observes:

Quite interestingly he took it, which I was surprised at, (R. Ok) because I think, for him power is an issue, you know.

It is difficult to draw any definitive interpretation as to what the participant exactly means by her response. However, her expression of being surprised at his response is noteworthy. This suggests that there is a gender element to supervision, and it is something that may need to be acknowledged in a specific way in supervision.
Furthermore, the extracts highlight the awareness that participants have of this issue and the way in which they deal with it. The role gender plays in influencing how one participant views supervision is exemplified by the following comment:

*Early on in my career, even as a counsellor I was very much into the fixing, the male thing that we have to fix this.*

(Rob, P.1, L.30-32):

What is widespread and acknowledged by everyone is that cultural influences are present in supervision. These will now be considered, with the aim of understanding the meaning that participants give to them, supported by using relevant extracts from the interviews with participants.

### 4.5.5 Subordinate theme (4d): Cultural context of supervision

All supervision is multicultural. Creaner et al. assert:

> Supervisors need to be knowledgeable about the unique aspects of their own country and culture as they pertain to clinical supervision and therapist training.

(Creaner et al. 2015, p.261)

Considerable research on the context in which supervision takes place and the impact this has on the supervision experience, has been undertaken by Creaner who points out:

> The growing awareness of cultural factors, diversity and multicultural competencies in professional psychology, counselling and psychotherapy is also reflected in the supervision literature.

(Creaner 2014, p.327)

It is vital that supervisors possess critical cultural awareness, so that they do not act in a manner that is culturally insensitive to supervisees. In this context, there is the potential for the supervisor to misuse their positional power within the supervisory relationship. As one participant notes:

*People of different cultures, people of different worldviews, and the danger is that if a supervisor isn’t aware of where they are coming from themselves, that there could be a misuse of power within the supervisory dynamic.*

(Colm, P. 6, L. 34-37)
In a multicultural Ireland, the need for supervisors to engage in cultural critical self-reflection is evident. Tried and tested ways of working with supervisees, infused with Eurocentric cultural norms, are no longer appropriate, and new ways which respect the cultures of the supervisee and supervisor need to be developed. Our supervisees’ cultural mores may be quite distinct from ours, and this difference is welcome. It needs to be acknowledged and explored in supervision so that there is a mutual awareness between supervisor and supervisee on how their respective roles are viewed and impact on each other. If this does not happen, there is a danger, as identified by one participant, of the supervisee feeling that they have been “colonised”. Although discussing this in terms of cross-professional supervision, it is equally applicable to clinical supervision. They note:

_That maybe one profession or two professions were taking the lead in supervision, but imposing what suited their profession and trying to plonk it into another profession ... and then I discovered it in other research in New Zealand. It was supervisees feeling they were colonised. (R. Wow). And that’s my mantra now. Cross professional supervisors don’t colonise another profession._

(Joan, P. 11, L. 28-41)

As supervisors, we need to be aware of our potential to colonise our supervisees and the detrimental consequence such colonisation has on the supervisory relationship. Wanting the supervisee to come into my culture, while not acknowledging their culture, is a form of cultural domination that all supervisors should be aware of and take steps to minimise. Developing an awareness of this aspect of the supervisory relationship is something that all supervisors need to do. Creaner (2014, p.327) echoes previous comments by Chung et al. (2001) that “all aspects of supervision … may be informed by cultural frames of reference”. Similar sentiments are expressed by Falender, Shafranske and Ofek (2014, p.397), who declare that “multicultural and diversity competence is an ethical imperative in clinical care and also in supervision”. Likewise, Philips et al. (2017, p.189) emphasise the importance “of explicitly addressing the diverse identities of supervisors and supervisees”. All supervision is multicultural.

It is hardly surprising that the results of this research have generated significant areas for debate and these will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.
Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore how supervisor power influences clinical supervision from the perspective of the supervisor. I wanted to gain an in-depth understanding of participants’ understanding and making sense of their positional power, how it impacted on them, their supervisees, and on the supervision process itself. This was carried out by using semi-structured interviews to obtain data and using IPA conventions to analyse and interpret the data.

As a result of conducting this analysis, four superordinate themes and seventeen subordinate themes emerged from participants’ transcripts. In this section, I discuss how these themes relate to the extant literature and the issues that arise from this research. I also focus on the significance, import, and meaning for supervision practice and theory of these findings. Additionally, I present a critical evaluation of the methodology used in the research. This is followed by a discussion of the clinical implications of the findings and recommendations for further investigation. I conclude with my final reflections on the study.

The four superordinate themes are:

(1) The impact of power;
(2) Awareness of power in supervision;
(3) Power as an entity in supervision;
(4) Sharing power in supervision.

I am aware from my research of the difficulties in trying to allocate the findings into discrete categories. Talk about power imbued all aspects of my conversations with participants. In attempting to have a discussion about a particular aspect of power, I am acutely aware that power is everywhere, all-embracing, and there is no escaping from it. Therefore, trying to describe it and interpret participants making sense of it is always an incomplete task. It is an ongoing evolving exercise.

5.2.1 Impact of power

One of the most interesting facts to emerge from this research is the extent to which participants’ personal positioning impacts their philosophy of supervision, the way
they conduct supervision, and understand their power. All of them acknowledge its presence in supervision and all note its asymmetrical nature.

In addition, many participants describe their power as a responsibility. This responsibility has a number of aspects, among them, creating a safe space for supervision through contracting, and discharging the monitoring and gatekeeping role of the supervisor in an ethical manner. This is significant, as it suggests by understanding their power in terms of responsibilities to maintain professional standards in all aspect of supervision, participants believe they are being responsible supervisors. Part of that responsibility is the exercising of power if needed. In describing their power as responsibility, supervisors may be ignorant of the fact that, in reality, they are exercising expert power (French and Raven, 1959). They may be unwitting agents in shaping perceptions of reality and expectations of their supervisees, as outlined in Lukes’s (1974, 2005) third dimension of power. Foucault’s contention that power is everywhere challenges the notion that supervisors knowingly and deliberately exercise power at different times during supervision. This suggests that there are times in supervision when supervisors believe power is not being exercised. This is something that Foucault maintains is impossible due to the ‘always on’ nature of power. Gilbert (2001) talks about a function of supervision to produce particular types of supervisee self-regulating identities. This has shades of the concept of governmentality that Foucault (1970) talks about.

Consequently, when participants talk about having responsibility rather than power, they are softening the ever-present power presence in supervision. Carrying responsibility as a supervisor also means carrying power. It is unsettling that, although participants demonstrate a heightened sense of awareness of their responsibilities as supervisors, they do not apply similar considerations to the notion of power.

The implications for the training of supervisors and the practice of supervision are significant. All participants indicated that they had not given much thought to their power until they received my request to take part in this research. Power, in all its manifestations, needs to be named and acknowledged as an ongoing presence in supervision in the literature on supervision. Its impact on the supervisory process needs to be recognised, and its particular impact on the supervisor needs to be
addressed. Mangione et al. (2011) remind us that the issue of power in supervision needs to be named. Interestingly, the definitions of supervision provided by many reputable authors (e.g. Bernard and Goodyear 2004, 2009, 2014; Calvert et al. 2016; Carroll 1995, 1996, 2009, 2010; Ellis 2010; Gaete and Ness 2015; Guiffrida 2015; Hawkins and Shohet 2006, 2012; Holloway 1992, 1995; Inskipp and Proctor 1993, 1995; Knox 2015; Mangione et al. 2011; Page and Wosket 1994, 2001, 2014; and Timm 2015) do not explicitly refer to power in their definitions. Holloway (1995) talks about types of power inherent in the role of supervisor (expert, evaluative, expert and reward), but crucially, does not critique the concept of power itself. It is not surprising therefore, that power in supervision is subsumed into the notion of responsibility, thereby dimming supervisors’ awareness of its presence in supervision and its impact on them as supervisors. This is perplexing and unexpected and needs to be addressed by amending supervisor training to deal with it. It also exposes the gaps in existing theories of supervision. This, in turn, demonstrates the need to develop robust theories of clinical supervision which explicitly state and deal with this aspect of supervision and supervisor training.

What also emerges from the research is the strong influence that the personal positioning of individual participants has on their philosophy of supervision. The range of roles that participants act out as supervisors includes that of mentor and transformative educator. Shohet (2006) and Carroll (1995, 1996, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2014) emphasise the educative and transformative aspects of collaborative supervision. Mangione et al. express similar sentiments:

> Our supervisory vision is a collaborative one of two authentic, open people working together to enhance the learning and growth of the supervisee, with the added awareness that the supervisor can also grow and change from the experience.

(Mangione et al. 2011, p.161)

These respective ways of working as supervisors are also reflected in the variety of definitions of supervision that are available. Gaete and Ness’s (2015) definition of supervision and that offered by Carroll (2009, 2010) emphasise the educative and collaborative nature of supervision. These definitions of supervision have been consciously embraced by a number of participants who articulate a high level of awareness of the power aspect of their role and the manner in which they interpret it.
This is not surprising given the observations by McMahon and Errity (2014, p.264) who note that “learning their craft under the supervision of professional elders had always been a central feature of the training of applied psychologists”. The point here is that supervisors may be modelling (consciously or unconsciously) their own style of supervision on how they experienced supervision themselves, or in alignment with a model that reflects their own philosophy of supervision. Holloway and Wolleat (1994) draw attention to the origins of the apprentice approach to learning in supervision. However effective these models are, they generally do not explicitly devote enough attention to the power element in supervision. A clear explication of their power position is necessary so that this aspect of the supervisory relationship be adequately highlighted and understood.

It is impossible to assess from participants’ responses what level of reflexivity they have engaged in to determine their own positionality. What is significant is the apparent uncritical application by some participants of models of supervision which they experienced when training as supervisors to their current practice of supervision.

Participants who demonstrated an awareness of their power as supervisors used analogies of a mother nourishing a child or a friendly grandparent to express how they understand their power. This might be evidence of a particular uncertainty or discomfort with the power they possess. Nonetheless, many participants give the impression that they struggle with the amount of power they have (and are given) and appear more at ease when talking about it in terms of responsibility in maintaining professional standards, rather than exercising power.

This uncertain understanding of the role that power plays in supervision expressed by participants raises a number of fundamental questions about the nature of supervision and participants’ understanding of the role that power plays in supervision.

Interestingly, it is noteworthy that all of the male participants are very upfront in naming and acknowledging their power (although it is not clear from their comments) and what their understanding of the concept of power is. One female participant talks about power being exercised in “an adult space”. This reference to an adult space suggests a desire by the supervisor to be as collaborative as possible with supervisees in exercising power, while at the same time not forgetting the reality of the asymmetrical power relationship that is a core element of supervision.
They appear to have a high level of awareness of their positional power. However, their understanding of power is not elucidated or critically interrogated. Given that the supervisory relationship is infused with asymmetrical power relationships, it is a cause for concern that greater attention has not been paid to supervisors’ understanding of power and, in the context of this research, why some of them chose to view it as responsibility.

Nonetheless, participants following a more overt hierarchical and power-laden model of supervision (in whatever way they understand power) do not articulate in any significant way how their power might be (as Gramsci might argue) a means of producing and reinforcing dominant cultural, social, economic, and political values. The norms associated with the role of clinical supervisor are ‘common-sense norms’.

Likewise, Bourdieu might argue that supervisors, whether conscious of it or not, do possess ‘cultural capital’ (competencies and qualifications) and ‘symbolic capital’ (their status as supervisors), and as a consequence do influence their supervisees (and themselves) into interpreting and accepting the supervisor role as natural. By interpreting and managing their power in a particular way, participants could be unwittingly indoctrinating themselves and their supervisees into a learned set of professional beliefs and dispositions. As a result, it is pertinent to ask whether they are consciously or unconsciously adapting a particular way of being in their relationships with themselves and their supervisees. Are they unwitting accomplices in promoting the hegemony of the status quo in discharging their roles in an uncritical manner?

Although all participants in the research acknowledge awareness of their power and what it means to them individually, how it is understood varies considerably. This would seem to validate Lukes’s (1974, p.61) claim, previously referred to in this research, that “the search for a single concept of power is illusionary” and that “power is essentially a contested concept”. In a subsequent (2005) development of his philosophy of power, Lukes suggests that power is located in society’s social and cultural norms. Therefore, as members of a society that is not equal, it could be argued that the supervisor-supervisee relationship is a reflection of the prevailing dominant social norms. Supervisors are expected to supervise, and supervisees are, by definition, the objects of supervision, thereby further reinforcing the hegemony of the status quo.
This research indicates that most of the participants interviewed are (if you take a Foucauldian view of power) ignorant of the true nature of their role, and that they are being manipulated by power. Foucault argues that power is ever present, silent and manipulative. It needs to be unmasked for it to become visible. Consequently, when viewed from a Foucauldian standpoint, supervisors might unwittingly be producing a supervisor-supervisee relationship reality that produces, reproduces, and reinforces existing unequal power relations that are present in society. In exercising (but not owning) power, supervisors are producing particular ‘regimes of truth’ which are then perpetuated through the profession. The idea of power as something that supervisors exercise, as opposed to being manipulated and influenced by, is something that comes across strongly in the responses from all participants.

The evaluative and gatekeeping aspect of the supervision is one where this becomes particularly evident. All participants acknowledge this aspect of their role. The theme running through all of the meaning-making that participants make of their power and its impact on them is that you cannot empower without power. Supervisors need power to empower their supervisees. For the supervisor to empower the supervisee, they must possess ‘expert power’ that is socially sanctioned and acknowledge that power relations are always asymmetrical.

This power relationship is evident, especially in the manner in which the participants contract to engage with their supervisees. Contracting is seen by all participants as mainly their responsibility. Participants see contracting as providing a template out of which supervision takes place. Its primary purpose is to provide a safe space for supervision to take place and generate clarity around the roles and responsibilities of both supervisor and supervisee.

Viewing contracting from a power perspective has a number of implications. It brings clarity to the roles and expectations of both supervisor and supervisee. However, it also cements into place the power relationship that the contract represents. Watkins et al. (2015, p.100) talk about “the supervision alliance”, whereas Goodyear (2014, p.83) uses the term “supervisory relationship”. Although these terms may be helpful in promoting collegiality between supervisor and supervisee, all participants acknowledge that they would ‘use’ their power if they felt they had to. Here again, this is consistent with the views expressed by participants that their power is something that is held in reserve, in the background and only to be
brought to the fore when the supervisee is doing something that requires a direct intervention from them.

Although the literature on supervision explores in detail the different types of supervision and theories of supervision, little attention appears to have been paid to how power is understood and conceptualised. This is something that needs to be rectified by including in the literature on power, a discussion on the notion of power and critically interrogating theories of power.

5.2.2 Awareness of power in supervision

There seems to be an aversion by some participants to acknowledging fully and naming the issue of power with their supervisees. This is despite Mangione’s et al. (2011) contention that naming and acknowledging the unequal power relationship in supervision is vital. Power is something they possess, but they do not see it as an always-present aspect of the supervisory relationship.

The view expressed by many participants contrasts significantly with views expressed by Foucault, who, in the context of clinical supervision, would argue that the supervisory relationship is mediated by power and that there cannot be a relationship without power. Lukes’s (1986, 2005) ‘third dimension of power’ may be at play here. This third dimension of power is its ability to shape agents’ perception of their role, without them being consciously aware that this is happening. Furthermore, by viewing how they exercise power in terms of responsibility, they may be silently being manipulated by power into thinking in this way. Interpreting their socially sanctioned power as positional responsibilities is much more palatable.

This is because exercising responsibility is less laden with a power element and is seen as something that is an integral part of supervision. For example, Gaete and Ness (2015) talk about supervisors’ responsibilities. Mangione et al. (2011) view this responsibility in terms of setting the tone of supervision. In reality, it is also an exercise of power.

This brings to the fore an interesting question. How is it that some participants interviewed demonstrate a strong awareness of their power, while others do not appear to have the same level of awareness of it and its impact on them? How do supervisors unmask and become aware of their power in supervision? Or are they so ‘in the world’ (‘dasein’), as argued by Heidegger, that it is impossible for them to be...
fully aware of their power? Interpreting power as responsibility is their unique way of understanding and making sense of it. This lack of explicitly mentioning power in supervision may be a contributory factor in understanding why many participants interpret their power as responsibility.

Closely allied with participants’ awareness of power in supervision is their understanding of how power is present in supervision. This emerged as a strong theme. It is to this that I will now turn my attention.

5.2.3 Power as an entity in supervision

Participants’ awareness of the presence of power in supervision shows considerable variations. They acknowledge that there is always a hierarchy in power relationships between supervisor and supervisee. This reference to the hierarchical power relationship in supervision is reflected in many of the definitions of supervision available. Both Gaete and Ness (2015, p.73) and Bernard and Goodyear (2014, p.151) talk about supervision as something that takes place between a “more senior member” of a profession and a “more junior member” of a profession. Holloway and Wolleat (1994) talk about supervision as an apprenticeship, where the trainee (in this case the supervisee) learns the necessary skills from the master (the supervisor). Likewise, Goren (2013, p.741) talks about the “one-down one-up” hierarchical nature of supervision. In these definitions, the power element is evident in the language used to describe the relationship. Furthermore, the asymmetrical nature of the relationship evident in these definitions concentrates a lot of power in the hands of the supervisor. This is something that is noted by all participants. Somewhat surprisingly, participants expressed fears around aspects of their power as supervisors. These fears are around taking-on too much power or being pressurised by the supervisees and training institutions to assume power. A fear of the power of governing bodies and how it might impact on the supervisor was also articulated by some supervisors.

Further exploration of the origin of these fears is necessary in order to understand their origin. These fears have the potential to generate conflict in supervision because of the power imbalance between the supervisor and the supervisee. Mangione et al. (2011, p.384) comment that “little is known about what happens to supervisory relationships when conflict resolution is difficult or impossible to achieve”.

These findings have significant implications for both clinical practice, supervisor training, and the theory of supervision. With regard to practice, supervisors need to critique their understanding of power and interrogate its influence on themselves as supervisors and on the manner in which they conduct clinical supervision. Specifically, they need to examine the ideas of power advanced by French and Raven (1959) and their applicability to the way in which they conduct supervision. This is important with regard to French and Raven’s concepts of legitimate and expert power. In addition, supervisors’ understanding of how they exercise power in supervision needs to be addressed. This becomes important if you agree with Foucault’s (1980) claim, that knowledge and power are inseparable.

This, in turn, points to the need for supervisors and supervisees to have an in-depth conversation about the various concepts of power as an integral part of supervisor training. These discussions would involve a focusing on the role power plays in supervision and its impact on the supervisors and the supervisees.

Any discussion of concepts of power should involve a thorough critical appraisal of theories of supervision offered by reputable authors. Such discussions would help supervisors position their supervisory practice in a particular theoretical context, thereby highlighting the role supervisor power plays in supervision, as well as the presence of power in supervision. Consequently, if participants are demonstrating what Gramsci, Bourdieu, and Foucault refer to as the ‘common-sense’ understanding of power, then this raises a number of questions about their supervision practice and the nature of supervision. For example, what role (unwitting or otherwise) are supervisors playing in inculcating themselves and their supervisees into a set of learned beliefs about their respective roles? What happens when these eventually become uncritically universally accepted and unchallenged ways of carrying out their roles and responsibilities?

Caution is needed here in attempting to infer or draw too much from the comments of participants. All of them demonstrate an awareness and understanding of their power (responsibility) as supervisors and how it impacts on them. What is less evident is how they view the whole concept of power and what their individual positionality regarding it is. In retrospect, I as a researcher assumed that all participants had already a critical engagement with the concepts of power put
forward by reputable theorists and had established their own positionality which was informing their understanding of supervisor power.

With regard to the practice of supervision, the evaluative element of the supervisor’s role is acknowledged by all theorists (Gaete and Ness, 2015; Bernard and Goodyear, 2014; Holloway and Wolleat, 1994). Collaborative models of supervision (Mangione et al., 2011; Carroll 2011), while emphasising collegiality (but not equality) between supervisor and supervisee, acknowledge the essential evaluative element of any supervisory relationship. After all, how can it be supervision if there is no evaluation of the supervisee’s competencies by the supervisor?

Yet, it is important to remember that, no matter how collegiate the supervisory relationship is, no matter how productive the working alliance (Roche et al., 2007) is, or how the bond between supervisor and supervisee develops (Watkins et al., 2015), Gaete and Ness (2015, p.741) remind us that: “supervisors are not only admired teachers but feared judges who have real power”. This type of ‘relationalship’ power is identified by Guerrero et al. (2014, pp.261-267) who note that the “issue is how much power each person has in a relationship vis-a-vis the other person”. Power in this context is not overtly adversarial, but there is no escaping the reality, as argued by Foucault, that we cannot exist in a non-power state of being.

It is also worth remembering that supervision is not practiced in isolation from the world. It influences its world and in turn is influenced by it. Both supervisors and supervisees are subject to these influences. These influences will now be looked at.

5.2.4 Sharing power in supervision

A powerful influence in the supervision room cited by many participants is that of governing bodies, accrediting bodies, and academic organisations. Participants are very much aware of the need to comply with requirements set by these bodies in discharging their supervisory responsibilities. Conversely, they did not demonstrate a marked awareness of the impact of gender, race, and culture on their role as supervisors. Nelson and Holloway (1990) highlight the role of gender dynamics in increasing the asymmetrical power relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee. Bertsch et al. (2014) assert that a lack of attention to gender bias can impact negatively on the training needs of supervisees, especially female ones. Granello et al. (1997) believe that supervisee gender impacts on the supervisory
strategies used by the supervisor in conducting supervision. Similarly, Nelson et al. (2006) suggest that gender differences impact on the power relationship between supervisor and supervisee.

Given the amount of literature available attesting to the influence of gender on the distribution of power in supervision relationships, the fact that participants do not mention it explicitly is disconcerting. Moreover, the reasons for this are not easily discernible from their comments. It could be that gender awareness is now part of their common sense meaning-making of supervision and that there is no need to explicitly mention it. More worryingly, if it is indicative of an incomplete or diminished awareness by participants of the role gender plays in power relations in supervision, then this is significant. This is something that needs to be addressed in supervisor training as a matter of urgency.

In a similar vein, the role that race and culture play in the supervisory practice of participants is highlighted by various theorists (Bertsch et al. 2014; Hernandez et al. 2009; and Hernandez and Mc Dowell, 2010). Troublingly, research by Falender et al. (2014) suggests that supervisors’ belief that they possess multicultural competency skills is not matched by their behaviour. Based on comments by all participants, it is difficult to assess their level of “cultural sensitivity” (Ridley et al. 1994, p.125). As noted earlier, all participants interviewed were white and Irish. The homogeneity of the sample population may have masked individual cultural sensitivity markers which were not obvious in our conversations. The extent to which supervisors are aware of these influences has significant implications for the practice of supervision and the context in which it takes place.

This research unearthed significant commonalities and some variations in how participants understand and interpret their power, its impact on them, on their supervisees, and the supervisory relationship. The particular research findings are the result of the specific methodology (IPA) used in the research, which I now critique.

5.3 Critical evaluation of the methodology

Research methodologies by their nature have specific elements that contribute to their strength, generate weaknesses, and contain limitations. These are now discussed as they apply to IPA.
5.3.1 Strengths

One of the strengths of IPA is that it provides for an in-depth exploration of the experiences of the participants. In this context, exploring the concept of power is congruent with IPA inquiry for a number of reasons. Firstly, Lukes’s (1974, p.61) claim that “power is essentially a contested concept” is an apt reminder that there is no universally accepted definition of power. Secondly, as a consequence of this, it follows that definitions of power will invariably be numerous and subjective, reflecting the positionality of those offering these definitions. Thirdly, this subjectivity will reflect participants’ understanding and meaning-making of power. This interpretative element is one of the key aspects of IPA, thereby making it congruent as a method of inquiry for exploring the concept of power.

As a clinical supervisor, I do not see myself as an expert with objective knowledge which I impart to my supervisees. For me, supervision is a collaborative working alliance (Falender et al., 2014) between the supervisor and the supervisee. It is about empowering supervisees by engaging in dialogical reflexivity for them to find suitable ways of working with their clients. How I understand the role that power plays in supervision is more nuanced. Power is a multifaceted presence in all relationships, including the supervisory one. I possess “expert power” (French and Raven 1959) and “relationalship” power (Guerrero et al. 2014) as a clinical supervisor in relation to my supervisees. I am influenced by the power I possess and in turn influence the object of my power, the supervisee. Foucault’s concept of power as an autonomous entity is relevant here, as I believe that power is ever-present and active in the supervision room, and this needs to be recognised and explicitly acknowledged by both the supervisor and the supervisee. We need to have a conversation about power. I also believe that power can be present in a non-relationship way, e.g. the layout of the room, the prominent display of supervisor qualifications, etc.

My understanding of power is consistent with the tenets of IPA, which focus on the individual’s perception, experience, and interpretation of a phenomenon.

An additional strength of this research is that every interview transcript was thoroughly examined in considerable detail to ensure that participants’ experiences were accurately represented. Also, the verbatim transcription and examination of the transcripts carried out by me enabled a detailed interpretation to be undertaken.
Smith (2009) states that, for IPA research, between three and six participants are sufficient to uncover similarities and differences between participants’ lived experience of the phenomenon. Therefore, in the context of IPA research, my sample of fourteen participants is large enough to allow for the development of common and unique themes, yet at the same time, allow for depth of analysis, therefore remaining true to the idiographic focus of IPA (Smith et al. 2009). It allows each participant’s unique experience of the phenomenon to be explored. A larger sample size would have made the research cumbersome and unwieldy, and it would have generated significant amounts of data which would make the research unmanageable. Furthermore, the relatively small sample size is not a limitation of the research, but its strength. Brocki and Wearden (2006) note that researchers who use IPA do not set out to get a representative sample.

5.3.2 Limitations

A limitation of this research is that I as the researcher was the only person (though guided by my supervisors) who analysed the transcripts. Although my supervisors rigorously critiqued my analysis to ensure themes were evidenced by transcripts from the interviews, the interpretation of the data was conducted by me. As a consequence, it is not possible to perform inter-rater reliability and comparison tests on the data.

However, IPA, with its emphasis on the researcher as in integral part of all aspects of the research, does not place high importance on inter-rater reliability. I am aware now, as I reflect on the data gathering and data analysis process, that I failed to fully appreciate my role in influencing the direction of the interviews and generating themes. Even so, I outlined the steps I had taken to ensure quality control in the methodology section. These followed the steps recommended by Yardley (2000) which are: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance.

A further limitation of this research is that I used IPA as a research methodology. By doing this, while I did get an in-depth perspective of participants’ understanding of the phenomenon, I excluded aspects of the data that might have become available if the research had been conducted through the lens of other methodologies. By choosing a particular research methodology, I accent and bring to the fore those aspects of the data that the particular research methodology seeks to highlight.
Simultaneously, aspects that other research methodologies might provide are not available to me.

Nonetheless, the issues raised by this research have significant clinical implication for the training of clinical supervisors and the practice of clinical supervision. These implications are now discussed in the following section.

5.4 Clinical implications and recommendations

The results of this research reveal that the impact of power on participants varies. Some are comfortable in naming and identifying it as power, whereas many participants understand power in terms of responsibility. This is the responsibility to maintaining professional standards, and it relates strongly to the gatekeeping function of supervision mentioned by all participants. This is a significant finding. It suggests there is a gap between the how the literature defines the supervision relationship in terms of power dynamics and the reality of supervisors, in that many participants understand it as responsibility, as shown by this research. The research shows that understanding power as responsibility is more palatable for many participants, rather than viewing it as power in its own right. This is a challenge for researchers and everyone involved in supervision and worthy of further research.

Whatever understanding participants have of power, the influence of participants’ philosophy of supervision on their understanding of power emerged as an important aspect of these findings. This is significant, as it highlights the strong influence that initial training has on supervisors and on how they subsequently practice supervision. This underlines the importance of exploring and critiquing the different models of supervision that are available. Also, there is a need for supervisors to be fully aware of and understand how their supervision practice is influenced by their philosophy of supervision.

Another significant finding of this study highlights the fact that all participants expressed an awareness of the presence of power in supervision. This became evident in the numerous ways mentioned by participants (e.g. a look on the face of a supervisor, layout of supervision room, supervisor qualifications prominently displayed, the use of language by a supervisor, etc.) of how power is present in the supervisory space. The significance of this is that it shows supervisor power can also be manifested in less obvious ways, as identified by the participants. Theories of
power stress its relational aspect. What this research has shown is that supervisor power is present in supervision in ways not explicitly identified in the literature to date.

This gap in our knowledge has implications for supervisor research, training, and practice. Researching power in supervision only from a relational perspective is insufficient. Attention must be paid to the other ways, identified by participants, where power is present in the supervision room. The training of supervisors needs to highlight the multidimensional aspects of power in supervision. With regard to practice, supervisors need to be constantly aware of the many ways in which power is present in the supervision room, paying particular attention to the non-relational aspects of power.

This research reveals awareness among participants of their understanding of how power is present in supervision and that power is an active presence in clinical supervision. In addition, this research found that some participants understand power as something they possess by virtue of their role and that it is exercised as needed. Others understand it as a key presence in supervision. Furthermore, some supervisors talk about their fears around their power. The differences in understanding among participants of the nature of power in supervision is curious and worthy of further research. In particular, research is needed into what informs their notions of power in relationships, and specifically, in their role as clinical supervisors.

A further significant finding of this research is the contrast in participants’ understanding of the impact of their supervisory power on them. Some see it as something positive, whereas others express fears around the consequence of their power. The reasons for this are not clear, but it is clearly fertile ground for further research.

All of the participants acknowledge that, as supervisors, they share power with many other people and organisations. This sharing of power (or responsibility) and its impact on supervisors merits further research.

Also, the role that gender plays, along with the cultural context of supervision, are issues identified by some participants. The supervision space is a very crowded one, as not only are the influences of governing bodies and academic institutions present, so too are gender dynamics and cultural considerations. Although clinical
supervision provides an opportunity to reflect and pull back from day-to-day practice, it is not immune from the influence of outside bodies and the social milieu within which it takes place. Further research into the development of cultural sensitivity by supervisors is indicated to ensure that the practice of supervision is informed by credible and current research on this issue. The fact that, in this research, participants came from a homogenous group (white and Irish) may have obscured pertinent cultural issues that otherwise might have been revealed. Nonetheless, sensitivity to gender and cultural issues in supervisor-supervisee relationships is necessary in order to be an effective and competent supervisor.

In summary, those providing supervisor training need to highlight the role that gender and culture play in supervision. Practising supervision without awareness of gender and cultural issues is unsatisfactory and potentially harmful for those involved in it.

So, for these reasons, there is an urgent need for academic institutions and those providing training programmes for supervisors to be made aware of the findings of this research and to be encouraged to devise and implement training and research programmes to take account of the recommendations of this research.

Throughout this research, I engaged in ongoing critical reflection of my role in the process; in particular, how I impacted on the research process, how the research process influenced me, and how my understanding of my role as a clinical supervisor has changed. These reflections are the subject of the next section – critical reflections.

5.5 Critical reflections

Being a researcher is not an everyday experience for me despite having careers in education, youth and community work, counselling, and clinical supervision. When interviewing participants, I had to remind myself that I was in the role of researcher and not therapist or supervisor. I was determined not to slip into a therapist or supervisor role when interviewing my participants. I was aware of a particular tension within me, insofar as I felt comfortable in therapist and supervisor roles, whereas finding and working out of my research persona when interviewing participants was a learning process for me.
My interest in engaging in this research was prompted by an off-the-cuff remark by one of my supervisees. Having signed-off and completed all the formalities in connection with her (first-time) accreditation, she smiled at me and said: “Thanks Shane, you do realise that you had the power to make or break me” and left. Initially, I felt chuffed that I had got another supervisee though to accreditation, but later her comment had a profound impact on me and prompted my research question.

My feelings throughout the research process ranged from being nervous before the interviews to one of relief and elation once the interviews were over. I experienced similar feelings when analysing the data and writing up the findings.

In relation to my interactions with participants, I wondered what impact my appearance, gender, age, culture, and presenting myself to participants as a doctoral student had on what participants disclosed and withheld. How I conducted the interview, my use of language, pauses, silences all impacted in some manner on the data that was generated.

Moreover, my use of guiding questions in semi-structured interviewing, while acknowledged by many as an effective way to undertake interviews from an IPA perspective, may have had the unintended effect of forming data categories that were of my making, and so the subsequent themes generated would reflect my own stance rather than that of the participants. Reflecting now on this aspect of my research, I think that if conducting the interviews again, I would be less committed to using a list of prepared questions and instead let the discussions take a more naturalistic course. This did happen from the third interview onwards. For the first two interviews I was directing the conversation with the aim of getting answers to my prepared questions, whereas in reality the interviews had taken on their own life. As a result of this, for the third and subsequent interviews I decided to be less directive in managing the interviews. This revised approach yielded incredibly rich data.

Besides, I was aware that, professionally speaking, I was talking to fellow supervisors who were members of the same professional association (IACP) as me. I saw myself as an insider making common ground with my participants, in exploring the issue of supervisor power in supervision. As a result, I hoped participants would see me as one of their own and be less apprehensive about talking to me. Nonetheless, my research aims would be guiding and steering our conversation. I was aware that how I managed the interview was also an example of power use by
me. I wondered what awareness my participants had of this and how it impacted on them?

Moustakas (1990, p.9) talks about a “growing self-awareness” that occurs in the researcher as a result of undertaking qualitative research. On my research journey, I have moved from apprehension to learning to let go and embrace the stimulating and often contradictory philosophical stances of participants. I learned to trust the process when interviewing participants and to give them space to tell their story. Also, I explored with them their meaning-making and understanding of their power and how they saw it impacting on themselves, their supervisees, and on supervision. I felt privileged and humbled that the participants were open and honest in their responses to my questions.

Going on to interpret and reinterpret their stories at a higher level, and to link it with the extant literature, was both daunting and exciting for me. I wanted to ensure that I always stayed close to what participants said, and so I continuously referred back to the original transcriptions for verification. Nevertheless, in keeping with the spirit of IPA, I was also keen to uncover hidden meanings that could be present in the extracts which participants might not be aware of. Matching what participants said against the various theories of clinical supervision and theories of power explored in this research generated lots of opportunities for critical reflection. There was a lot of going back and forth between what participants said, their meaning-making and understanding of the phenomenon, and theories of supervision and power.

The comments by participants on the role others played in clinical supervision caused me to critically reflect on the influences that are present in the supervision space; in particular, how clinical supervision is influenced by culture, and in turn affects the culture in which it is situated. As a result of carrying out this research, my attention has been drawn to my need to have a critical awareness of the role culture plays in supervision.

The impact of ageism was commented on by one participant. They expressed concerns about what they saw as a trend among some institutions providing counsellor training courses to discount life experience in favour of academic qualifications. ‘Once you are old, you are out and have nothing further to offer the profession’, sums up their feelings about this issue. This is at variance with my own experience of counselling and supervision, where experience of life is valued and is
seen as a necessary requisite for the professional development of the therapist, regardless of their academic qualifications.

I was encouraged that all participants talked and acknowledged their increased levels of awareness of their power as a result of discussing it with me. The observations made by many participants, that they had not thought about the issue of supervisor power before receiving my Invitation-To-Part-Let, surprised me. Their subsequent declarations, that power was something that they would pay more attention to on an ongoing basis, motivated me to keep going with this research. I was drawing attention to an aspect of supervision and the supervisory relationship that had been neglected for far too long.

My own journey, both professionally and philosophically as a supervisor, is ongoing. Initially, I copied my model (and by default, my philosophy) of supervision from the way I was supervised myself. It seemed natural and in tune with my own worldview and what I thought good supervision was all about. It did not occur to me to explore other models of supervision or to critically reflect on the philosophical underpinnings of the model I was exposed to. I was playing it safe.

Discovering that there are many models of supervision forced me to scan the supervision landscape and acknowledge that there are many other ways of engaging in supervision that are informed by robust philosophies. I let go of the insular certainties of adhering to one model of supervision and explored the often choppy waters of philosophies of power and supervision. In doing so, I embraced and welcomed philosophical uncertainty with the avowed aim of maintaining an open and critical stance on developments in supervision. As Creaner (2014, p.32) rightly points out: “competencies are time bound and require continual updating”.

In my supervision practice, I have moved away from the position of “grey-beard expert” (Hemner, 2012, p.828) to a collaborator and explorer with my supervisees. I conduct supervision in a more collegiate manner. As part of engaging with my supervisees in a more collegiate and collaborative way, I provide them with coffee. Providing coffee is both to emphasise to the supervisee that we are two professionals critically reflecting about aspects of practice and also to differentiate it from counselling. I also think it is a powerful symbol of the way I work as a supervisor and the regard I have for the position (an equal but having less power) of the supervisee. Providing coffee appears to reduce the tension that can be present in a
situation where one person (me as supervisor) has considerable power over another person (the supervisee).

This move to a more collegiate and reflexive style of supervision has impacted on the way I work with my supervisees. Some initially resisted my new way of working, while others were at first confused by it, citing a lack of direction and structure in this new way of conducting supervision. Many welcomed the prospect of working with me in a more collegiate and transformative way.

Yet, I have a nagging concern about aspects of my power that I am blind to or even unaware of. As the holder of significant power in the professional lives of my supervisees, I have a responsibility to ensure that they are ethical in all aspects of their professional practice and the welfare of the client remains centre stage in supervision. It is in these moments, where potentially stressful situations may arise for me as their supervisor (and for them as supervisees), that my awareness of the true extent of the power conferred on me as a supervisor becomes apparent.

Nevertheless, I am also challenged by the notions of power offered by theorists such as French and Raven, Gramsci, Bourdieu, Lukes and Foucault. They alert me to the ongoing presence of power in all relationships, and in the context of this research, my supervisory relationships with my supervisees. Also, they draw attention to the powerful (and often unnoticed) forces that shape my philosophy of supervision. I find myself interrogating the question of whether I am a free, autonomous being, capable of critical thinking, or whether I am, as many of the theorists above assert, a puppet on an invisible) string, being manipulated in my practice of supervision to meet the needs of the dominant in society. Perhaps power’s greatest achievement has been to convince us that we exercise it and are not manipulated by it. The reality may be different.

It is apt, therefore, to draw attention to the comment by Manathunga previously referred to, but worth mentioning again, regarding power and supervision:

Power remains an integral part of any form of pedagogy and that portraying supervision as mentoring and therefore as an innocent, neutral practice serves only to mask the very real and inescapable role that power plays within supervision.

(Manathunga 2007, p.208)
Ignoring the presence of power in supervision is not an option. To do so, would be negligent and ultimately unhelpful to me as a supervisor and to my supervisees. Rather than ignore it, I interrogate it, and in doing this, I acknowledge and address this core aspect of clinical supervision.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Summary

In this research, participants discussed their perspectives on the power they hold as clinical supervisors. They explored their understanding of how this power impacts on themselves, their supervisees, and the supervisory relationship. A number of superordinate and subordinate themes emerged from these discussions. All of these themes focused on participants’ understanding of the role their power plays in clinical supervision. This research revealed a number of issues around supervisor power that are significant in increasing our understanding of the role it plays in supervision. Gaps in the literature on supervision were identified, and suggestions were offered on how the findings of this research can contribute to the development of supervisor theory, research, practice, and training.

The results of this research reveal that participants are aware that, as supervisors, they possess significant power in their relationships with their supervisees. Their understanding and awareness of this power varies. There is divergence among participants on how they perceive it impacting on them in their role as clinical supervisors.

Given the significant role power plays in the supervisory relationship, the lack of literature available on how this power impacts on the supervisor is a cause for concern. The need for further research is stated in order to contribute to greater understanding of this aspect of power in the supervisory relationship. This is something that I have drawn attention to throughout this study. When people take on the role of supervisor, it is imperative that they are fully aware of all aspects of their role. Power is a central component of this role.

Supervisors have a particular need to engage in a reflective process so that they interrogate their own understanding of power and how it is present in supervision. This research demonstrates the importance of supervisors engaging critically and reflectively in this process. As Carroll (2014, p.134) puts it: “reflection is the life-blood of supervision; it is the process par excellence through which we learn”.

In conclusion, it is imperative that everyone involved in clinical supervision, whether they are a training organisation, a governing body, a service provider, a supervisor or a supervisee, develop an awareness of the role that power plays in clinical
supervision. Such awareness can be developed by all stakeholders in clinical supervision by engaging in ongoing critical reflection on what informs their understanding of power and supervision.

6.2 Finally

This research highlights the dominant and significant role that power plays in all supervisory relationships, in particular participants’ experiences and understanding of the phenomenon. As a result, if supervision is to be effective, supervisors need to understand the nature of power, and how their supervisor power impacts on themselves and their supervisees. To René Descartes famous remark, “I think, therefore I am” can now be added the following in the context of clinical supervision:

To not reflect, or not reflect sufficiently, is to allow others to make our opinions and decisions for us. We become sheep when we don’t reflect: our lives are drawn by instincts, emotions and the will of others.

(Carroll 2014, p.150)
References


Burkard, A., Knox, S., Clarke, R., Phelps, D. and Inman, A. (2014) “Supervisors’ experiences of providing difficult feedback in cross-
ethnic/racial supervision”, *The Counseling Psychologist*, 42, 314–344.


Irish Association of Alcohol and Addiction Counsellors (IAAAC) “Working Principles for Counsellors”, available:

http://www.iaaac.org/content/principles.html [accessed 27 Jul 2014].


Appendix One

EHSREC Approval Number 2014-03-05-EHS

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Welcome participant and thank them for taking part in the research: ___

Offer them a seat and make sure they are comfortable: ___

Provide water for them to drink and switch on audio recording device: ___

Give participant a copy of the participant information sheet and check that it has been fully understood: ___

Give participant a copy of the consent form and check that it has been fully understood: ___

Obtain informed consent in writing and ensure form is stored securely: ___

Outline purpose of the research: ___

It is hoped that this research will raise awareness of supervisor power among practicing Irish clinical supervisors. This includes clarifying your experience of your supervisory power, its impact on you, on your supervisees, and on the manner in which you conduct clinical supervision.

Research question: How does supervisor power influence clinical supervision from the perspective of the supervisor?

Time of interview: ____________________________________________________

Date of interview: ___________________________________________________

Location of interview: _______________________________________________

Interviewer: ________________________________________________________

Duration of interview: _______________________________________________

Audio opt out: Yes: _____ No: _____

Interviewee (name): _________________________________________________
Age range: 30 - 35  36 - 40  41 - 45  46 - 50  51 - 55  56 - 60  61 - 65  66 - 70  71 - 75  76 - 80

Sex: Male:  Female:

Number of years accredited as a supervisor:  

Alphanumeric interview code:  

At end of interview, thank participant once again, assure them of confidentiality, and switch off audio recording device.
Dear [Name of participant],

My name is Shane McGuire, and as part of my PhD studies at the University of Limerick I am conducting research into how, as clinical supervisors, we manage our power in clinical supervision.

It is hoped that this research will contribute to the awareness Irish clinical supervisors have of their power, its impact on them as supervisors, and its impact on their supervisees, and on clinical supervision.

Your name was chosen randomly from the Irish Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (IACP) database of accredited supervisors in Ireland.

I am enclosing for your information a participant information sheet an informed consent form which explain in more detail the aims of my research and what would be expected of you should you decide to take part in the research.

As an accredited supervisor myself, I am keenly aware of the significance my positional power can have on myself and on my supervisees. I would warmly welcome your involvement in this exciting research, and I will contact you shortly with details on how this might happen.

I look forward to meeting you and collaborating with you in this research.

Yours sincerely,

_________________________

Michael John (Shane) McGuire

Enc: Participant Information Sheet

Informed Consent Form
Appendix Three

EHSREC Approval Number 2014-03-05-EHS

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

This document contains an outline of the purpose of the research in which you are being invited to participate. Please read it carefully to ensure you fully understand what the research is about, and the nature of your involvement, should you agree to participate.

Please feel free to contact me at any stage if you have any questions, comments, or concerns about your participation in this study (contact details below).

Title of study:

How does supervisor power influence clinical supervision from the perspective of the supervisor?

EHS approval number: 2014-03-05-EHS

Aims of study:

- To understand the nature of supervisor power in clinical supervision.
- To explore how supervisor power is present in clinical supervision.
- To examine how supervisor power impacts on the process of clinical supervision.
- To explore how supervisor power impacts on the supervisee from the perspective of the supervisor.
- To develop a greater understanding of supervisor power in clinical supervision.
- To inform clinical supervision practice.
- To elicit perspectives from participants on the nature of, and use of, power in clinical supervision.

What will you have to do?

You are invited to participate in this study which will involve your participation in a one-hour, one-to-one interview, at a time, date, and venue to be agreed between you and the researcher. With your consent, the interview will be audio recorded for later transcribing by the interviewer. You are free to withdraw from the research at any-time, and to withdraw your consent for use of data in the research.
What are the benefits for you?

It is hoped that this research will help raise awareness of supervisor power among practicing Irish clinical supervisors. The benefits to you include clarifying your experience of your supervisory power, its impact on you, and on the manner in which you conduct clinical supervision. Furthermore, it is hoped that it will contribute to the development of best practice guidelines in your supervisory practice.

What are the risks to you?

No risks are anticipated. However, if in the course of a particular discussion, issues of concern emerge concerning unethical behaviour towards supervisees, the researcher will be obliged to contact your supervisor or the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP) or both. You should only sign the informed consent form if you agree to this.

Who is taking part?

Twelve to fifteen randomly chosen accredited supervisors who are both resident and practicing in Ireland and members of the Irish Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (IACP).

What happens to the data?

All data collected will be stored on an encrypted, password protected PC, which is kept in a locked office. Verbatim transcripts of the data will be available only to the Principal Investigator and the researcher. These transcripts will be kept in a locked filing cabinet, in a locked office. The data will be anonymised to prevent identification of the participants. The data will be retained for a period of seven years, after which it will be destroyed by incineration.

Names and contact details of investigators:

Principal investigator: Dr Sharon Houghton
Lecturer /Clinical Co-ordinator
Doctoral Programme in Clinical Psychology
University of Limerick
Telephone number: +353 61 202728
Email: Sharon.houghton@ul.ie

Other investigator: Michael John (Shane) McGuire
PhD Student
Department of Education and Professional Studies
University of Limerick
Email: michael.mcguire@ul.ie
This research study has received ethical approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EHSREC), approval number: 2014-03-05-EHS.

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:

**Chairperson**
**Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee**
**EHS Faculty Office**
**University of Limerick**
**Telephone:** +353 61 234101
**Email:** ehsresearchethics@ul.ie
Appendix Four

EHSREC Approval Number 2014-03-05-EHS

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Study
How does supervisor power influence clinical supervision from the perspective of the supervisor?

INVITATION TO TAKE PART IN A RESEARCH STUDY

You are invited to take part in this study, the purpose of which is to explore how supervisor power, from the perspective of the supervisor, informs and impacts on the supervisor, the supervisee, and on the process of clinical supervision in Ireland.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The purpose of the research is to explore the awareness Irish clinical supervisors have of their power, its impact on them as supervisors, and its impact on their supervisees, and on the clinical supervision encounter.

Before you take part in this study, it is important that you understand the following points:

- Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the research at any time for any reason,
- You may refuse to answer any question without having to give a reason for doing so,
- Your data will be treated as confidential and, if published, it will not be identifiable as yours,
- If, during the course of a particular discussion, issues of concern emerge concerning unethical behaviour towards supervisees, the researcher will be obliged to contact your supervisor or the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP) or both. You should sign the informed consent form, only if you agree to this,
Once the research is complete, you will receive an electronic copy of the results of the study. An electronic copy of the research will also be available at www.ul.ie/library in the University of Limerick’s Institutional Repository file. By signing below, you are agreeing that you have read and understood the participant information sheet and the informed consent form, and that you agree to take part in this research study.

_________________________     ________________
Participant’s Signature              Date

_________________________     ________________
Shane McGuire,              Date
Researcher
Appendix Five

EHSREC Approval Number 2014-03-05-EHS

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- How might you describe your awareness of your power as a supervisor in clinical supervision?
- Do you experience any impact of power in supervision, and if so, can you tell me about this?
- In your opinion, what effect does your power have on your supervisees?
- How does this become evident during supervision?
- How does your supervisory power impact on the supervisory process?
- What would you say are the positive effects of your supervisory power on yourself?
- What would you say are the positive effects of your supervisory power on the supervisee (e.g. to allow, to facilitate, to enhance, to enable, etc.)?
- What does it feel like for you when you experience the positive effects of your supervisory power?
- How do you think these positive aspects of your supervisor power impact on the supervisee?
- What would you say are the negative aspects of your supervisory power on yourself?
- What would you say are the negative aspects of your supervisory power on the supervisee (e.g. to control, dictate, dominate, coerce, etc.)?
- What does it feel like for you when you experience the negative effects of your supervisory power?
- How do you think these negative aspects of your supervisor power impact on the supervisee?
- What part does self-reflection play in your practice of clinical supervision?
- As a result of our talking today, how would you describe your awareness of your supervisory power in supervision?
- Is there anything else you would like to say?
Appendix Six

IACP Code of Ethics and Practice for Counsellors / Psychotherapists

Preamble: The first paragraph of the preamble defines counselling and psychotherapy as professional activities involving Association Members, hereafter called practitioners, and their clients. The practitioner offers an impartial helping relationship which respects the client's personal values and autonomy. Practitioners recognise the importance of confidentiality in establishing such a relationship. Counselling and psychotherapy are formal activities involving an agreed contract. To maintain their effectiveness, practitioners review their work regularly in a confidential setting with a supervisor. In joining the Association, Members agree to comply with the provisions of the Code of Ethics and Practice. The Code of Ethics and Practice applies to their professional activities and any behaviour that might impinge on those. To ensure that they behave in an ethical manner, practitioners are required to use a formal procedure in examining ethical aspects of their work. In situations where ethical decisions can be complex and difficult, and different ethical principles may be in conflict, the best decision comes from considering issues systematically. Details of the recommended decision-making procedure are presented in Appendix A. Like all other citizens, practitioners are subject to the Law, and their practice must conform to the Law. Content of the Code of Ethics and Practice is based on four overall ethical principles, under which specific ethical standards are elaborated in greater detail.

Principle 1: Respect for the rights and dignity of the client. Practitioners are required to treat their clients as persons of intrinsic worth with a right to determine their own priorities, to respect clients' dignity and to give due regard to their moral and cultural values. Practitioners take care not to intrude inappropriately on clients' privacy. They treat as confidential all information obtained in the course of their work. As far as possible, they ensure that clients understand and consent to whatever professional action they propose.

Principle 2: Competence. Practitioners are required to monitor and develop their professional skills and ethical awareness on an ongoing basis. They recognize that their expertise and capacity for work are limited, and take care not to exceed the limits.
Principle 3: Responsibility. In their professional activities, practitioners are required to act in a trustworthy and reputable manner towards clients and the community. They refer clients to colleagues and other professionals, as appropriate, to ensure the best service to clients. They act appropriately to resolve ethical dilemmas and conflicts of interest.

Principle 4: Integrity. Practitioners take steps to manage personal stress, maintain their own mental health, and ensure that their work is professionally supervised. They are required to be honest and accurate about their qualifications and the effectiveness of the services which they offer. They treat others in a fair, open and straightforward manner, honour professional commitments, and act to clarify any confusion about their role or responsibilities. They do not use the professional relationship to exploit clients and they deal appropriately with personal conflicts of interest. They take action against harmful or unethical behaviour in colleagues.

The Code of Ethics and Practice in Detail

1.0. Respect for the Rights and Dignity of the client.

Practitioners honour and promote the fundamental rights, dignity and worth of clients. They respect clients' rights to privacy, confidentiality, self-determination and autonomy, consistent with the practitioner's other professional obligations and with the law.

More specifically, practitioners shall:

1.1. General Respect

1.1.1. Have sensible regard for clients' beliefs and values.

1.1.2. Not allow their service to clients to be diminished by factors such as gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, race, ethnicity, age, national origin, party politics, social standing or class.

1.1.3. Convey sensible respect for prevailing community mores, social customs and cultural expectations.

1.1.4. Work in ways which promote clients’ personal autonomy.

1.2. Privacy and Confidentiality.

1.2.1. Ensure that the setting for sessions is appropriately private.
1.2.2 Treat in confidence personal information about clients, whether obtained directly or indirectly or by inference. Such information includes name, address, biographical details, and any descriptions of the client's life and circumstances which might make the client identifiable by others.

1.2.2. Ensure that information which may lead to the identification of clients is not transmitted through overlapping networks of confidential relationships.

1.2.3. Break confidentiality only where required by law, or where there are grounds for believing that clients will cause physical harm to themselves or others. Where feasible, practitioners shall endeavour to obtain the client's consent, and consult their supervisor or an experienced colleague, in advance of any such disclosure. However, in emergencies, practitioners shall make their own judgment as to what action is best.

1.2.4. Minimize any breach of confidentiality by conveying only that information which is necessary, and only to relevant persons.

1.2.5. In supervision and consultation with colleagues, reveal only that information about clients which is relevant for those purposes.

1.2.6. Discuss the limits of confidentiality with the client at the time of initial contracting, the discussion to include the implications for confidentiality of the supervisory relationship.

1.2.7. Store, handle, transfer and dispose of all records (including written, electronic, audio and video) securely and in a way that safeguards the client's right to privacy.

1.3. Informed Consent and Freedom of Consent.

1.3.1. Ensure that the client consents to participate at all stages and respect clients' right to discontinue at any time.

1.3.2. Provide reasonable opportunity during the course of the relationship for review of the terms on which the service is being offered.

1.3.3. Not normally act on behalf of their clients. If they do, they shall ensure that the client consents in advance to any proposed action.

1.3.4. Where the client is concurrently engaged in another professional helping relationship, obtain the client's permission before conferring with the other professional.

1.3.5. Obtain the client's consent before making audio or video recordings of sessions.
1.3.6. Obtain the client's consent to attendance at sessions by third parties.

1.3.7. When publishing research or case studies concerning clients or supervisees, ensure that identities are carefully disguised and obtain appropriate consent.

1.3.8. Written Permission from both parents / legal guardians should be obtained (where possible) by therapists before commencing therapy with a minor.

1.3.9 If it is not possible to obtain written permission from both parents / legal guardians then written permission must be obtained by at least one parent / legal guardian prior to the commencement of therapy.

2.0. Competence.

Practitioners strive to ensure and maintain high standards of competence in their work. They recognize the boundaries of their competence and the limitations of their expertise. They provide only those services and use only those techniques for which they are qualified by training and experience. It is an indication of competence that they recognize when they are unable to offer a professional service. More specifically, practitioners shall:

2.1. Ethical Awareness

2.1.1. Accept the obligation to study and understand the provisions of this Code of Ethics and Practice.

2.2. Limits of Competence.

2.2.1. Offer or carry out only those professional activities for which they have established their competence to practice.

2.2.2. Recognise the boundaries of their competence, and take care not to exceed these.

2.2.3. Refrain offering a service when their functioning is impaired due to personal or emotional difficulties, illness, disability, alcohol, drugs or any other cause.

2.3. Continuing Professional Development.

2.3.1. Monitor and develop their professional competence.
3.0. Responsibility. Practitioners are aware of their professional responsibilities, and at all times take positive action to fulfil these responsibilities. More specifically, practitioners shall:

3.1.1. Review and evaluate the effectiveness of their professional activities.
3.1.2. Behave in professional activities in such a way as not to undermine public confidence in the profession.
3.1.3. Exercise appropriate respect towards colleagues.

3.2. Avoidance of Harm.
3.2.1. Set and monitor appropriate boundaries during the practitioner/client relationship, and make these explicit to the client.
3.2.2. Take all reasonable steps to ensure that the client suffers neither physical nor psychological harm during the practitioner/client relationship.

3.3. Continuity of Care.
3.3.1. Refer clients to other appropriately qualified practitioners or other professionals when it is appropriate to do so.
3.3.2. When referring a client, maintain support and responsibility for caring until contact has commenced with the person to whom referral was made.
3.3.3. Give reasonable notice, and make reasonably certain that discontinuation will cause no harm to the client, before discontinuing services.
3.3.4. Contribute where appropriate to the co-ordination of client services in order to avoid duplication or working at cross purposes. To facilitate this process, practitioners shall maintain adequate records and communicate with other service providers.

3.4. Resolving Dilemmas.
3.4.1. Use a systematic procedure for making ethical decisions and resolving ethical dilemmas. Take an active role in resolving conflicts of interest between themselves and third parties (for example, colleagues, employers, employing agencies) where there are implications for the client.

4.0. Integrity. Practitioners seek to promote integrity in the practice of their profession. They recognise their professional limitations and ensure that they receive appropriate support and supervision from colleagues. In their
professional activities they are honest, fair and respectful of others. They clarify for relevant parties the roles which they are performing, and attempt to function appropriately in accordance with these roles. More specifically, practitioners shall:

4.1. Recognition of Professional Limitations.
4.1.1. Engage in self-care activities which help to avoid conditions (for example, burnout, and addictions) which could result in impaired judgment and interfere with their ability to benefit their clients.
4.1.2. Monitor their own personal functioning and seek help when their personal resources are sufficiently depleted to require such action.
4.1.3. Obtain professional supervision regularly in proportion to the amount of their work with clients.
4.1.4. Where appropriate, seek consultative support from colleagues.

4.2. Honesty and Accuracy.
4.2.1. Ensure that they and others accurately represent their education, training, experience, membership status within the Association, and the effectiveness of the services which they offer, in all spoken, written or printed communications.
4.2.2. Make a clear contract with the client which includes issues such as availability, fees, and cancelled appointments. They shall ensure that the contract is agreed before work commences. Any subsequent revisions of the contract shall be agreed with the client before they take effect.
4.2.3. When advertising, avoid misrepresentation or exaggeration about services offered.

4.3. Conflict of Interests and Exploitation.
4.3.1. Be acutely aware of the power dynamics of the practitioner/client relationship and shall not exploit clients in any way, either during the relationship or after its conclusion.
4.3.2. Be acutely aware of the problematic nature of dual relationships (for example, with students, business associates, employees or clients), and recognize that it is not always possible to avoid them (e.g. when offering services in a small community, or engaging in training). Where it is possible, practitioners shall avoid such relationships; where it is not, they shall take appropriate steps to safeguard the interests of those involved.
4.3.3. Where possible, avoid conflicts of interest that may affect their relationship with the client, and where it is not possible, shall make these conflicts of interest explicit to the client.

4.3.4. Offer the same standard of service whether the work is paid or voluntary.

4.3.5. Seek supervision and/or consultative support on all issues relating to conflict of interests.

4.3.6. Ensure that their supervisor does not occupy other significant roles in their lives.

4.4. Actions of Colleagues.

4.4.1. Remonstrate privately with a colleague if that colleague appears to be engaging in unethical behaviour; where this action does not resolve the issue, they shall bring the matter confidentially and without malice to the attention of the Association's Complaints Committee. The first edition of this code was adopted prior to 1991.


This Code of Ethics was ratified at the AGM 2005.

Appendix A

Recommended Procedure for Ethical Decision-Making.

Section 2.1 of the Code of Ethics and Practice deals with ethical awareness, and Clause 3.4.1 states that practitioners shall use a systematic procedure for making ethical decisions. The following procedure is recommended for dealing with both immediate dilemmas and routine work-related issues.

1. Define carefully the issues and parties involved (the latter may include the practitioner, the client, members of the client's family, the practitioner's own employer and co-workers, organisations purchasing or providing services, and the general public).

2. Consult the Code of Ethics and Practice, and identify relevant principles and clauses. Also consult other applicable professional guidelines (e.g. from government departments, health boards) and any pertinent legislation.

3. Evaluate the rights, responsibilities and welfare of all affected parties.
4. Generate as many alternative decisions as possible - the more the better.
5. Evaluate carefully the likely outcome of each decision.
6. Choose what, in your professional judgment, is the best decision, implement it, and inform relevant parties.
7. Finally, take responsibility for the consequences of the decision.

The complexity of ethical issues makes it likely that different principles and clauses will occasionally clash; in addition, the provisions of the Code of Ethics and Practice may also clash with the Law and/or other relevant guidelines. Unfortunately, the resolution of ethical dilemmas is not guaranteed to be simple. However, the law accepts that professionals may make errors of judgment, and that these are not the same as malpractice. The formal decision-making procedure is intended to reduce the incidence of decisions which are mistakes because they are taken in the heat of the moment, without consideration of all the relevant factors. What is required, in all cases, is a considered professional judgment taken in a systematic way. It is desirable to keep a written record of deliberations at each stage of the process.

Additional Code of Ethics and Practice for IACP Accredited Supervisors of Counsellors and Psychotherapists.

Introduction

Supervision is a formal mutually agreed arrangement within which the supervisee discusses work regularly with the supervisor.

The term “supervision” encompasses a number of functions concerned with monitoring, educating, developing and supporting individuals in their counselling / psychotherapy work. To this end supervision is concerned with:

a) The relationship between supervisee and client, to enhance its therapeutic effectiveness.
b) Monitoring and supporting the supervisee in the counselling / psychotherapy role.
c) The relationship between the supervisee and the supervisor so as to enable the supervisee to develop and enhance professional skills and abilities through reflection and exploration on the work.

d) Ensuring that ethical standards are maintained throughout the counselling / psychotherapy work and that it is conducted in an appropriate setting.

A. Code of Ethics

A1. The purpose of this Code of Ethics is to establish and maintain standards for supervisors in their supervision work with counsellors / psychotherapists, hereinafter referred to as supervisees, and to inform and protect supervisees seeking supervision.

A1.1. Ethical standards comprise such values as integrity, responsibility, competence and confidentiality.

A1.2. Supervisors in assenting to this Code of Ethics reaffirm their assent to all other Codes of Ethics and Practice of the IACP and accept their responsibilities to supervisees and their clients, their agencies, to colleagues, the wider community and this Association.

A1.3. There are various models of supervision. This Code applies to all supervision arrangements.

A2. Issues of Responsibility.

A2.1 Given that the primary purpose of supervision is to ensure that the supervisee is addressing the needs of the client:

a) Supervisees are responsible for their work with the client, and for presenting and exploring as honestly as possible that work with their supervisor.

b) Supervisors are responsible for helping supervisees reflect critically upon that work.

A2.2 Supervisors and supervisees are both responsible for setting and maintaining clear boundaries between working relationships and friendships or other relationships, and making explicit the boundaries between supervision, consultancy, therapy and training.

A2.3 Supervisors and supervisees must distinguish between supervising and counselling the supervisee.

A2.4 Supervisors are responsible for adhering to the principles embodied in this Code of Ethics and Practice for the Supervision of Counsellors /
Psychotherapists, and the Code of Ethics and Practice for Counsellors / Psychotherapists.

A2.5 Supervisors must recognise the value and dignity of supervisees and clients as people, irrespective of origin, status, sex, sexual orientation, age or belief.

A2.6 Supervisors should not exploit supervisees financially, sexually, emotionally or in any other way.

A2.7 Supervisors are responsible for establishing clear working agreements, which indicate the responsibility of supervisees for their own continued learning and self-monitoring.

A2.8 Both are responsible for regularly reviewing the effectiveness of the supervision arrangement and changing it when appropriate.

A2.9 The supervisor and supervisee should consider their respective legal liabilities to each other, the employing or training organisation, if any, and to the client.


A3.1 Supervisors must ensure, when working with student Counsellors / Psychotherapists, that the supervision contract includes assessment of the client work. Such assessment is in the interests of clients, the profession and those responsible for the training of the supervisee. The criteria by which assessments are to be made must be agreed between supervisees and the course providers, or other bodies responsible for the accreditation of student Counsellors / Psychotherapists.

A3.2 All external supervisors must supply reports on student work to the course provider’s assessment panel, and these reports should be co-evaluated by the student and supervisor.


A4.1 Supervisors should continually seek ways of increasing their own professional development, including, wherever possible, specific training in the development of supervision skills.

A4.2 Supervisors are expected to make arrangements for their own consultancy and support to help them monitor and evaluate their supervision. This includes having supervision of their supervision work.
A4.3 Supervisors have a responsibility to monitor and maintain their own effectiveness. There may be a need to seek help and/or withdraw from the practice of supervision, whether temporary or permanently.

A4.4 All supervisors should maintain a practice in counselling / psychotherapy.

**B. Code of Practice**

**Introduction**

This Code of Practice is intended to give more specific information and guidance regarding the implementation of the principles embodied in the Code of Ethics for Supervision of Counsellors / Psychotherapists.

**B.2 The Management of the Supervision Work.**

B2.1 Supervisors should ensure that their supervisees subscribe and adhere to the IACP Code of Ethics and Practice for Counsellors / Psychotherapists or an equivalent Code of Ethics and Practice.

B2.2 Supervisors should be explicit regarding practical arrangements for supervision, paying particular regard to the length of contact time, the frequency of contact and the privacy and safety of the venue.

B2.3 Fees required should be agreed in advance and any increase in fees should be negotiated.

B2.4 Supervisors and supervisees should make explicit the expectations and requirements they have of each other. This should include the manner in which any formal assessment of the supervisee’s work will be conducted. Each party should assess the value of working with the other and review this regularly.

B2.5 Supervisors should ensure that their Supervisees are aware of the Supervisor’s qualifications, theoretical approach and method of working.
Appendix Seven

Supervisor’s Report for Applicants seeking Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy First Time Accreditation

NOTICE TO SUPERVISOR:

You are advised to read the ‘Accreditation’ Section on the IACP Website: in particular - First Time Accreditation / Supervisor Requirements for Pre-Accredited Members.

Supervision of post-training counselling / psychotherapy work must not be undertaken with a Supervisor, who either supervised the applicant while a student during training, or was involved with or had an interest in the core course. (Please refer to the Accreditation Section of IACP web site www.iacp.ie under Accreditation / Supervision Requirements).

The Supervisor supervising the applicant for the 12 months immediately preceding their application is required to read the applicant’s completed application form.

Please note: If the Applicant has changed supervisor during the pre-accreditation period they will need a Supervisor’s Report from each Supervisor. The applicant must be with the same Supervisor for a minimum of 12 months prior to submitting their application for accreditation.

Please return this completed form to:

The Accreditation Secretary, IACP, First Floor, Marina House, 11-13 Clarence Street, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.

1. APPLICANT’S PERSONAL DETAILS

Name:

________________________________________________________________________

Address:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Membership: _________________ Number:

2. SUPERVISOR’S PERSONAL DETAILS

The Supervisor must fulfil the requirements of IACP for supervision of IACP members. “From March 2010, a requirement came into effect that those beginning supervision, or current Members changing Supervisor (i.e. new contracts), will have to have their work supervised by a Supervisor accredited by IACP or accredited by an equivalent body acceptable to IACP” (IACP, IAHIP, BACP Accredited Supervisors).
Name: ___________________________________________________________________

Address: ___________________________________________________________________

Phone Number: ___________________________________________________________________

Qualification/s: Counselling / Psychotherapy ___________________________________________________________________

Experience in supervision of counselling /psychotherapy ___________________________________________________________________

Main area of your work: ___________________________________________________________________

Professional Membership/s: ___________________________________________________________________

2 (i). Are you an IACP Accredited Supervisor: Yes / No

Membership No: __________

Date and period of current IACP supervisor accreditation

From (month and year): ____________ To (month and year): ____________

If you are not an IACP Accredited Supervisor - please fill in the following details:

Name of Association with whom you are accredited: ___________________________________________________________________

Membership No: ________ Date of Supervisor Accreditation: _____________

Date and period of current supervisor accreditation:

From (month and year): ____________ To (month and year): _______________

2 (ii). How long have you been supervising the applicant?

(It is essential that the current supervisor has been supervising the applicant for a minimum of 12 months prior to writing this report)
### Individually

From (dd/mm/yy): ___________________  To (dd/mm/yy): _______________________

### In a group

From (dd/mm/yy): ___________________ To (dd/mm/yy): _______________________

**How often do you meet the applicant for individual supervision?**

Individually  Frequency: _________________  Length of session: 

How often do you meet the applicant for group supervision? (If including Group Supervision, Please refer to the Accreditation Section of IACP website / Supervision / Supervision requirements for Pre-Accredited Members.

Group: Frequency: _______________ Length of session: ___________________

**How many are in the group? ____ How many group supervision meetings are held per year? ____

Does the applicant present his / her work regularly? __________

**Has the applicant completed the required 450 post course counselling / psychotherapy hours?  Yes /No**

And the required minimum of 45 supervision hours? Yes / No

What is the method / model of your supervision? (e.g. case notes / review of sessions / counselling / psychotherapy in presence of Supervisor / use of video tape recordings etc.)

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

Do you consider that the applicant has received sufficient training and experience for accreditation as a Counsellor/ Psychotherapist?

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________
What part of the applicant’s training, skills and competencies do you consider most relevant to their work?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Do you consider that the applicant has sufficient self-awareness and discipline to be an able and responsible counsellor/ psychotherapist?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Do you consider that in practice the applicant is a competent Counsellor / Psychotherapist?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

What do you consider makes the applicant a competent Counsellor/Psychotherapist?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Are you satisfied that the applicant will counsel in accordance with the IACP Code of Ethics and Practice?

__________________________________________________________________

Do you believe the applicant is committed to on-going personal and professional development?

__________________________________________________________________
Is there any reason why, to your knowledge or in your opinion, the applicant should not be accredited by IACP?

__________________________________________________________________

Any other comments?

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR:

Signed: ______________________________ Date: ____________________

DECLARATION BY CURRENT SUPERVISOR:

I have read the applicant’s application form which, to the best of my knowledge, is correct

Signed: ______________________________ Date: ____________________
Appendix Eight

Appendix 8 provides an overview of all the phases involved in using Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) in the development of themes that emerged in this research. The themes are supported by referring to selected verbatim extracts from conversations with participants.

Phase 1-2 contains extracts from a participant which illustrate how themes emerged from the transcripts.

Phase 3a lists these themes in chronological order.

Phase 3b lists these themes as grouped themes.

Phase 3c contains grouped themes (extracts) with supporting evidence from the interview transcripts.

Phase 3d contains the same information as phase 3c with the addition of researcher reflections /comments.

Phase 3e lists all themes from all participants.

Phase 4 lists the grouped superordinate and subordinate themes.

Phase 5 is a selection of supporting verbatim extracts from participants.
Data analysis phase 1-2 of sample participant

(Selected verbatim extracts from interview)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive model of supervision.</th>
<th>Philosophy of supervision.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does not want to go into apprenticeship model of supervision. Supervision as a collaborative, learning place. Has supervisor role and responsibilities.</td>
<td>Philosophy of supervision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor as expert. Offering something that may be of help to supervisee. Supervisor role to free up the supervisory space. Less of their ego in the supervision room.</td>
<td>Impact of supervision on supervisor.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| P. So I would say, I am acutely aware of it, but also, blind to elements of my own power in the supervisory space. I think then, the area I am most vigilant around is making sure that I don’t go into that kinda apprenticeship model as a cross professional supervisor. I am very sensitive to that, that, it’s a collaborative learning space for me, supervision. That doesn’t mean I give my power away. I have my role, I have power and responsibilities, but I am very aware of the battle. |
|---|---|
| P. What does it feel like? Am, for a moment I acknowledge the experience that I have, and I like that. And I say, I have something to offer here which is useful and I feel you know, it’s helpful to bring it in. But the difference, when I am in the other one, the niggle, is that I actually take a breadth, and am called to pull back, and a, free up the space. That it’s like, there is too much of me in there. I can sense the ego coming in. |
| P. Am, I think it’s very positive. It’s also alerting me to the being silenced experience that supervisee’s have had. The overpowering feeling that supervisees have had. Sometimes I’ve seen the positive side of it, where the supervisees, get very thirsty for more searching from being empowered to come up with their own answers, facilitated through transformative questions. At other times it has turned up for them, anger and frustration, and a other feelings for them. Where they have felt unheard in the past and angry, and they have never had this kind of supervision before. They will actually voice that and say, you know, I never felt I could actually safely throw out my ideas before, come and say what I made a mess of, that I had to kinda hide this, or keep my voice back, and try and say the right think rather than the real thing. And that to me is sad for them , but exciting that they are now coming into a space that knowing what transformative supervision can be really all about. |
| Supervision as a transformative experience. |
| Power abuse by supervisees when they are being supervised. |
| Supervisors over using their power. Difficult as their supervisor to offer an alternative perspective. Black and white thinking of some supervisors when working with trainees. |
| Signing-off responsibility of supervisor can be a lonely act. |
| There are many actors in the supervision space. Don’t take their power too. Be aware of everyone involved in the trainee’s development. |
| Power presence can be glossed over though participant attempts to share their own understanding of it with the supervisee. |
| Reporting obligations catch/trap supervisors. |

R. Can, can either the supervisor or the supervisee, can we abuse our power?
P. Oh, absolutely (we both laugh) without a doubt. That’s a big one.

P. There is that moment in encountering the rigidity that I know, there is something going on here, that somebody is overusing their power, because I find it hard as their supervisor to be able to bring in a different perspective. They are gone into the black and white thinking. (R. ‘My way or the highway’ thinking.)

P. Yeah, I think it is the fear of the signing-off, and legally and responsibly what does that mean. I have put my signature to this. And it’s almost like a lonely space for the supervisor, who is taking on some responsibility, and in that moment I suppose, what I feel I am trying to bring into the conversation is ‘you are not the only one’ because the accrediting body is in the room, the training college, the organisation where the trainee is working. Don’t take all that power. You are taking too much power. Think team, think community of people that are supporting this trainee. But very often in that moment, the fear is palpable in the room for the supervisor, feeling oh, it’s my signature.

P. Even within that organisation, there may be individuals, but then the reporting catches us. I feel we really can’t work together because this is, this is a three-way contract with the

| Power abuse in supervision. |
| Power abuse by supervisor (assertive, rigid). |
| Impact of sign-off power on supervisor. |
| Context in which supervision takes place. |
| Dealing with power dynamic in supervision. |
| Influences on the supervisory process. |
There is a three-way contrast with organisations with supervisees. Their culture of power-over supervision means different things to different people.

Supervisor has keen self-awareness. Supervisor not to get cosy with supervisee.

Supervisees from different professions offer contrasting feedback. Supervisees can not transplant supervision from one profession to another. Supervisees felt colonised. Do not engage in colonisation model of supervision.

The embedded cultural context of language and the use of the word client. Need for supervisor to embrace the language of the supervisee. Supervisor has to come out of their own culture.

Important to value and welcome diversity or else organisation. The supervisee might be open to working in a power-with way, but they are caught in an organisation maybe that has a culture of power-over. Because there are different, when we say 'supervision' it means so many different things to different people.

P. Well it certainly is. I had to challenge myself about three years ago to say, well don’t get cosy with that, don’t just suddenly s and I think that’s what the cross professional piece has taught me.

P. I think one thing that really caught me was the feedback from supervisees in different professions. That maybe one profession or two professions, were taking the lead in supervision, but imposing what suited their profession and trying to plonk it into another profession and say, this is supervision and I cloned quite a strong word for it myself, and then I discovered it in other research in New Zealand. It was supervisees feeling they were colonised. (R. Wow) And that’s my mantra now. Cross professional supervisors don’t colonise another profession.

P. It’s a huge word. To me that’s like a big power word. Talking about power there, for example I had childcare workers who were struggling in supervision and came to me for kinda, a new phase of their supervision and said, 'The thing that really annoyed me in my last supervision experience was the supervisor kept calling my service users clients. I never had a client in my life. And all I could hear was the power and the colonisation of the supervisor not willing to come into the language of the supervisee. Wanting the supervisee to come into their language. And for me a supervisor has got to step out of their culture.
find a generic common language for cross professional supervision.

Broadening our frames of reference. We want to stay with what we know, the familiar, and may be reluctant to go into our challenge zone.

Language use as power use. Language as a power alert.

**P.** I think it’s about frames of reference and transformational learning. We can’t get rid of our frames of reference, but we’ve got to keep broadening them. And we want to stay in the familiar. And to open up to other frames of reference, gosh, there’s a whole different world, and this is how supervision is seen here, and this is how ethical practice is seen here, and it can be very hard to come out of my frame of reference.

**P.** Yeah, yeah. So language can be power. And watching and reflecting on my language. Even when I start calling? The supervisees by supervisees. Language alerts me there is something here, happening in the power gradient.
Appendix 8 phase 3a – Themes in chronological order

1. Philosophy of supervision.
2. Philosophy of supervision.
3. Philosophy of supervision.
4. Philosophy of supervision.
5. Impact of supervision on supervisor.
7. Expectations around role of supervisor.
8. Expectations around role/purpose of supervisor.
9. Philosophy of supervision.
10. Philosophy of supervision.
11. Concept of supervision.
12. Philosophy of supervision.
13. Philosophy of supervision.
14. Philosophy of supervision.
15. Supervision as a learning collaborative space.
17. Supervisor as non-expert.
19. Supervision as learning, collaborative space.
20. Supervision as a space for supervisee self-discovery.
22. Supervision as a space for supervisee self-discovery.
23. Impact of supervision on supervisee.
24. Philosophy of supervision.
25. Impact of supervision on supervisee.
26. Philosophy of supervision.
27. Supervisee resistance to this philosophy?
28. Impact of model on supervisee.
29. Supervisee resistance.
30. Philosophy /style of supervision.
31. Supervision as learning, collaborative space.
32. Ethical considerations in supervision.
33. Benefits to supervisee.
34. Power abuse in supervision.
35. Power abuse by supervisor (complacency).
37. Power abuse by supervisor (assertive, rigid).
38. Other supervisor’s using their power.
39. Variation in the use of power by supervisors, with supervisees at different stages in their professional career.
40. Supervisee resistance.
41. What inhibits supervision?
42. Impact of sign-off power on supervisor.
43. Context in which supervision takes place.
44. Influences on the supervisory process.
45. Philosophy of supervision.
46. Supervisor abuse of their power.
47. Impact of sign-off power on supervisor.
48. Influence of previous experiences on philosophy of supervision.
49. Different categories of supervisees.
50. Philosophy of supervision.
51. Power dynamic in supervision.
52. Concept of power (Foucault).
53. Power is ever present in the supervisory space.
54. Expectations around supervisor power use.
55. Power is ever present in the supervisory space.
56. Dealing with power dynamic in supervision.
57. Power as collegiate/shared.
58. Concept of power.
59. Power as influence.
60. Dealing with supervisee unethical behaviour.
61. Contracting in supervision.
62. Ethical tensions in supervision.
63. Ethical use of power in supervision.
64. Role of supervisor instinct in supervision.
65. Influences on supervisor power use.
67. What is negotiable and what is not.
68. Contracting in supervision.
69. Role of supervisor self-reflecting in supervision.
70. Criteria for using supervisor power.
71. Role of supervisor self-reflecting in supervision.
72. Role of supervisor self-reflecting in supervision.
73. Concept of power.
74. Concept of power.
75. Managing supervisor power.
76. Influences on the supervisory process.
77. Expectations around supervision.
78. Criteria for supervision.
79. Influences on the supervisory process.
80. Expectations around supervision.
81. Criteria for supervision.
82. Role of supervisor self-reflecting in supervision.
83. Contracting in supervision.
84. Challenge in supervision.
85. Philosophy of supervision.
86. Is there a different power dynamic when working with different professionals?
87. Supervision in non-traditional areas /professions.
88. Supervision as a profession specific engagement.
89. Transplant supervision.
90. Impact of supervision on different professions.
91. Transplant supervision.
92. Supervision as cultural imperialism.
93. Supervision and cultural representation.
94. Language as power.
95. Supervision and cultural representation.
96. Language as power.
97. Influences of supervisor’s own experiences of moving cultures on their critical self-awareness.
98. Supervisor resistance to challenge and change.
99. Language as culture.
100. Intent and impact of language use.
101. Language as a means to power.
102. Language use as a means to power.
103. Philosophy of supervision.
104. Impact of power on supervisor.
105. Power as paradox.
106. Impact of conversation on how participant might work with supervisees.
107. Philosophy of supervision.
108. Impact on supervisor.
Appendix 8 phase 3b - Super-ordinated (grouped) themes

**Philosophy of supervision**

1. Philosophy of supervision.
2. Philosophy of supervision.
3. Philosophy of supervision.
4. Philosophy of supervision.
8. Expectations around role/purpose of supervisor.
9. Philosophy of supervision.
10. Philosophy of supervision.
11. Concept of supervision.
12. Philosophy of supervision.
13. Philosophy of supervision.
14. Philosophy of supervision.
15. Supervision as a learning collaborative space.
17. Supervisor as non-expert.
19. Supervision as learning, collaborative space.
24. Philosophy of supervision.
26. Philosophy of supervision.
30. Philosophy/style of supervision.
31. Supervision as learning, collaborative space.
45. Philosophy of supervision.
50. Philosophy of supervision.
85. Philosophy of supervision.
103. Philosophy of supervision.
107. Philosophy of supervision.

**Power use in supervision**

38. Other supervisors using their power.
39. Variation in the use of power by supervisors with supervisees at different stages in their professional career.

49. Different categories of supervisees.

86. Is there a different power dynamic when working with different professionals?

**Power dynamic in supervision**

51. Power dynamic in supervision.

52. Concept of power (Foucault).

53. Power is ever present in the supervisory space.

55. Power is ever present in the supervisory space.

56. Dealing with power dynamic in supervision.

57. Power as collegiate/shared.

58. Concept of power.

59. Power as influence.

73. Concept of power.

74. Concept of power.

75. Managing supervisor power.

105. Power as paradox.

**Power abuse in supervision**

34. Power abuse in supervision.

35. Power abuse by supervisor (complacency).


37. Power abuse by supervisor (assertive, rigid).

46. Supervisor abuse of their power.

**Contracting in supervision**

7. Expectations around role of supervisor.

54. Expectations around supervisor power use.

61. Contracting in supervision.

67. What is negotiable and what is not.
68. Contracting in supervision.

70. Criteria for using supervisor power.

77. Expectations around supervision.

78. Criteria for supervision.

80. Expectations around supervision.

81. Criteria for supervision.

83. Contracting in supervision.

106. Impact of conversation on how participant might work with supervisees.

**Impact of supervision on supervisor**

5. Impact of supervision on supervisor.


42. Impact of sign-off power on supervisor.

47. Impact of sign-off power on supervisor.

104. Impact of power on supervisor.

108. Impact on supervisor.

**Impact of supervision on supervisee**


23. Impact of supervision on supervisee.

25. Impact of supervision on supervisee.

27. Supervisee resistance to this philosophy?

28. Impact of model on supervisee.

29. Supervisee resistance.

40. Supervisee resistance.

**Supervisor self-reflection and discovery**

20. Supervision as a space for supervisee self-discovery.

22. Supervision as a space for supervisee self-discovery.

69. Role of supervisor self-reflecting in supervision.
71. Role of supervisor self-reflecting in supervision.
72. Role of supervisor self-reflecting in supervision.
82. Role of supervisor self-reflecting in supervision.

**Supervision as representation of culture**

89. Transplant supervision.
91. Transplant supervision.
92. Supervision as cultural imperialism.
93. Supervision and cultural representation.
95. Supervision and cultural representation.

**Context of supervision**

43. Context in which supervision takes place.
44. Influences on the supervisory process.
65. Influences on supervisor power use.
76. Influences on the supervisory process.
79. Influences on the supervisory process.

**Ethical dimension of supervision**

32. Ethical considerations in supervision.
60. Dealing with supervisee unethical behaviour.
62. Ethical tensions in supervision.
63. Ethical use of power in supervision.

**Language in supervision**

94. Language as power.
96. Language as power.
99. Language as culture.
100. Intent and impact of language use.
101. Language as a means to power.
102. Language use as a means to power.
Influence of previous experience on philosophy of supervision

48. Influence of previous experiences on philosophy of supervision.

97. Influences of supervisor’s own experiences of moving cultures on their critical self-awareness.

Cross – professional supervision

87. Supervision in non-traditional areas /professions.

88. Supervision as a profession specific engagement.

90. Impact of supervision on different professions.

Orphan themes

33. Benefits to supervisee.

41. What inhibits supervision?

64. Role of supervisor instinct in supervision.

84. Challenge in supervision.

98. Supervisor resistance to challenge and change.
## Appendix 8 phase 3c – Extracts from super-ordinated (grouped) themes with supporting text and reference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Philosophy of supervision.</td>
<td>P.1,L.11-15</td>
<td>P. Oh, that’s a big question. Firstly, there is two things in that question. One, I don’t really see myself as a clinical supervisor (R. Ok) I kinda see it as more, as you know, cross professional supervisor, with some clinical supervision, but more than that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Philosophy of supervision.</td>
<td>P.1,L.15-18</td>
<td>P. Around power, I would say, I think supervision is a very powerful space, transformative space. So I would say, I am acutely aware of it, but also, blind to elements of my own power in the supervisory space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Philosophy of supervision.</td>
<td>P.1,L.18-22</td>
<td>P. I think then, the area I am most vigilant around is making sure that I don’t go into that kinda apprenticeship model as a cross professional supervisor. I am very sensitive to that, that, it’s a collaborative learning space for me supervision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. Power dynamics in supervision.</td>
<td>P.6,L.35-38</td>
<td>P. … because, am, I suppose my own experience is sometimes the power, the reality of the power can get lost with the collegial more experienced supervisors. (R. Ok) The power is still there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61. Contracting in supervision.</td>
<td>P.7,L.2-5</td>
<td>P. As you say it would be, as you say, the whole contracting leading in, saying about part of the contract is, if there are some non-negotiable, more not suggestions, but requests and necessary actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Impact of sign-off power on supervisor.</td>
<td>P.5,L.28-30</td>
<td>P. Yeah, I think it is the fear of the signing-off, and legally and responsibly what does that mean. I have put my signature to this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69. Role of supervisor self-reflecting in supervision.</td>
<td>P.9,L.5-8</td>
<td>P. and again it would be if I had a solid, kinda well reflected on, sense that there is somebody at risk here. Either the supervisor themselves, or clients, or an organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. Influences on the supervisory process.</td>
<td>P.5,L.37-43</td>
<td>P. Think team, think community of people that are supporting this trainee. But very often in that moment, the fear is palpable in the room for the supervisor, feeling oh, it’s my signature.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>P.1,L.15</td>
<td>P. Around power, I would say, I think supervision is a very powerful space, transformative space. So I would say, I am acutely aware of it, but also, blind to elements of my own power in the supervisory space.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>P.1,L.22</td>
<td>P. That doesn’t mean I give my power away. I have my role, I have power and responsibilities, but I am very aware of the battle.</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>P.2,L.3</td>
<td>P. … and I have to let go of the power, to let a higher power, or a greater power into the learning space.</td>
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<td>49.</td>
<td>P.49,L.22</td>
<td>R. Yeah and the thought that is coming to my head now is, you mentioned a lot about the trainees. I think there are three types, there is trainees, there are people going, we’ll say have their degree, diploma or whatever it is, going for accreditation, and then post accreditation experienced practitioners.</td>
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<td>51.</td>
<td>P.6,L.3</td>
<td>P. … because, am, I suppose my own experience is sometimes the power, the reality of the power can get lost with the collegial more experienced supervisors. (R. Ok) The power is still there.</td>
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<td>55.</td>
<td>P.7,L.1</td>
<td>P. … somebody has and exercising that power, it may have gone off the radar, but it is still in the room.</td>
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<td>57.</td>
<td>P.6,L.2</td>
<td>P. That’s basically how I understand power. And usually when I mention power with</td>
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73. Concept of power.

34. Power abuse in supervision.

35. Power abuse by supervisor (complacency).

7. Expectations around role of supervisor.

61. Contracting in supervision.

80. Expectations around supervision.

5. Impact of supervision on supervisor.

P.9,L.2 8-30

P.10,L.1-2

P.14,L.10-13

P.6,L.6-7

P.7,L.7-10

P.10,L.24-26

P.1,L.2 5-32

colleagues.

P. So for me it’s, I have, there is no such thing as neutrality. Your influence is for good or bad. So that is how I understand power.

R. Can, can either the supervisor or the supervisee, can we abuse our power? P. Oh, absolutely (we both laugh) without a doubt. That’s a big one.

P. When supervisors are, maybe slipping out of their usual way of being, and they have gone into. Usually a lot of the time it’s with the trainees.

P. And me wanting to stay with the questions and empower. Not to give my answer and sometimes catching myself where I have gone and given an answer, and then I go, ‘wow I got caught there’. And it could be in the session, and it could be after the session. I say, what happened there? In a sense I didn’t empower, I overpowered with an answer.

P. As you say it would be, as you say, the whole contracting leading in, saying about part of the contract is, if there are some non-negotiable, more not suggestions, but requests and necessary actions.

P. Because there are different, when we say ‘supervision’ it means so many different things to different people.

P. When I first started as a supervisor, expecting myself to move into that more expert role. I should have something to offer, and sometimes we can be pushed into it, of power are limiting and do not fully address its complex nature.

Here again the participant is mirroring my own understanding of power. I feel affirmed in this but also need to be aware of the importance of not getting complacent in my stance, just because it is affirmed by another supervisor.

This intrigued me - supervisor complacency as an abuse/misuse of their power. Am I complacent in not challenging them? I realise I tend to be very aware of how I am working with trainees and pre-accredited supervisees. Is my desire to be more collegiate with experienced supervisees also making me more complacent? Are our sessions too cosy? Almost collusive to the point of being of no value? More reflection needed.

Do I always want to be a ‘Mr. Fixit’ supervisor? Am I using a medical model of supervision in which a supervisee presents problems and I offer solutions? It may be the easiest way to work, but I don’t think it empowers my supervisee. In fact, I think it does the very opposite. It further disempowers my supervisee, undermines their ability to deal with issues, and further enlarges the perceived or actual asymmetrical relationship between me and my supervisee.

What are my non-negotiable elements in supervision? What ones will I be flexible around? What determines the non-negotiable and the negotiable elements? How did I arrive at this decision? And what influenced it? Are those reasons still a good basis on which to currently base my decisions? Do I need to revisit them?

Especially true in cross professional supervision. Where supervisees are from a non-counselling background. I need to clarify meaning and expectations around supervision at the beginning.

I smiled when I read this. As a new supervisor I was bristling with expertise and knowledge! I knew all the theories of supervision and felt I was able for whatever my supervisees threw at me. That is not the way I now supervise. Being powerful as a supervisor, meant letting
<p>| 6. Power dynamic in supervision – impact on supervisor. | feeling pushed into it by supervisees wanting me to take up that power of the more experienced person. And I suppose, that’s continued for all of many, many, years I have been in supervision, and in the supervisory role. To me where I get that little niggle of power. |
| 42. Impact of sign-off power on supervisor. | P. When I feel the tension maybe, whether it’s one to one, or a group, where I feel there is a power movement around expectations of roles and identities, wanting me maybe to give an answer. |
| 23. Impact of supervision on supervisee. | P. Yeah, I think it is the fear of the signing-off, and legally and responsibly what does that mean. I have put my signature to this. |
| 92. Supervision as cultural imperialism. | P. At other times it has turned up for them, anger and frustration, and other feelings for them. Where they have felt unheard in the past and angry, and they have never had this kind of supervision before. |
| 43. Context in which supervision takes place. | P. … and then I discovered it in other research in New Zealand. It was supervisees feeling they were colonised. (R. Wow) And that’s my mantra now. Cross professional supervisors don’t colonise another profession. |
| | P. And it’s almost like a lonely space for the supervisor, who is taking on some responsibility, and in that moment I suppose, what I feel I am trying to bring into the go of my power and sharing it with my supervisee. Daring to invite the supervisee into a creative space as a co-creator. Some supervisees are not comfortable in taking on this role and the power and responsibility that goes with it. |
| | So often I fall into the trap of giving answers, rather than exploring issues with supervisees. Staying with them in their ’stuckness’ might be a better option. |
| | Frequently I wonder when I am signing-off on a supervisee: What exactly am I doing here and what impact is it having on me and on the supervisee? For me, it is both exciting and humbling. Exciting to see a supervisee successfully negotiate a milestone in their professional career, and humbling in that I have been bestowed with this responsibility by my professional colleagues. It can be fearful. |
| | Supervision should be a place where my supervisees find their voice, struggle and wrestle with issues in a safe environment. It is not a passive mono-directional activity, in which supervisor dispenses their wisdom to the qualified but inexperienced supervisee. What works in clinical supervision in one Country may not work or even be appropriate for supervision in another country. The use of the word ‘colonisation’ is indeed a very powerful one. It brings to my mind forms of cultural dominance and hegemony that existed throughout the history of humankind. Most of these are not positive ones. What can I do in my supervision practice to become aware of all my biases (cultural and others)? |
| | I am not God. I am a supervisor. My Power is limited and circumscribed by my role. Others have roles to play in the professional development of my supervisee. Something I need to remember. |</p>
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<tr>
<th>44. Influences on the supervisory process.</th>
<th>conversation is ‘you are not the only one’ because the accrediting body is in the room, the training college, the organisation where the trainee is working. Don’t take all that power. You are taking too much power.</th>
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<td>62. Ethical tensions in supervision.</td>
<td><strong>P.</strong> Think team, think community of people that are supporting this trainee. But very often in that moment, the fear is palpable in the room for the supervisor, feeling oh, it’s my signature. And I’d say, it’s your signature on the report that has come in from another body. You are answering questions that are guided by another body, and you are answering them with the trainee.</td>
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<td>63. Ethical use of power in supervision.</td>
<td><strong>P.</strong> …and I feel there is an at-risk issue, for there is something there, as you say, ethical for me, I would have to come into my own power. And to do that I would have to reflect beforehand. I’d go for supervision myself. I’d journal.</td>
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<td>102. Language use as a means to power.</td>
<td><strong>P.</strong> So I’d prepare myself a lot to use my power. Not to step away from the power that’s in my role. But sometimes I have, I know I have let it go too long. Maybe for a week or a month. And trying to salvage the relationship, trying not to maybe breakdown the learning relationship that might wait a bit too long. That would be more about me using my power than the supervisor blocking me. That would be something I’d have to do.</td>
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These comments capture the way I sometimes feel when signing-off on my supervisees.

In particular, it sometimes annoys and vexes me when I am trying to answer some of the questions other bodies ask. I now ask my supervisees, if there are any report forms that I have to fill out, to let me have sight of them at the contracting stage of supervision. We then go through them, and if there are issues for me or the supervisee, we discuss them.

This piece reminds me of one of my critical concerns as a supervisor. I cannot abandon or renounce my power. That would be unethical. At times, I may have to unilaterally assert it, though not before considerable reflection beforehand.

Like this participant, I have sometimes ignored my instinct (to assert my power) for fear of damaging my relationship with the supervisee. Yet this piece reminds me that I need to be clear that the primary purpose of supervision is the welfare of the client (as well as that of the supervisee). Avoidance of my power-responsibility is for me a form of abuse of my power as a supervisor. Non-use is misuse.

I may mediate or try to ameliorate the power differential with my supervisee, but I do so through the medium of language. Words are imbued with power and symbols, and what words I use and how I use them sends a message to my supervisees. Basically, I need to be careful what I say.
| P.11,L. 22-26 | P. I would see and experience some professions that haven’t got a long history of supervision. There is a freshness and openness to the transformative element of it, and not kinda superimposing an approach to supervision from another profession. | and how I say it. In addition, I need to be conscious that my understanding of the words may not be shared by the person I am talking to. Maybe my established supervision practices and traditions are inhibiting me from working creatively and being open to new and exciting ways of working. Maybe I and the supervision profession need a *table-rasa* to reawaken and ignite an explosive creativity in the profession. |
Appendix 8 phase 3e - List of all themes (all participants)

Contracting as creating a safe space
Ageism in supervision
Academic influences in supervision
Supervision as space for reflection
The role of the supervisor
Influence of governing bodies
Philosophy as an exercise of power
Supervision as a space for a mutual learning relationship
Monitoring–gatekeeping role/function of supervisor
How participants interpret their power
Impact of power on supervisor
Power balance-dance in supervision
Supervisors’ awareness of power
Power as positive
Coercive power
Variation in power awareness/influence when working with supervisees
Power as an entity
Gender in supervision
Impact of power (on supervisor)
Power impact (on supervisee)
Fear of supervisee
Supervisor fears regarding consequences of their power
The Ego
Other influences in the room
Cultural context
Language as power
Supervisee power, use and misuse
Appendix 8 phase 4 - Master list of super-ordinate and subordinate themes

**Super-ordinate theme (1):** The impact of power.

Subordinate themes:

(1a) The roles that supervisors take on and act out of;

(1b) How participants’ philosophy of supervision informs these actions;

(1c) Creating a safe space through contracting;

(1d) Monitoring/gatekeeping role of supervisor.

**Super-ordinate theme (2):** Awareness of power in supervision.

Subordinate themes:

(2a) How power is present in supervision (energy, a supervisor stance, style of interaction between participants and their supervisees);

(2b) Language as power;

(2c) Stroking the ego;

(2d) Use and misuse of supervisee power.

**Super-ordinate theme (3):** Power as an entity in supervision.

Subordinate themes:

(3a) The power dance in supervision;

(3b) Supervisor power as something positive;

(3c) Supervisors’ fears regarding the consequences of their power;

(3d) Supervisors’ fears of their supervisees;

(3e) How supervisors perceive their power impacts on their supervisees.

**Super-ordinate theme (4):** Sharing power in supervision.

Subordinate themes:

(4a) Influence of governing bodies;

(4b) Influence of academic organisations;

(4c) Gender issues in supervision;

(4d) Cultural context of supervision.
Appendix 8 phase 5 - Supporting verbatim extracts from participants.

Super-ordinate theme (1): The impact of power.

14.1, P.1, L.7-8 I see my power as a responsibility.

14.3, P.12, L.28-29 I mean, sure everybody in life has positions of power and influence. (R. We all have yeah.) I would think of it like as a responsibility, I suppose you know. It’s a responsibility.

14.4, P.13, L.49-51 So you have the, when you carry responsibility, you carry power, whatever way you look at it.

15.9, P.8, L.21-23 And I am very clear that as a supervisor I have a responsibility. I’ve always thought of it as responsibility more than power.

15.13, P.1, L.9-12 …that the word ‘power’ doesn’t actually sit comfortably at all, and I don’t see it in my lexicon of language at all. I prefer to use the word ‘responsibility’, because that’s what I believe I have.

15.14, P.4, L.4-5 So they call it responsibility in that moment, I should share responsibility. I say, you share the power.

15.9, P.11, L.46-48 So, the power, the ethical responsibility is a positive and a good thing and necessary. P. Absolutely necessary, yeah.

Subordinate theme (1a): The roles that supervisors take on and act out of.

14.1, P.3, L.20-24 Well you see the, the way I would, the way I deal with that is, I, I see ah, am they have to feed off me, and the reason they are coming to me is that I am a little a bit ahead of them

15.13, P.5, L.9-10 Yeah, yeah, and so yes, certainly, I am sort of being, there is a bit of the mummy in me coming out with the trainees.

4.02, P.6, L.46-51 Well it would be maybe knowing that maybe I am more experienced say that somebody else. I have more knowledge in certain areas.

15.7, P.15, L.32-37 I’m here to be a third eye, a neutral person, provide a space, where we throw out stuff, help the person reflect.

14.4, P.6, L.8-15 Yeah, and I suppose I see it as maybe the friendly grandparent, or all of those.

Subordinate theme: (1b) How participants’ philosophy of supervision informs these actions.

14.4, P.8, L.50-51 And I can’t work with that, (R. Ok) you know. It doesn’t sit comfortably with me. So I’m not being authentic or genuine.
I would be back to my gut, and I’d be trying to, if there was something going on.

It is interesting that you say that from the past. And I’ve trained in a certain way, and you know I am a stickler. Set the record straight. I suppose there is a control point of view there as well, you know. I’m transparent. I’m very transparent and to my detriment.

It does and it doesn’t. It doesn’t, because, maybe I am getting more comfortable in myself as I get older. I don’t know whether that has something to do with it as well. But I know also that my relationship with my supervisors in the past has enhanced that comforting me, if you know what I mean.

**Subordinate theme (1c): Creating a safe space through contracting.**

I suppose that’s a bit of empowerment in that as well, I can do you know, you can end your supervision (R. A dance almost.) Yeah yeah, if we’re not fitting, then, it’s back to the contract.

So I would place a great emphasis on contracting and on flagging the expectations of the supervisee and the expectations of the supervisor.

In the sense that if something goes wrong, or if something is, that responsibility does lie with you, to be honest, to tell, that the work is done properly, and safely, safely (R. Yeah) it’s about safety.

**Subordinate theme: (1d) Monitoring and gatekeeping role of supervisor.**

…out, there is a power in it, and yes you have a sign-off on people. But I don’t think, but for me anyway, it doesn’t get in the way. (R. Ok yeah) to put it that way.

We are in a responsible position; we are gatekeepers for the profession when we are doing supervision.

What I suppose I would want to emphasise is the positive nature of the power in the relationship. While the other stuff is there and there is the possibility that you could worry that I’m going to be signing-off on you, so you have to play ball, and you have to be a good boy. (R. Play the game almost). I really want to try and not let that happen.

Well I suppose a big thing is having to sign-off for people for their reaccreditation.

**Super-ordinate theme (2): Awareness of power in supervision.**

I am certainly aware of it, am, I suppose varying levels of awareness of it, depending on the supervisee I am working with (R. Ok) Am, reflecting on that issue of power, there are a number of different categories that come to mind.
It goes without saying, it actually is there. And maybe a look on my face could be power that I am not even aware of.

Yeah yes yeah. I am very aware of the responsibility I have.

I’m not generally, to be honest with you most of the time I don’t. (R. Ok) I’m not aware of it being in the way, or I’m certainly not conscious of it (power).

I would say that I’m always aware of it actually. I’m always quite aware of it. I would be, I’d be comfortable with it. I’d be, I suppose, it’s, I’d be thinking about it at the beginning with supervisees.

But I would be much more aware now, even in my supervisory relationship with a peer who has had the same experience or longer, that there is a power relationship involved and it might be something that I’d want to talk about.

Subordinate theme: (2a) How power is present in supervision (entity, a supervisor stance, style of interaction between participants and their supervisees).

Yeah, I think it is there like an energy there that, you know, the energy is there. It’s not always easy to put in words. (R. No.) It’s there, hmmm, yeah. P. It comes and goes.

Well not as strong as that. But in talking about it, I feel there is no, no supervision without power. That it is woven into it like a tapestry in the nuances as well as in the actual, am, pieces that you have to call on.

Am, I suppose it’s something, its subtle, it’s there and it can be used or abused I suppose. Power in any situation, you know. So that, am, like power in supervision to me is just holding, like, it’s not, I don’t know how to answer it.

And when it’s pulled out of the hat it can be a shock, because it got all collegial and nice and suddenly, we are getting real around, there is an asymmetrical relationship here. The power is always in the room.

Subordinate theme: (2b) Language as power.

Yeah, yeah. So language can be power. And watching and reflecting on my language. Even when I start calling the supervisees supervisees. Language alerts me there is something here, happening in the power gradient.

Yeah and that is why language is so important. I consciously do reflect on the language I use in supervision. Trying to catch myself, and sometimes I would be really trying to transcribe verbatim from memory after a session, just to try and catch the language. And I notice the shifts in me come out in my language. It’s powerful.
Subordinate theme: (2c) Stroking the ego.

14.5, P.9, L.18 It’s the ego more than, but then power and ego, it’s yeah.

15.6 P.4, L.44-46 … amm when I have power I like to know that I don’t get off on power. I’m not one of these people that likes to be in charge.

15.11, P.8, L.38-42 When he got accredited he immediately sent a text saying he got accredited and so much thanks to you and I felt Huh! (R. Nice one.) I felt my ego was been stroked you know. It’s only now as I’m talking about it that I would see that has any sense in a power issue.

15.14, P.2, L.17-21 That it’s like, there is too much of me in there. I can sense the ego coming in.

15.8, P.5, L.1-4 P. Ahh, its good it’s affirming. I suppose. The danger is that the two, that it might appeal to one’s grandiosity (both laugh), I don’t think!

Subordinate theme: (2d) Use and misuse of supervisee power.

15.9, P.11, L.17-21 Can supervisees abuse their power? P. They can. Like anybody else, they cannot be prepared. They can cancel you know. That’s all stuff. That’s power as well. They can. I suppose they can duck and dive. They can maybe choose not to bring something.

14.1, P.14, L.21-25 Well you know something, they can play the game. (R. laughs) They could say “yes I will do all of that” and do nothing.

15.8, P.17, L.17-21 Well they have power. The power of withholding of what they bring, of what they disclose. If they are anxious about something, are they bringing the ones they are concerned about?

Super-ordinate theme (3): Power as an entity in supervision.

15.9, P.1, L.8-12 Am, I suppose it’s something, it’s subtle, it’s there and it can be used or abused I suppose. Power in any situation, you know. So that, am, I, like power in supervision to me is just holding, like, it’s not, I don’t know how to answer it (we both laugh).

15.8, P.7, L.47-49 I think that’s something that might be a danger for me a lack of owning my power, and saying look, let’s allocate this and we will give this much time at the end.

15.7, P.3, L.29-31 Power doesn’t sit well with me at some level and sometimes I feel I’ve got a power that I’m a bit resentful about, because I think some of these should have been addressed already.

15.6, P.1, L.6-8 Power perhaps is a word that perhaps I don’t particularly use myself. I don’t like it. I do think there needs to be a certain amount of it.
15.8, P.6, L.1-2 I don’t see myself, or I don’t view myself as somebody with power, and yet I do have it and I suppose that’s a blind spot, isn’t it.

15.10, P.5, L.19-22 I would talk about empowering people, and empowering people is fine. But just the word power on its own, it’s not a comfortable word, no.

15.13, P.1, L.9-12 The word power doesn’t actually sit comfortably at all, and I don’t see it in my lexicon of language at all. I prefer to use the word responsibility, because that’s what I believe I have.

15.14, P.1, L.36-38 When I feel the tension maybe, whether it’s one to one, or a group, where I feel there is a power movement around expectations of roles and identities, wanting me maybe to give an answer.

Subordinate theme: (3a) The power dance in supervision.

14.02, P.4, L.21-23 Maybe I am taking too much (laughs) too much responsibility for it. That’s what I’d kinda feel in, would be different with the peer supervision.

14.3, P.2, L.19-22 I was unsure with my supervisee, there was an imbalance of power between the two of us and that trickled down.

14.4, P.1, L.26-30 But there obviously would be, there is a balance of power (R. Yeah) you know, and I suppose I have become more aware over the years, am of the responsibility of it, more than I might have been in the earlier days.

14.5, P.2, L.10-12 Like I would find sometimes to be strong, and hold my power (R. Mmm, right.) in an ethical way.

14.5, P.16, L.50-51 …and that, that, you almost, you almost, want the, you want to share the power, even if the supervisees are almost reluctant to (P. Yeah) claim theirs.

15.7, P.1, L.39-43 But again and I, I, think that, I, suppose that there can be a power struggle, then power I would say for some around, for some there is a high anxiety around; are you going to sign-off if you are challenging certain things.

15.9, P.3, L.6-9 I am sure there is definitely a power balance (R. Yes) because they’re almost looking at you having to mark and they’re more at the first stage of supervision, you know they’re dependent, they’re dependent on supervision.

Subordinate theme: (3b) Supervisor power as something positive.

14.1, P.9, L.21-24 Yes I do have power, but I, I, you’re right. I use it in a positive way and that, I suppose that, if it’s [supervision] not working, what’s the point.

14.02, P. 6, L.33-36 It am, yeah it can be. You know I think power can be positive and, am, and, you have it you know as well as long as you use it in a kinda proper fashion. Ah, ah, and it’s so, so, it sits well with me so it ok with me, yeah.
Subordinate theme: (3c) Supervisors’ fears regarding the consequences of their power.

15.11, P.5, L.8-18 I know I would find it very difficult. Very, very difficult to say, ‘No, in my opinion, this person isn’t, shouldn’t go ahead’ (R. Ok) I mean I am. This is a theoretical kinda scenario, because it hasn’t happened. But I think I would, I would struggle. I know I would struggle, because I know myself, that I like to please people and all that stuff is there.

15.14, P.5, L.28-30 Yeah, I think it is the fear of the signing-off, and legally and responsibly what does that mean. I have put my signature to this.

Subordinate theme: (3d) Supervisors’ fear of their supervisees.

14.3, P.9, L.40-46 But there is an edge to her. So there is a part of me that’s a little bit afraid of her (laughs).

14.4, P.9, L.43-48 P. Another occasion where I had someone who didn’t, who abused the supervision. R. Ok, yeah. The supervisee, the supervisee? You felt you were being abused? P. Yeah I did.

15.9, P.11, L.7-9 I was very guarded in that. I think it is the only supervision relationship that I actually felt I was guarding. I felt it a disadvantage, you know.

Subordinate theme: (3e) How supervisors perceive their power impacts on their supervisees.

15.9, P.2, L.5-7 R. How do you feel your power impacts on the supervisee? P. I don’t think it impacts very often (R. Right). It’s when something comes up that’s serious.

15.9, P.8, L.12-14 Oh yeah. I think they would have an awareness of power, yeah. There, as I say, there. I suppose we have power in every situation.

15.12, P4, L.13-16 I would feel that the trainee, the person who is attending or taking part in a training institute or somebody who is, I would feel that they would be very conscious of the power.

15.14, P.2, L.34-38 So how might it impact the supervisee? It can confuse them, if I am not in the role that they expect me to be in. I can see confusion, and sense confusion, and to hold that is a challenge, but it’s possible.

Super-ordinate theme (4): Sharing power in supervision.

15.9, P.12, L.9-12 Am, I think supervision is tough work, that’s all. I have, I mean, I like, but sometimes I’ve thought over the years, especially when you are into a sort of reporting thing, or whatever.

15.9, P.4, L.32-33 I think the marking for students for me is uncomfortable, very uncomfortable.
15.12, P.11, L.13-17 I suppose I am aware of it, and I suppose sometimes, some of the accrediting bodies place a greater responsibility on to the shoulders of the supervisor for whether or not the supervisee gets accreditation. (R. Yeah) So I am particularly conscious of it there, and sometimes we’ll say that it can be a little bit onerous.

15.12, P.11, L.20-24 But certainly for some accrediting bodies, as for some training institutes, the amount of, that’s left to the supervisor to, to off on, is very significant.

15.14, P.5, L.12-16 The third presence in the room. It is usually about an accrediting body.

**Subordinate theme: (4a) Influence of governing bodies.**

14.02, P.2, L.1-4 supervising someone, and maybe you weren’t happy with their way of working or whatever (R. Yeah) and I’d wonder if you brought that to the association, am, how they would deal with it.

14.02, P.1, L.33-40 Am well as I say, I ah the whole kinda thing of power, am, and I suppose, one of the things that maybe, I’d wonder about is you know, am in, in, the kinda the, the, the, long run, be, say with the association.

**Subordinate theme: (4b) Influence of the academic establishment.**

14.5, P.15, L.17-20 And there is a whole other thing going on around the academic end of it. And the academics, the way they have gone at the moment, they’re not interested in personal therapy, or anything to do with it.

15.13, P.10, L.17-20 Yes absolutely and you know it’s becoming much more of a kinda in some ways a more an intellectual endeavour and just because you may have written a couple of essays, and am, got there.

15.13, P.13, L.11-13 My fear is the intellectuals may win. The way everyone wants to be accredited (P. Yes).

**Subordinate theme: (4c) Gender issues in supervision.**

14.02, P.2, L.40-43 And I pointed that out to him, and you know we talked a bit about it, and I think that you know, he accepted it.

14.4, P.10, L.39-43 I went away, and I wasn’t comfortable, and I felt I needed to address that. I felt he was actually, there were a few others, he was quite rude, em but I was also annoyed with my reaction, which was immediately to be defensive.

15.11, P.8, L.9-13 Now I find that quite difficult, and when you try to challenge it at all, ‘but I did hear what you said I did’, actually females more than males. I don’t want to. I find men much more. You rarely get that with men.
Subordinate theme: (4d) Cultural context of supervision.

15.14, P.12, L.12-14 And all I could hear was the power and the colonisation of the supervisor not willing to come into the language of the supervisee. Wanting the supervisee to come into their language. And for me a supervisor has got to step out of their culture.