



Ethics, Competence, and the Role of Supervision in Developing Self-Knowledge

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As pointed out by both Cooperⁱ, and Mandusiak and Sandhuⁱⁱ, in the excellent series of articles on diversity in the Summer 2014 issue of *Psynopsis*, psychologist self-knowledge is very important to understanding and serving the best interests of clients. Such self-knowledge includes awareness of one's own diversities, values, biases, and culture, as well as awareness of one's understanding of and attitudes to power, oppression and privilege.

Attention to self-knowledge (sometimes also termed "self-awareness" or "self-reflection"), has an interesting history within psychology. Prior to the 1960s, when mentioned at all in the psychology literature, self-knowledge referred to what clients needed or managed to achieve through psychological services. With the exception of the stream of psychology that required analysis as part of training, rarely did the mention of self-knowledge refer to something needed by psychologists. However, with the increased awareness and acknowledgment in the 1960s of racism and sexism in society came increased recognition that such attitudes also existed in science and in the helping professions, including the scientific, practice, and teaching activities of psychologists.^{iii,iv} With this increased recognition came an increased awareness of the role of self-knowledge in avoiding racism and sexism.

When the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists* was first adopted in 1986, non-discrimination was included as a value under Respect for the Dignity of Persons (Principle I). However, the *Code* also contained several references to self-knowledge and self-reflection. Self-knowledge was presented as an essential component of competence, which in turn was viewed as essential for psychologists to benefit and not cause harm to clients, students, research participants, supervisees, or others (Principle II). Self-knowledge also was portrayed as essential to avoiding bias and maintaining integrity in all psychological activities (Principle III), and as part of being reflective about the place of psychology in society and the ways the profession and discipline of psychology might be contributing to or detracting from beneficial societal changes (Principle IV). These portrayals of non-discrimination and of self-knowledge and self-reflection have remained in the *Code* across its two revisions, with only small wording changes.

Attention in the psychological literature to the importance of self-knowledge to being an ethical psychologist has increased exponentially since 1986, particularly with respect to the connection between self-knowledge and the competent provision of services. This has been due partly to increased research and knowledge about various diversities (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, abilities, age, and race) and partly due to an increasingly knowledgeable public that became more assertive regarding what it expected from relationships with professionals; however, it also has been the result of rapidly advancing globalization and the expanding multi-

cultural nature of most societies, which has challenged psychologists to find ways to provide services that benefit and do not harm clients with worldviews, cultures, beliefs, and sociopolitical histories different from their own.

In spite of agreement about the importance of self-knowledge in meeting these challenges, relatively little is available in the literature regarding how best to promote the development of self-knowledge in ourselves and those we supervise. One recent promising resource for both supervisors and supervisees is *Multiculturalism and Diversity in Clinical Supervision: A Competency-Based Approach*, edited by Falender, Shafranske, and Falicov. Although not reflected in the title, the major theme of the book is helping trainee supervisees to develop the self-knowledge needed to provide services that are respectful of and that benefit and do not harm clients. Several chapters demonstrate this by focussing on a particular diversity (e.g., culture, gender, race, immigration,

socio-economic status, disabilities, religiousness and spirituality, sexual orientation, and being a member of an indigenous people). Other chapters provide integrative models and approaches for responding to the multiple diversities that help form the personal identity of clients, supervisees, and supervisors.

Although each chapter provides a brief synopsis of some of the major issues and empirical findings related to the chapter's focus, the book's primary emphasis is the role of clinical supervision in the development of self-knowledge. Other than the introductory and final chapters, each chapter includes examples of supervision session conversations that demonstrate the process involved and the growth in self-knowledge. One chapter provides interesting personal reflections by three supervisees on their experience with this type of supervision. Another theme throughout the book is the importance of supervisors being self-aware and of their ability to create a safe environment for supervisees' self-reflection.

In fact, the tone of the book very much embodies the ethical principles and values espoused in the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists* and in CPA's *Ethical Guidelines for Supervision in Psychology*.

Although some Canadian readers might find the content a little too American in its examples and concerns, and some might find the treatment methods used in the examples quite different from their own, supervisees and supervisors will find much valuable information in this book regarding the use of the supervisory relationship to develop the self-knowledge needed for competencies related to multiculturalism and diversity.

Invitation: If you have topics or issues that you would like to see covered in future Ethics Corner articles, please let us know by sending an email to ethicscttee@cpa.ca.

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