

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

*“Practice is personal and holistic and cannot be divided by discipline”.*

*(Jarvis, 1999, p.81)*

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

*(Czarniawska-Joerges, 1997, p.71)*

### Overview – how I engaged with the literature

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

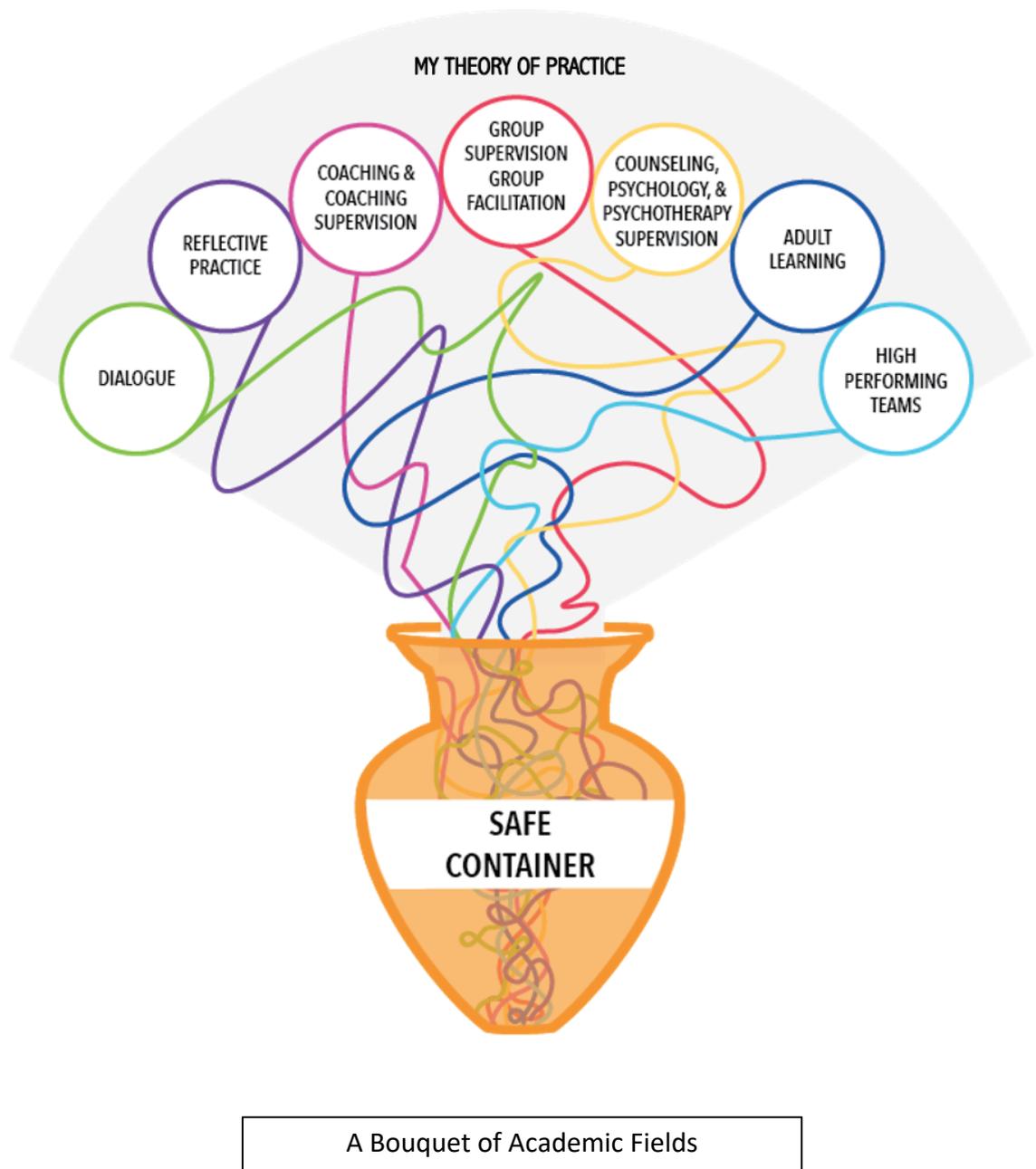


Figure 2: A Bouquet of Academic Fields

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

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

### Reflective Practice

*“We resort to reflection only when we require guidance in negotiating a step in a series of actions or run into difficulty in understanding a new experience”.*

*(Mezirow 1991, pp.116-117)*

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

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

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

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

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

### Reflective Practice is a full body experience

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

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

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

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

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

### [Isaacs described the container for dialogue](#)

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

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

### Intentional attention: deep listening

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

### Theory U: Requisite elements of the container for transformative learning

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

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

The move down the U (Scharmer, 2009) is described linearly, see the image below<sup>2</sup>, although in real life it does not necessarily happen in the order it is presented.

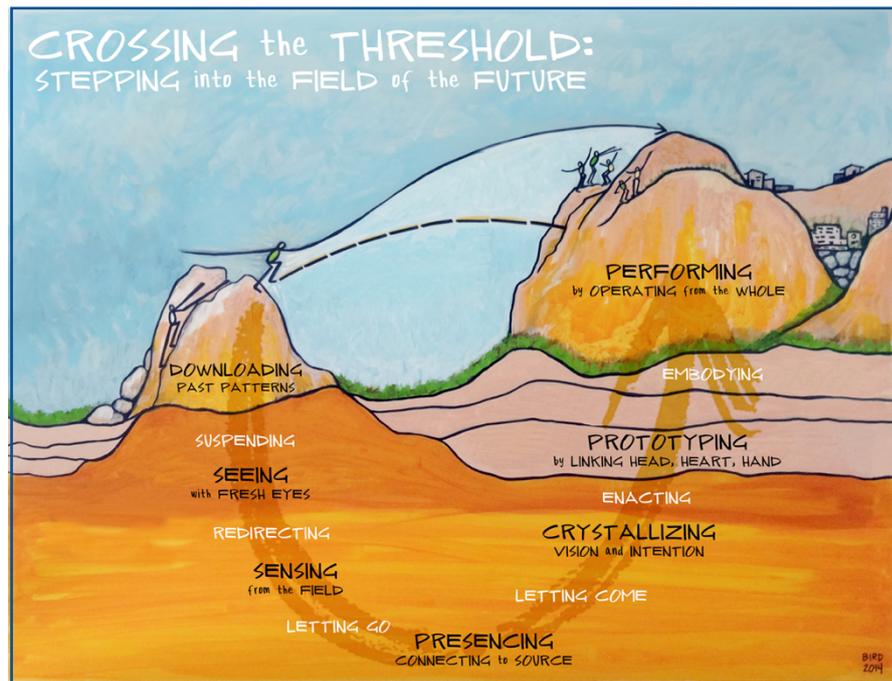


Figure 3: Theory U

There were many sessions within the groups where the move to sensing happened. Sensing is described as people engaged at a deeper level of presence and connection—more inquiry with “genuine questions”, “thinking together”, each one seeing one’s self as part of the larger system (ibid., pp.146-147).

Genuine curiosity and care provided the coaches the opportunities to see their

<sup>2</sup> This work is licensed by the Presencing Institute - Otto Scharmer, Source of the image: [https://www.presencing.org/assets/images/theory-u/TU\\_1\\_Threshold\\_850h.png](https://www.presencing.org/assets/images/theory-u/TU_1_Threshold_850h.png) [accessed: May 27, 2019] and license at: <https://www.presencing.org/resource/permission> [accessed: May 27, 2019]

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

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

1. The first principle of “letting go and surrendering” is letting go of what you have come to know, to believe, how you construct your world, and surrender into what may emerge.
2. A felt shift in the group to a deeper level of connection with “an emerging field”, a conscious step to let go of who you are (e.g., “a masterful coach”) and move into a quiet space with the group.
3. Being in a “higher authentic presence”, listening beyond empathy to what may emerge. “What happens is that you leave the conversation as a different being—a different person—from the one who entered the conversation...You are a (tiny bit) more who you really are”.
4. A container for deep listening – has “three conditions in this space: unconditional witnessing or no judgment, impersonal love, and seeing the essential self”.

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

### Reflective practice in teams

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Emotional Intelligence

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

## Communities of Practice

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

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

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

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

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

## Coaching Supervision

### Research on coaching supervision

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

*(Hullinger and DiGirolamo, 2019, p.2)*

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

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

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

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

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

### [The supervisory relationship is significant](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Coaching supervision groups

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### [Supervisory relationships in clinical supervision](#)

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

### [Distinctions between coaching and clinical supervision](#)

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

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

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

### Supervisor-Supervisee Relationships are Primary

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

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

### Elements contributing to the supervisory relationships

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### [Groups in clinical settings](#)

#### Limited research on group supervision

*“Almost all that is known about group supervision has to be labelled ‘anecdotal’. I want to challenge practitioners to transform anecdotal evidence in to practice-based evidence so we can engage in evidence-based practice...”*

*(Proctor, 2008, p.xvi).*

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

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

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

### Group supervision requires management of group dynamics

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

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

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

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

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

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

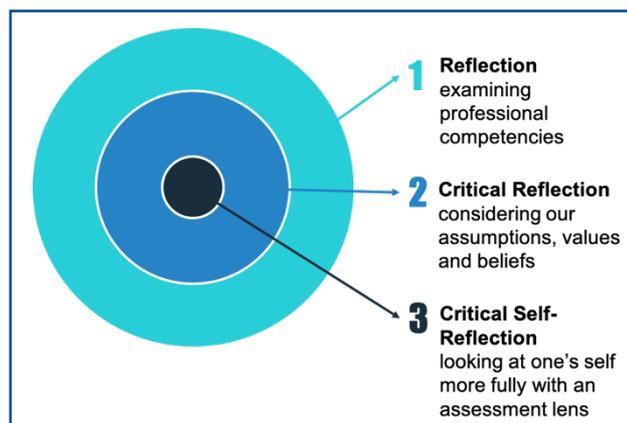
### Group typology – options for facilitation of the groups

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

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

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

### Experiential learning (Kolb) and transformative learning (Mezirow)



*Figure 4: Experiential Learning (Kolb) and Transformative Learning (Mezirow)*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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