STRENGTHENING POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION

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6

A FEMINIST APPROACH FOR EMANCIPATORY SUPERVISION

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter queries common conceptions about the desirable qualities of higher degree supervisors and interrogates the conventional model of postgraduate supervision, referred to as the ‘apprenticeship model,’ and question assumptions about its efficacy. In a departure from hierocratic and institutionalized thinking, this chapter suggests a holistic pedagogical approach that combines sociological paradigms of emancipation and feminism – that is, a model of supervision based in feminist, emancipatory pedagogy.

I have had a fair degree of exposure to various models of supervision, having worked in both US and Commonwealth (generally, British-based) systems, and in diverse countries. I began teaching in tertiary institutions during my MA (for an English department in the US), continued to teach during my PhD in Drama (as well as in Women’s Studies, Sociology and a Writing Centre), and thereafter during my post-doctorate in the Middle East (teaching English EFL for Engineers and then a range of theoretical and practical classes for students of Theatre and Dance). In the years following I supervised theses in a range of disciplines, including Theatre, Dance, English, Philosophy, Fine Arts, Psychology, Women’s Studies and Creative Arts therapies; I have examined in diverse other disciplines. In all these experiences I saw the ‘apprenticeship model’ in place, with no other options available – including in theses called Research by Practice (original creative work with a written component) and the newest collaboratively written theses.

My preferred model of supervision, which I advance in this chapter, I call “teaching as supervision”. In this model, postgraduate supervisors may continue to apprentice

STRENGTHENING POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION

supervisees but would also demonstrate, in the course of their supervision, best teaching practices through feminist pedagogy.

Egalitarian and emancipatory models of supervision aim to meet students 'where they live', in their own cultural and educational contexts. The South African educational context (SAQA, 2007) continues to be complicated by currents of colonialism, racial and class segregation, and ongoing ruptures between what Bourdieu (1986) calls "economic, social and cultural capital", in which whole generations have been deprived of quality education. Feminist pedagogies share a great deal in terms of intentions with liberatory pedagogies. Thus a feminist perspective of supervision that remains conscious of indigeneity can be organically aligned with and incorporated into any discipline's teaching, in order to enhance social inclusion in the classroom and supervision more generally.

TRADITIONAL MODELS OF SUPERVISION

The conventional concept of supervisors in universities reflects the thinking that tertiary teachers are fundamentally identical to supervisors, that tertiary employment qualifies a person for both, and that the completion of a doctorate guarantees supervisory capability. In my experience, however, lecturers with doctorates are not necessarily qualified to supervise higher degrees.

A number of factors stand in the way of successful postgraduate supervision, the responsibility for which cannot in all cases be laid at the feet of the supervisor. Significantly, students who achieve above average marks for Bachelor degrees or a BA with Honours, or who excel at undergraduate learning, cannot be assumed to be the "'always/already' autonomous student" (Manathunga, 2007:207).

Moreover, undergraduate and postgraduate learning are not the same, and not only because the economic outcome of the process is different. In fact, the economic outcome could be said to be different because of the change in 'terrain'—higher 'mountains' of learning to scale, deeper 'seas' of theory to navigate, and, on the whole, a more complex conceptualization of what constitutes an appropriate 'territory': the subject and method of research discovery. While undergraduate learning is customarily achieved as one of a group, postgraduate learning typically takes place in a more isolated context. These differences add to the complexity of the underlying assumptions that inform views regarding preparedness for postgraduate learning and teaching.

The apprenticeship model of postgraduate supervision is arguably old-fashioned, patriarchal and predicated on educators' personal experiences. In this construction,

CHAPTER 6 • A FEMINIST APPROACH FOR EMANCIPATORY SUPERVISION

postgraduate students depend upon a quasi-parental relationship, defined by the unequal power of the participants in terms of their status, authority and/or knowledge. Thus postgraduate students whose apprenticeship in postgraduate research was successful (generally as a result of personal chemistry and supervisory support) might fruitfully adopt and replicate the apprenticeship model when they themselves supervise, while students whose experiences were unsuccessful are at a disadvantage in that they do not have a positive role model for supervision.

Bitzer and Abertyn (2011:3, citing de Beer and Mason, 2009) critique the conventional mode of supervision – the ‘apprenticeship model’ – qua convention. The familiar model of postgraduate supervision ‘apprentices’ a postgraduate candidate to an individual (in the guise of the supervisor) who is presumably more knowledgeable in the area of scholarship, without acknowledgment for either party that an apprenticeship is taking place or how it is to proceed. Whilst the apprenticeship model could be condemned as egotistical – the making of a ‘Little Me’ – it remains embedded in academia, with the supervisor’s nexus of power defined by greater status, authority and/or knowledge – what Bourdieu (1986) calls “symbolic capital”.

The underlying assumption remains that a one-on-one approach is most beneficial for the student (as supervision is individualized and presumably customized) and most lucrative for the institution (as fewer faculty members must be employed for its operation). Thus, although the institution derives all (or most) of the economic benefits of postgraduate education, responsibility for success typically remains the supervisor’s. Supervisors become active, authoritarian subjects and postgraduate students can appear to be almost passive, disempowered objects. This may be true even with viable apprenticeships.

Significantly, not all students reach the goal of completion of their doctoral studies. Just as students do not necessarily think through the ramifications of pursuing higher degrees, administrators and educators may not ensure appropriate conditions for offering those degrees. For many reasons, postgraduate students may be inadequately, poorly or thoughtlessly supervised – or not supervised at all, an absence Ward and West (2008) find preferable.

At the risk of generalizing, the patriarchal structure of the university system (like the hospital system) is over-determined as patriarchal, a state of being that provides a frame, if not the whole picture, which is male dominated, linear and paternalistic. Reification of a masculine mentor-apprentice relationship within such a structure seems to reflect the existing environment. Disconcertingly, the more the pattern is repeated, the more difficult it becomes to subvert the structure.

STRENGTHENING POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION

The formula's repetition is seen as part of its success as, putting aside disciplinary specialization, there is a specific formal pattern in a written thesis that stands as the final result of most supervision. I do not challenge this obvious outcome, but suggest that the formal object, the thesis, is only one outcome. I would argue that the more significant and useful outcome is the process of creating a doctoral scholar – a student, a teacher, a thinker. This position aligns with Lee's (2007) proposal that 'doctoralness' is a specific phenomenon and the appropriate goal of the supervision process.

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO SUPERVISION

Johnson, Lee and Green (2000:61) argue that postgraduate education has been inadequately examined and new approaches are necessary. Alternatives to the apprenticeship model are not well known or practised (*ibid.*) – thus their economic advantages and disadvantages remain speculation.

As a means of improving supervisory efficiency (see Ahmed, et al. 2010:25-26), Bitzer and Albertyn (2011:4), promote the use of "alternative approaches". Their stated concern is with reducing staff workload, arguing that instructor loads are "relieved" (p. 13) by involving more participants in supervision. I would argue that although relief could be achieved were administrative and supervisory responsibility to be shared, adding supervisors can also result in limiting the ability to resolve an academic appeal, administrative error or legal issue. Bitzer and Albertyn also reach this conclusion (p. 18), yet despite promotion of a "hybrid approach" leave all planning and facilitating in the hands of one supervisor.

There is a fallacy in the assumption that administrators often make that workload translates into a lecturer's frontal or contact hours, with an assumption that equal contact hours means equal work – and therefore equal pay. Yet staff experience workload reductions in varying terms, including fewer contact hours, less preparation required, lowered emotional demand, easily reached teaching locations, or more convenient administration. Equality in load also varies widely among disciplines, ranks and individuals. From a feminist paradigm such inequalities are inadmissible, not only for faculty members who experience them but also for postgraduate students who observe and, by extension, 'survive' them as symptomatic of the supervision process (Kamler and Thomson 2006).

Bitzer and Albertyn (2011:5) call for supervisors to develop "new skills to apply holistic and creative approaches" and share supervision with other colleagues. However, as one who has shared supervision, co-taught and coordinated diverse classes with multiple lecturers, guest speakers and community members in various countries, I

CHAPTER 6 • A FEMINIST APPROACH FOR EMANCIPATORY SUPERVISION

attest that such models did not reduce my overall workload though they may have diminished the number of lectures I prepared. Rather, they increased my workload as my administration doubled or tripled. That is not to say that shared supervision is to be avoided. On the contrary, I feel that shared supervision is preferable to any model that promotes one individual as the sole fount of knowledge, or that forces a student to adopt an object – or abject – position with regard to her supervisor. The shared governance and cooperative modeling that I propose are consistent with a feminist paradigm.

A FEMINIST PARADIGM

Co-teaching is sometimes utilized to shift academic load, but it can also expose students to more academic staff, augment teachers' knowledge bases, and subvert the conventional subject-object epistemologies of a classroom. This disruption seems to increase in importance when primary lecturers are male, top-down teachers, or are consumed with demonstrating higher status. Students may initially respond with distress as their single, classroom authority evaporates, to be replaced with two or more possible authorities in a feminist, emancipatory model.

Shrewsbury (1987:7-8) identifies three structures in feminist pedagogy – empowerment, community and leadership – stating that “Feminist pedagogy ultimately seeks a transformation of the academy”. Moreover,

A classroom characterized as persons connected in a net of relationships with people who care about each other's learning as well as their own is very different from a classroom that is seen as comprised of teacher and students. One goal of the liberatory classroom is that members learn to respect each other's differences rather than fear them. [...] The classroom becomes a place in which integrity is not only possible but normal (Shrewsbury, 1987:6).

At the University of Cape Town, my own co-teaching encounter as one of two feminist scholars with a postgraduate class of black males and females – secondary school teachers themselves – resulted in an overturning of classroom norms. Our students subsequently reported introduction of a variety of novel teaching strategies into their own classes, including de-stabilizing classes by teaching from behind the students, and moving students around during class. These approaches to teaching demonstrate how a feminist teaching paradigm re-drew students' centers and shaped new ways of thinking about teachers' expertise.

Strategies such as co-teaching depend on colleagues to co-prepare for shared classes, arrive on schedule and deliver their share. Unplanned absences weaken

STRENGTHENING POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION

group dynamics, the momentum of learning and a desire for learning. The time lost from a teacher's absence and a need to 'catch up' further damages the contract (often informal) between lecturer and students. So, while co-teaching can disrupt the single authoritarian master, demonstrating the diversity of positions that can be taken towards any subject, co-teaching is also more demanding. To work in an effectively collaborative manner, one must tutor and be tutored by co-contributors, modeling the work of teaching to one's students. The rewards for a feminist paradigmatic teaching collaboration are potentially significant for both students and lecturers.

A COMMITTEE PARADIGM

The model I experienced in the United States from 1991 to 1995 was a 'new' or 'hybrid' approach, in which each of four male supervisors supervised the same doctoral candidate one-on-one. This committee of scholars did not devise group supervision or any opportunity for the student to see more than one supervisor at a time – that is, until the oral examinations, when students taught and defended theses of their own choice in a one-to-four ratio. In my own case, the oral thesis did not appear in my dissertation or written comprehensive examinations, but was a subject I prepared so as to lecture my teachers. For this harrowing experience (which was not a *viva voce*) I derived a topic in response to a critical reading from class, citing literature, history and theory from three years of coursework. The panel enjoyed the seminar and exited the room arguing about it, which seemed a good sign.

This model emerged in the early 1990s in one of the 'new and creative' approaches written about more than a decade later (especially Boud, 2009, and Bitzer and Albertyn, 2011), but still drew upon the conventional model – essentially an apprenticeship model transposed within a team or panel of expert supervisors. This model increases the doctoral student's amount of academic and relational work. Yet, notwithstanding the temptation to engage in post-completion sanitization of the doctoral experience (see Lee and Williams, 1999), over a period of four years (including three years of coursework with many more professors), there was time to grow and to determine a subject of interest to both the student and her committee, and to learn to teach at undergraduate, postgraduate and expert level. While a committee system of supervision takes much longer to complete than the Commonwealth system, the combination of coursework and specialized research assists in producing subject generalists able to teach across the discipline of record and, perhaps, other disciplines.

CHAPTER 6 • A FEMINIST APPROACH FOR EMANCIPATORY SUPERVISION

AN OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW PARADIGMS

The mandate of the *Strengthening Postgraduate Supervision* course is to improve the quality of research supervision through concentration on the supervisory experience as a holistic and relational process. SPS addresses potential supervisors as students themselves, asking them to identify with student issues; to restore and re-evaluate their own experiences as postgraduate supervisees; to explore and recognize their disciplinary differences; and to re-envision the supervision experience on their own terms, rather than as departmental duties. Emphasizing the epistemology of research supervision, the course attaches value to experiential learning while acknowledging the wide variety of issues to be encountered by both students and supervisors.

During SPS, the support experienced by working with other potential supervisors, and working through issues experienced by mature supervisors, increased participants' feeling of commonality, similarity, resourcing and empathy – for other supervisors as well as one's own students. The fact that the majority of potential supervisors in the cohort were current postgraduate students (being supervised by lecturers who were not part of the cohort) gave a sense of credence and currency to the examples offered during the training. Moreover, the shared teaching and learning opportunity – replicating the feminist paradigm – empowered women in the class, both young and old, to speak up before their male cultural elders, to challenge their own and others' assumptions, and to participate in re-directing their own supervision.

One of the requirements of the *Strengthening Postgraduate Supervision* program was to keep an online journal, a means to maintaining open communication with class members during the protracted period between shared classes, of supporting classmates, and of learning from their comments. This also provided opportunities for reflection on personal practice and learning generated from participation in SPS (as reported later in this chapter).

SUPERVISORY PEDAGOGIES

Some years ago in Australia, a request from our Graduate School provided me with an opportunity to collaborate in design and implementation of a new coursework masters. The intention was to cater to students returning from a hiatus in learning who wanted to brush up on basics, gain theoretical knowledge and command higher salaries as teachers, government officials or tertiary educators. While devising the program, promises of additional staff were frequent, but unfortunately never honoured. Fighting our burgeoning workloads, we of necessity integrated the first year of MA coursework with our year of Honours coursework.

STRENGTHENING POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION

As the core instructor of Research Methodology I invited all doctoral students (including those supervised by others) to attend classes without fees or assignments (although many later requested to submit assignments). In successive years, postgraduate students in other disciplines asked to join this class, and I turned away no one who showed interest. As a consequence, there was a differing multi-level, interdisciplinary cohort each year, prompting an enormous learning curve as I developed a new syllabus and approach for each class. This was one of the formative experiences on the development of my approach to supervisory pedagogies.

Ahern and Manathunga (2004:241) comment on a “growing recognition of supervision as a form of teaching or pedagogy”, called “cognitive apprenticeship” (after Pearson and Brew, 2002). Green and Lee (1995) and Lee and Kamler (2008) also advocate the concept of pedagogy rather than teaching. Delany (2008) comments:

Connell (1985) takes a more superlative approach and describes PhD supervision as “the most advanced level of teaching ... a genuinely complex teaching task.” [...] A somewhat more nuanced dualistic view is proffered by Zuber-Skerrit and Ryan (1994) who suggest that “research postgraduate training is unique among academic responsibilities in providing a direct linkage between teaching and learning activities and research’.

The notion of “research education” (Pearson and Brew, 2002:135) further underlines the effort at stake in supervision. It is a critical juncture in a student’s life, laying foundations for formation of a junior academic and emerging researcher. If treated as a period of education – a pedagogical opportunity – this difficult and often desolate time of unfamiliar administrative demands can be transformed into an advantage in higher education. In such an approach, the postgraduate student becomes

a skillful performer ... who not only knows what to do but knows how to apply that in practice ... who has something to say that peers want to hear [and] has astuteness to discover where a useful contribution can be made. (Pearson and Brew, 2002:137-138, citing Phillips and Pugh, 1994).

Evans and Green (1995:3) refer to pedagogy as the “absent presence” in the supervisory relationship, while Connell (1985:38) says it must be perceived as a “form of teaching”. Gurr (2001) calls for indirect/direct and passive/active supervision, defined in Delany (2008:7) as:

- Direct active: characterised by initiating, criticising, telling and directing the student

CHAPTER 6 • A FEMINIST APPROACH FOR EMANCIPATORY SUPERVISION

- Indirect active: characterised by asking for opinions and suggestions, accepting and expanding students' ideas, or asking for explanations and justifications of supervisee's statements
- Indirect passive: characterised by listening and waiting for the student to process ideas and problem solve; and
- Passive: characterised by having no input and not responding to student's input

The varied approaches described here may be found in normative practices of an effective teacher who regularly and organically models best teaching practice.

THE EMPLOYABLE POSTGRADUATE

It is salient, at this juncture, to consider why the modeling of postgraduate teaching practice is so crucial. In the US, Krebs (2014) identifies a well-trained (meaning immediately employable) postgraduate student as one who can directly commence university or college teaching with the capacity to assume teaching responsibilities at a level that includes not only the ability to teach in a classroom but to teach a range of subjects in each semester system. This expectation requires that the postgraduate has had teacher modeling, most efficiently derived from exposure to several teachers handling complex subjects while critiquing and orienting students; fielding, eliciting and encouraging student queries and comments; demonstrating patience and enabling student processing; and empowering students to answer questions for themselves and their peers.

Moving from a focus on how to best supervise to how to train postgraduates as teachers, Krebs (2014:1) asks how appropriate levels of training in teaching in a range of institutions can be provided for doctoral candidates. This question is addressed by representatives of all education sectors in Krebs' initiative, the 'Massachusetts Cross-Sector Partnership', as follows:

...[the] kind of preparation doctoral candidates would need [is]: specialized coursework, visits to the other schools to shadow faculty and participate in workshops, and part-time teaching opportunities. (Krebs, 2014:1)

In the United States, the emphasis for postgraduates on teaching as a form of scholarship is considered a given, and, until recently, it was assumed that possession of a masters qualified the individual to teach at a two-year institution (a community college), while an earned doctorate permitted employment at a four-year institution (a university). The US community college system is a teaching-intensive system in which instructors have no onus to publish (but may produce teaching manuals).

STRENGTHENING POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION

Only in the university sector is research publication expected – and required – for employment, promotion and the elusive prize of tenure.

In tackling such a complex political, economic and pedagogical problem, the Massachusetts partnership established a direct correlation between postgraduate supervision and postgraduates' futures as teachers. The group agreed that supervision includes issues and modes of teaching, and postgraduate students require teaching practice and confidence. One might compare Gurr's (2001) indirect/direct and passive/active supervision, redefining supervision as a means to directive pedagogy and empowering learning.

COMBINING PARADIGMS IN PERSONAL PRACTICE: TEACHING-AS-SUPERVISION

The multiple paradigm exposure I underwent engendered a significantly different and untraditional supervisory practice. The links made to models of supervision are, respectively, "critical thinking, enculturation and mentoring" (Lee, 2007:682). With respect to Australia, Ward and West (2008:65) say that, apart from provision of support services in language, writing and perhaps time management, "there has been little or no attempt ... to formally situate learning of PhD candidature outside the supervisory relationship".

Cognizant of the absence of teaching in Australian doctoral supervision, and the lack of Australian literature on feminist supervision (for example, Brew, 2001), I adopted the teaching-as-supervision model as an academic in Australia, with instantaneous success. My construction of a class, ostensibly based in research methodology, increasingly distinguished by the challenge to question and transform, was not then (or now) common practice. By that time, I had already resisted the Commonwealth-based master-pupil dialectic for almost ten years, introducing US pedagogical styles in which independent learners are encouraged, if not expected. Having learned and taught in a range of disciplines, including Women's Studies, I had embraced the emancipatory scaffolding of feminist pedagogy, in line with descriptions of what is involved earlier in this chapter.

In my proposed paradigm of 'teaching-as-supervision', co-supervisors are invited to contribute, and supervision is structured differently from the traditional apprenticeship model. Core features of this approach to supervision include:

1. Single supervision sessions with each supervisor, as per apprenticeship model;
2. Joint supervision, generally every fourth or fifth supervision session;

CHAPTER 6 • A FEMINIST APPROACH FOR EMANCIPATORY SUPERVISION

3. Discussion of joint and other supervisions with as many other supervisors as possible, not in the student's presence; and
4. Discussion of supervision with other supervisors in the student's presence.

Not every supervisor will be open to the preceding points (especially 3 and 4), but over time even silent attendance at such sessions can be fruitful for supervisors as well as students.

Subsequent to enrolling in *Strengthening Postgraduate Supervision* (SPS) training, I found myself adding another element to supervisory practice: Discussion of the supervision with other supervisors, in the presence of new supervisors and supervisors-in-training.

While not suggesting eliminating the apprenticeship model, I offer an approach to supervision – teaching as supervision – which disrupts the supremacy of one-on-one apprenticeship while empowering postgraduate students to learn at their own paces from facilitators and student peers in a safe and supportive educational environment. My formulation of teaching as supervision straightforwardly follows feminist pedagogical practice. The nucleus of the teaching is Socratic, open-ended and inviting disagreement; the basis of the learning involves contesting theories and unseating cherished 'truths'. As Shrewsbury (1987:6) has described it, feminist pedagogy is:

engaged teaching/learning – engaged with self in a continuing, reflective process; engaged actively with the material being studied; engaged with others in a struggle to get beyond our sexism and racism and classism and homophobia and other destructive hatreds and to work together to enhance our knowledge; engaged with the community, with traditional organizations, and with movements for social change.

Teaching as supervision accords with the US model of coursework in doctoral studies, but includes an ongoing demonstration of knowledge dissemination and acquisition, research, a range of teaching practices, group discussions and formal presentations by teacher and students. There are regular assignments that model particular aspects of potential or in-process dissertation writing – especially the research proposal, methodology and research design, literature review or annotation, and written argument. Such mini-assignments counteract students' feelings of isolation, and of swimming or drowning (as reported by Kamler and Thompson, 2006). They provide grist for chapters, often forming the bases of dissertations; and, best of all, they diminish the perceived size of the overall project by reducing it to a series of papers modeled in classroom assignments.

STRENGTHENING POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION

There are a number of ways teaching-as-supervision differs from 'typical' teacher-centred instruction, as well as from the standard supervision models. Teaching-as-supervision could be defined as the need for:

- conscious teaching – teaching that is not only reflective but also highly alert to students' varied ways of receiving and processing information;
- modeling – the constant modeling of best practice as concomitantly a teacher and supervisor (see Delaney above);
- inspiring – moving the student beyond the bounds of passive listening to an urgency of response;
- reciprocating – in which the student unconsciously reverses the (single) teacher/ (multiple) learners role by participating in group teaching; and
- peerage – the teacher must also establish equality, or peerage, in the relationship between the learners and each other, and the learners and self.

In the very act of teaching the teacher demonstrates (her own) desire for knowledge and the (switched-on) mode of critical thinking. There are other effects that might be addressed, but these five are paramount. Although they do not currently appear per se in any feminist pedagogical literature, these elements are consistent with a feminist, emancipatory paradigm of pedagogical practice and a student-centred habitus (Delamont et al., 1997:78). This is, in short, a transcendent model: an opportunity for both learners and teacher to transcend roles and attitudes, and enter into a partnership of mutual desire for knowledge. In this relationship ideas take precedence over egos, and thinking becomes celebratory. One could compare the energy in the classroom to an event, such as a performance – the atmosphere crackles.

The potential for scholarly transformation is dynamic. Doctoral students have at times entered classes structured according to my view of teaching as supervision with arrogance and exited with humility, having had their assumptions challenged by bright young peers. For example, one year two doctoral students joined our postgraduate class in Dramatic Theory and Research Methods four weeks after its start. (The class was particularly rigorous, as I had been forced to combine an overview of 3 000 years of dramatic theory with the protocols for constructing research – all in one semester.) Both men were credentialed educators over 40, had taught secondary school for many years, and had returned to university determined to become tertiary teachers by obtaining doctorates. Likeable but closed-minded, these men began to question the nature of reality – in response to class readings, and apparently for the

CHAPTER 6 • A FEMINIST APPROACH FOR EMANCIPATORY SUPERVISION

first time. For two sessions they deflated discussion with questions such as ‘What is reality?’ They had only now realized that reality is shaped by personal narrative and that we do not all share a single perception. My undergraduates were amused, as theories of cultural and personal relativism were part of our freshman and sophomore classes. Returning to study, therefore, these men encountered something unforeseen – their own learned and innate prejudices and the limitations of their knowledge. (I was not unsympathetic: I had a similar experience in postgraduate school.)

In this model of supervision, even the most able of students will – or, possibly, should – encounter a proliferation of new resources, media and technologies, in which junior students can be peers and mentors. I am advocating something more integral than peer learning (Boud and Lee, 2005) and/or supervisory mentoring (Manathunga, 2007) and teaching-as-supervision supports this interchange. I view this as a desirable outcome of a doctoral process, part of what Leshem and Trafford (2007) identify as “doctorateness”: a time in which a postgraduate student develops conceptual frameworks that become intrinsic to perceiving knowledge.

Lee (2007:691) sees the necessity of retraining and reframing approaches to supervision as part of a reflective, mature practice. Although the research on a range of supervisory models is rich, my own model has not (to my knowledge) yet appeared as an option – that is, collaborative peerage or group-taught supervision in which postgraduate students play a larger role. Bitzer and Albertyn (2008:11) come close, suggesting that “experienced academics could act as mentors within a supervisory team together with the students) and inexperienced academics”.

I do not present teaching-as-supervision as wholly original, but rather as an extension of feminist pedagogical practice, in which students and teachers are mutually empowered and participants are guided in teaching each other. There are similar proposals (although methods are not discussed) in Lee (2007:682), adapted from Brew (2001), in regard to research and models of supervision, especially:

- Layer conception: A process of discovering, uncovering or creating underlying meanings;
- Trading conception: A kind of social market place where the exchange of products takes place; [and]
- Journey conception: A personal journey of discovery, possibly leading to transformation.

I prefer to erase established divisions between postgraduate levels of Honours, Masters and Doctorate, inducing students to take more active roles in their own

STRENGTHENING POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION

learning. I position students to query and debate theory with each other in a seminar format, while I, as instructor/mentor, intermittently become a 'passive' participant. Increasingly I am able to move further from the focal centre and adopt a more facilitative role. Sometimes I literally sit on the periphery while the argument ensues between students, and do not interrupt except to ensure clarity, or when a class asks me for guidance, or to settle an argument.

My favourite kind of teaching is facilitative, a natural extension of the preparation of minds for education where facilitators empower students to teach themselves. Although they do not reach this conclusion, Bitzer and Albertyn (2008:11) write, in respect of this kind of approach, that:

More flexible and productive relationships may emerge and a more equal relationship, recognising the different expertise and interests of all members of the team. This could offset the power relations inherent in postgraduate supervisory relationships ... as well as the complexity of power in cross-cultural supervisor relationships.

In my experience as a postgraduate teacher/supervisor (a collation I prefer), I deliberately challenge students' mindsets as well as their knowledge bases. I am not so much concerned with what students believe as in pressing them to identify how and why they believe. Often questions prove more interesting than answers.

Neither teaching-as-supervision nor feminist, emancipatory paradigms alter the fact that the thesis and dissertation are still (for most postgraduates) individually written. It is, rather, the learning and preparation for theorizing and writing which are communally undertaken, granting all students increased support at the critical stage of knowledge production. Directive feedback from a supervisor can also be used collectively to enhance other students' work.

The teacher-as-supervision model is not unproblematic. Narratives of "trauma and distress", transcribed in Lee and Williams (1999:23) as part of the "baptism of fire" faced by doctoral students, can remain intact – even with the intervention of peer mentoring, feminist pedagogy, peer mentoring and communities of practice. The authors ask: "Would alternative forms of doctoral training ... overcome the emotional distress of doctoral training?"

My reply is that the most liberating of practices may still fail to relieve doctoral students from the formally isolating enterprise of doctoral writing. In my own journey towards doctoralness, despite three years of continual coursework, my own teaching and a panel of expert supervisors, I described the thesis-writing period as 'limbo' – in other words, banishment to a possibly interminable purgatory.

POSTGRADUATE RELATIONSHIPS: MOTHERS AND OTHERS

Supervisors tend to replicate methods to which they were exposed as postgraduate students (Pearson and Brew, 2002:146). The SPS assignment to interview other doctoral supervisors provoked me to reflect on this, as my online journal showed:

I think now that the relationship between the apprenticeship model and the kind of expertise and confidence it develops in the protégé are related. If one has had a reasonably good experience as a doctoral student, then the apprenticeship model may be adequate and perceived as efficient and even excellent. If the experience was less desirable, then the result may be someone lacking confidence, and feeling unable to supervise.

Perhaps this is a natural psychological product of the sense of rejection or abandonment one might feel as a result of the experience of supervision in one's own postgraduate learning. One could compare similar comments from parents who were poorly parented. These are my own conjectures but, having spoken with numerous students during my own supervision and since, I recall many negative associations with supervision. I also recall the death of my doctoral chair, which felt like the loss of a father as well as a great scholar. I resist the parental aspect in supervision (and in teaching in general) but know it is there, or expected to be there. Being aware of the family dynamic, and learning how to handle it, is useful for doctoral supervisors.

As a woman I find the role even more vexing, as the positioning of women in society remains limited in scope: mothers, servants and sex-workers or, as Sarah B. Pomeroy titled her radically challenging book on women in classical antiquity, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves* (Pomeroy, 1976). Arguably, contexts for women have not significantly changed in 3 000 years. Citing a large study of York University students conducted by Seagram et al. (1998), Delaney (2008:4) notes that although time to completion does not vary between female and male PhD students, experiences and particularly attitudes towards supervisors are significantly different: "Female postgraduates nominated interpersonal factors as most significant whilst males reported academic factors". As a female supervisor, then, one may need to consciously subvert a family dynamic that locates the supervisor as a mother figure, while bearing in mind that cultural imperatives may precede the family dynamic (Cummins 1996; Sidorkin, 2002; Bishop, 2008). This is especially true in an indigenous context such as that found in South Africa.

STRENGTHENING POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION

FEMINIST SUPERVISION

Having been raised with the Socratic method, aligned with “Gentle Socratic Inquiry” (Jackson, 2001, cited in Lee, 2007:689), I am accustomed to a model in which I do not have all the answers and do not even desire to have access to all the answers. I have found questions to be of more interest and merit, and sometimes do not concern myself with answers at all. Feminist pedagogy disrupts the centrality of an authoritarian pedagogue by posing a marginalized, “minoritarian” (Bhabha, 1994) or unheard (Olsen, 1978) voice as guide.

However, there are potential consequences of adopting the strategies of feminist supervision that need to be monitored. As Ward and West (2008) point out,

some supervisors, having challenged [conventional hierarchical] practices and [who] attempted to undertake a more pastoral role, often basing their attempts on a feminist pedagogy, report being overwhelmed by the needs of their students (p. 62).

My own experience is that the female supervisor is perceived as more available than her male colleagues, as well as soft, nurturing and maternal. At a recent conference a male African postgraduate student declaimed, “What about the feminism of care? Women are meant to nurture men.” I disabused him of this patriarchal doctrine (Baum, 2003). Gender role characteristics, common in domestic life, infiltrate the academy and doubly bind women as weak yet simultaneously ready to take on the greater burdens of their students. With respect to the assumptions regarding links between pedagogy and gender, Evans and Green (1995:3) comment that:

... this can be considered within the terms of a binary logic or economy, a structured system of relations, investments and priorities whereby research is valued at the expense of pedagogy. The ‘research/pedagogy’ binary links up in turn with other binary sets among which are ‘knowledge/identity’ and ‘man/woman’.

Pursuing the issue of labour in the university as an elite subset of patriarchal society, the researchers reach a powerful conclusion:

Our point is that, within this particular formulation, a structured relationship may be observed among the terms ‘research’, ‘knowledge’, and ‘man’ (or ‘the masculine’), on the one hand, and on the other, among those of ‘pedagogy’, ‘identity’ and ‘woman’ (or ‘the feminine’). Moreover, the first field of relationships is systematically or structurally valued over and against the second; indeed, the latter field is negatively valued, or positively devalued, in this regard (Evans and Green, 1995:3).

Prior to my most recent training in supervision I did not consider my own approach as particularly noteworthy – it was simply what I did. Questioning its validity set a

CHAPTER 6 • A FEMINIST APPROACH FOR EMANCIPATORY SUPERVISION

process in motion to acknowledge a distinct and theorized model. And although my stance as a feminist emancipatory educator has long been visible and forthright, I did not apply the theory to mentor or support myself. For some years I have been mindful of how much I give to my students, but did not register that when I am depleted I model exploitation, not dedication. In this regard, I unconsciously reaffirmed negative values for female academics, and did not adequately defend my own time and research.

THE CULTURAL IMPERATIVE

With regard to the cultural imperative, I would argue that the strategies described in my practice of teaching-as-supervision are tenable in diverse regions. I used a modified version of it at the University of Cape Town, inviting postgraduates to join my third-year classes and writing clinics. However, a caution is necessary here. Because of the reverence for status in countries where there is a thickly entrenched concept of elders as unapproachable or uncontestable, this more inclusive classroom may not always be operable. Teachers should be careful not to import a challenge into a culture that will condemn it. More broadly, in line with the assumptions of feminist pedagogy, I expect in many ways to be less capable of communicating openly with students because of our multitude of differences, such as age, status, gender, race, religion, and culture (Baum 2003, 2005).

CREATING TEACHERS

Teaching-as-supervision has a range of possible benefits in the creation of teachers through postgraduate supervision. Amongst these are developments in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching; the creation of mentoring relationships and networks of capacity building; the engagement of students in a variety of teaching practices; and the development of an emancipatory process of academic identities formation, moving the focus for this (at least initially) from written to oral modes.

The terms in which supervision is monitored and evaluated (particularly the supervision of others) can change through the strategies used in teaching-as-supervision, resulting in increased effectiveness of learning and the disruption of the patriarchal apprenticeship model. A feminist pedagogy, like the similarly emancipatory “pedagogy of the oppressed” (Freire, 1977), posits a stronger parity between learners and teachers (or co-learners and co-teachers), and disrupts the focal nucleus of a teacher-guru as the one person with all the answers. Co-teachers in front of a class and co-teachers in the seats undermine instructional authority, simultaneously elevating all knowledge to the status of possible authority or shared

STRENGTHENING POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION

non-authority. If one person does not singly represent the repository of knowledge, then any person in the room might contribute to, and represent part of, a repository. In addition, learning moves from a dependent mode, taking in and recording information in class, to an independent mode, drawing one's own conclusions, learning to debate them, accommodating other points of view, altering or in addition to one's own perspectives (see also Lee, 2007:686).

Another positive factor of teaching-as-supervision is the possibility of creating mentorship relationships within the class. Senior students sometimes take mentorship roles involving writing and research tasks; junior students (such as Honours students) can become peer mentors both within the class and for undergraduate students. These outcomes build capacity across the student cohort and release the instructor from the burden of holding all the power. Like the feminist pedagogical paradigm itself, peer mentoring consists in slicing through power relations, while moving towards a form of social inclusion.

Some students enjoy taking on mentorship roles (perhaps formally within a recognized university structure) and having the opportunity to relate closely with others, becoming 'authorities' on a mini-subject and engaging in the act of making the opaque more transparent. Peer mentorship can assist individuals to articulate their arguments in writing, thus shifting a student from orality to literacy. As peers spend more time together than do supervisors and their students, the shared student experience has a scaffolding effect. Finally, such a system of peer mentorship may be synonymous with what Lave and Wenger (1991) call "communities of practice", where the supervised 'apprentices' learn in context with their peers.

Engaging students in teaching practices permits them to experience the difficulties (and occasional joys) of teaching, and, as many students believe they will go on to teach, it is fitting that they have such an experience prior to enrolling in a teaching program. One learns best by teaching: discussions about how students have clarified terms or communicated a concept help student to better comprehend the subject. Peer mentoring or teaching then becomes part of the student's identity.

In general, this style of teaching permits and excites open debate between students, their peers, and myself as their facilitator, from diverse perspectives. Their nascent academic identities emerge and form during such discussions, more so than from solitary attempts to grapple with the literature through reading or writing. This emergence stands in marked distinction to Kamler and Thomson's (2006) thesis on doctoral identity as written. I believe it is customarily spoken (during which time it is vetted, tested, rebutted and embraced) before it is written. In part, because

CHAPTER 6 • A FEMINIST APPROACH FOR EMANCIPATORY SUPERVISION

discussions remain open, with no particular 'right answer', students are emancipated in their identity quests.

In my model of teaching-as-supervision, moreover, students do not embark on this quest alone: they can see, hear and feel their peers' efforts, torments and delights; they can also see, hear and feel mine. I make it clear that I am not there to be pandered to, and that to disagree with me is always good as long as that argument (like any other) is justified. In the multi-disciplinary context, we argue about issues of craft and differing disciplinary approaches. Approach to craft and disciplinary context becomes an aspect of identity in writing, as Kamler and Thomson (2006) confirm. In the seminar room students can take the steps, and make the leaps, together.

This is not to say that every student develops her own "doctoralness" (Lee, 2007) at the same time, or that identities become homogenous. Just as students can develop identity from wrestling with a text and from producing their own texts, they can also generate identity orally, articulating arguments which may be rejected by others and yet remain that student's point of view. Meanwhile, even the quiet or silent student – or the student who has not yet begun to write – is learning and working to locate herself among the voices in the room.

CONCLUSION

This chapter interrogates traditional supervision paradigms, in particular the apprenticeship model, signaling reasons for concern and describing some alternative approaches to supervision that the current literature calls 'hybrid'. My intention is to formulate possibilities of emancipatory educational practices in postgraduate supervision, in consideration of the mandate of *Strengthening Postgraduate Supervision* to enhance the quality of the supervision experience.

Clearly, attention is required in any teaching or supervision model, particularly when diversity and emancipation lie at its core. A feminist paradigm can be aligned, however, with emancipatory pedagogical practices in postgraduate teaching in coursework and research degrees. The teaching-as-supervision model suggested provides opportunity for cultural and transformational nodes of instruction and learning, particularly in the context of peer mentorship in and out of the classroom, and a feminist teacher's facilitation of socially inclusive, mutually expansive and transformational discussion and learning.

A key aspect of this chapter has been a focus on the relationships of postgraduate supervision. Evans and Green (1995) assert that "the intellectual relationship is at

STRENGTHENING POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION

the very heart of postgraduate pedagogy" (p. 5), where "knowledge production" and "identity production" (p. 5) are contiguous. Bishop, Ladwig and Berryman (2014) confirm the "centrality of relationships for pedagogy", predicating those relationships on a notion of "extended family". If so, then the core project of teaching-as-supervision is generation of an intellectual community, in which not only relationships between the supervisor and her postgraduate students, but also between postgraduate students themselves, are transparent and openly acknowledged. In this way a postgraduate community of practice is cultivated within an academy that customarily excludes or precludes communities, a community that is feminist and liberatory in nature, and that facilitates a mutually empowering romance with learning.

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CHAPTER 6 • A FEMINIST APPROACH FOR EMANCIPATORY SUPERVISION

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STRENGTHENING POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION

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