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Transformative Supervision: A Conceptual Framework for Relationally Based, Trauma-Informed Supervision In Postpandemic Practicum Education

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Abstract

The signature pedagogy of social work, practicum education, is crucial for teaching students to respond to complex community needs, which have been intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. While practicum education is emphasized, there is a lack of structure, focus, and framework of supervision from the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), leading to significant variations across accredited programs. This lack of consistency may substantially impact interns' professional growth. This article introduces a conceptual framework integrating Relational Cultural Theory (RCT), trauma-informed principles, and the three roles of professional supervision in practice to strengthen and transform the relationship between the student intern, supervisor, and practicum faculty in postpandemic social work education.

Keywords: practicum education; Relational Cultural Theory; trauma-informed supervision; professional development; postpandemic

Accredited social work programs are responsible for developing educational content, evidence-based pedagogical practices, and learning activities that provide students with opportunities to demonstrate competency (Council on Social Work Education [CSWE], 2022) across a variety of subjects (Fisher et al., 2018). The CSWE Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) guide programs in establishing thresholds across nine core competencies that students must meet to graduate (CSWE, 2022). An essential way to demonstrate these competencies is through practicum education. Practicum education has been recognized as the signature pedagogy of social work education since 2008 and reaffirmed with each EPAS update (Bogo, 2015; Cleak & Zuchowski, 2020; CSWE, 2008, 2015, 2022; Skeen, 2023). The term *signature pedagogy* refers to the characteristic teaching and learning methods that define how future practitioners are educated within their discipline (Shulman, 2005). Practicum allows students to develop and apply skills required for professional practice (Bogo & McKnight, 2006; Knight, 2018), and is supported through supervision (Litvack et al., 2010).

Supervised internships have evolved into a collaborative partnership involving student, agency, and social work faculty (Ketner et al., 2017). Agency supervisors are a crucial component of practicum education and voluntarily facilitate student learning across administrative, supportive, and professional developmental domains (Arundel et al., 2022). The relationship between agency supervisor and student is considered paramount to student growth and progression as a social worker (Flanagan & Wilson, 2018; Pehrson et al., 2012; Wilson & Flanagan, 2021). Social work faculty, including liaisons, seminar instructors, and practicum education directors, are an equally vital component of this collaborative partnership and student supervision experience. Liaisons and seminar instructors provide supervision and ensure students gain access to learning opportunities and develop across the nine core competencies (Anderson et al., 2022; Nedegaard & Carlin, 2021). Practicum education directors are the institutional authority on the most critical part of the curriculum (Ayala et al., 2018; Lyter, 2012), and are responsible for organizing, implementing, administering, and monitoring the signature pedagogy of social work education (Ayala et al., 2018; Beaulieu, 2020; Ellison & Raskin, 2014; Lyter, 2012).

Most recently, the landscape of practicum education has changed drastically due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Practicum education directors experienced a significant increase in workload as they reimaged the delivery of the signature pedagogy of social work (Au et al., 2023; Choate et al., 2022; Dempsey et al., 2022; Fronek et al., 2023; McLaughlin et al., 2020; Morris & Everett, 2024). Despite living in a postpandemic world, there are lingering effects related to workforce shortages, a lack of seasoned supervisors willing and able to provide internship supervision, and a significant increase in the complex needs of clients and communities accessing social work

services (Bender et al., 2021; Haight et al., 2022; Holcomb, 2024).

In response to these challenges, practicum faculty play a pivotal role in supporting, monitoring, and occasionally providing supplemental supervision for students (Egan & Hill, 2020). However, fiscal pressures, increased student enrollment and expectations, and practicum placement competition and shortages have strained faculty's ability to support students effectively (Cleak & Zukowski, 2019; Gushwa & Harriman, 2019). These challenges were exacerbated by the uncertainty and isolation brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, which further impacted student practicum experiences (Bright, 2020; Dempsey et al., 2022; Leitch et al., 2021).

Despite the critical role of practicum education, there is a lack of guidance or policy from the accrediting body regarding supervision practices and supervisor expectations, straining an already exhausted postpandemic system. While social work education emphasizes the importance of the practicum experience, little detail is provided on how supervision is conducted, the relationship between student and supervisor, and the use of trauma-informed supervisory practices (Borders et al., 2023). The absence of trauma-informed supervision is particularly concerning, as many social workers are drawn to the profession due to a desire to help and because of personal experiences with trauma (Leung et al., 2023; Steen et al., 2023).

Furthermore, there is limited guidance on supervisor expectations (Kostecki et al., 2021). Supervisors often receive inadequate initial training, minimal ongoing support, and unclear expectations from social work practicum offices (Bogo, 2015; Bogo, et al., 2007; Drolet et al., 2023; Vinton & Wilke, 2011). They also lack the time, resources, and support needed to assist students effectively (Hill et al., 2015; Kourgiantakis et al., 2020; Pack, 2018; Tufford et al., 2024). This situation has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Arundel et al., 2022; Burke et al., 2024; Ossais et al., 2021). While many accredited programs provide trainings related to the expectations and focus of supervision, these practices vary widely. Without concrete expectations and policies set forth by CSWE, there are significant discrepancies in how various programs acclimate supervisors to the signature pedagogy of social work education and ultimately to the experience each student receives within practicum.

Current supervision models often fail adequately to incorporate relationally based, trauma-informed practices that address all three roles of supervision (administrative, educational, and supportive). Building relationships, fostering connection, and creating a sense of belonging are particularly crucial in light of the shared trauma and disconnection that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic (Haight et al., 2022; Mogro-Wilson et al., 2022). This article presents a conceptual framework that emphasizes a shared partnership approach to supervision, involving the student, agency supervisor, and practicum education faculty. The framework prioritizes

relationally based, trauma-informed supervision with the goal of fostering meaningful, intentional growth, and cultivating a safe, connected, and supportive supervisory environment that recognizes the impact of trauma throughout the supervisory relationship. This article integrates Relational Cultural Theory (RCT), trauma-informed principles, and the three roles of supervision. The article argues that supervision grounded in these principles is essential for students to benefit fully from practicum education, and that to amplify the importance of supervision, CSWE should consider instituting policies regarding the structure and focus of supervision.

Literature Review

Despite practicum education being designated the signature pedagogy of social work, there is a lack of focus on the structure of supervision as well as on content that should be explored within the supervisory relationship. Of particular concern is the lack of models that adequately address relationship-building in a cocreated manner, which prepares social work students to transition to a professional identity and work with vulnerable and oppressed communities, particularly postpandemic. This literature review explores three major themes: a) social work practicum and supervision requirements; b) the impact of practicum and barriers to supervision; and c) the impact of COVID-19 on practicum education. Gaps in the literature are also explored.

Social Work Practicum and Supervision Requirements

The importance of supervision is emphasized in the evolution of curriculum standards set by the CSWE (CSWE, 2008). In response to the need for more objective accreditation standards and increased accountability in student academic performance, the CSWE transitioned from using student outcomes to competency-based learning with the 2008 EPAS (Stoesz, 2013), providing social work programs with a clear threshold for demonstrating competence (Petracchi & Zastrow, 2010). This shift established practicum education as the signature pedagogy of social work, requiring accredited baccalaureate and master's programs to offer community-based internships and seminar courses (CSWE, 2008). Internships enable students to demonstrate their skillset across the nine core competencies and receive feedback from the agency supervisor and practicum faculty.

Internship supervision, a key component of social work practicum education, is required by accredited social work programs (Loos & Kostecki, 2018). Supervisors are responsible for guiding students in administrative, educational, and supportive functions (Bogo & McKnight, 2006; Sewell, 2018; Tsui, 2004). However, there is inconsistency in defining and applying CSWE supervision requirements (Skeen, 2023), as well as variability in internship supervision experiences (Hay et al., 2019). Increasingly, evidence suggests that many social work students receive inadequate

or even detrimental supervision (Ellis et al., 2015; McNamara et al., 2017, as cited in Fisher et al., 2018), leaving them feeling unprepared and unclear about the purpose of supervision (Everett et al., 2011). Supervisory practices vary widely, with strengths and weaknesses consistently noted in the literature (Fisher et al., 2018; Loos & Kostecki, 2018; Zuchowski et al., 2021). These inconsistencies and differing models of supervision impede students' ability to develop essential social work skills (Cleak & Zuchowski, 2019). This also affects the supervisor-student relationship, which is essential for open communication and the addressing of difficult topics (Bussey, 2024). These challenges also disrupt the institution's ability to adhere to CSWE accreditation standards consistently and maintain its signature pedagogy status (Robbins et al., 2016).

Impact of Internship and Barriers to Supervision

The impact of internships on students and agencies cannot be overstated. Practicum education allows students to bridge theoretical and classroom knowledge, and to apply both to the practice world through the demonstration of competency within their internship (Shulman, 2005). Thus, the internship is vital to effective social work education (Petra et al., 2020). Universally, students and graduates of social work programs state that practicum education was the most crucial component in preparing them for future practice (Bogo et al., 2022). Students engaged in practicum receive opportunities to cultivate discipline-specific skills, cultivate a professional network, and often enjoy access to increased employment opportunities (Binder et al., 2015; Gault et al., 2010; Huhman, 2024; Judge et al., 2001; Porter, 2019). Interns also experience growth in areas such as cultural awareness, team-building, and improved communication (Finch et al., 2013; Moran, 2013; Stack & Fede, 2019).

Agencies also benefit from hosting student interns. The literature suggests that interns enhance the quality and quantity of services available for clients (Mallory et al., 2012). Social work interns are noted to be integral parts of interdisciplinary teams, and add to the multiple perspectives in case formulation to ensure client needs are adequately addressed (Klein, 2015). Overall, interns are described as adding to the collaborative efforts of teams in providing holistic service delivery to clients (Moore et al., 2018). Social work interns have a positive effect on the day-to-day operations of the agency, staff morale, and client care (Mallory et al., 2012). Qualified interns often assume significant responsibilities in administering daily tasks, which alleviates some of the burden placed on staff; they also bring a fresh and creative skill set to the agency (Mallory et al., 2012). Finally, while agencies spend significant time acclimating and supporting interns, these up-front investments allow for a more streamlined and less costly onboarding process if the intern ultimately is hired postgraduation (National Association of Colleges and Employers [NACE], 2023).

While there are significant benefits to social work internships, there are challenges relating to providing supervision, particularly in the current workforce climate. Agency supervisors often lack knowledge and skills related to providing trauma-informed supervision practices (Borders et al., 2023) and have few resources available to support them in developing social work supervision skills (Loos & Kostecki, 2018). Often, agency supervisors do not receive monetary compensation or workload reduction, which makes providing quality supervision challenging (Hay & Brown, 2015; Loos & Kostecki, 2018; McHugh, 2016). Additionally, given the current staffing shortages and need to meet growing client and community challenges, it is commonplace for supervisors to maintain a caseload, which ultimately impacts their capacity to support interns effectively (Bonano-Broussard et al., 2023). Finally, in a postpandemic environment, many employees (including agency supervisors) work in a remote or hybrid capacity, which impacts an intern's opportunity for incidental learning, observations of multiple workers, real-time supervision and insight, and supportive feedback from supervisors and peers (Davis & Mirick, 2021; O'Keefe et al., 2023).

COVID-19 and the Impact on Practicum Education

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted practicum education, and in response practicum education directors rapidly pivoted the delivery of internships to online formats (Choate et al., 2022; Dempsey et al., 2022; Fronek et al., 2023; McLaughlin et al., 2020). As practicum education was historically delivered face-to-face, this was a monumental task that required creativity, adaptability, and innovation (Choate et al., 2022; Dempsey et al., 2022; McLaughlin et al., 2020). Practicum education directors modified the internship experience to focus on student well-being and demonstration of competency, while simultaneously striving to maintain the rigor of the signature pedagogy of social work education (Choate et al., 2022; Fronek et al., 2023; Morris & Everett, 2024). Literature during the pandemic reflects educators' commitment to acknowledging shared trauma and grief, engaging empathically with students, extending compassion, and creating a sense of community and belonging (Filho et al., 2021; Frahm & Spiker, 2021; Haight et al., 2022; Slavich et al., 2022).

During the early days of the pandemic, many placements could not be maintained as initially designed. In response, practicum education offices and faculty provided supplemental resources, such as online trainings and webinars; project-based assignments to develop programs as well as policies and procedures for agencies transitioning to pandemic era service delivery models; discussion boards focused on ethical scenarios or case studies; and virtual resource repositories for professional development (Au et al., 2023; DeFries et al., 2021; Mantulak et al., 2021; Withrow et al., 2023). Some programs transitioned students to simulation-based learning (Keeney et al., 2023; Morris & Everett, 2024) while others bolstered the role of the internship

liaison by providing supplemental supervision and more frequent check-ins focused on student care and mental health (Au et al., 2023; Morris & Everett, 2024; Withrow et al., 2023).

Additional support was also provided to agencies. Practicum offices increased communication with supervisors, expanded partnerships to meet agency needs, and in some cases utilized the CSWE-approved reduction in student internship hours to aid community partners during this overwhelming time (Keeney et al., 2023; Withrow et al., 2023). The practicum education community also focused on supporting one another. Practicum directors participated in local, regional, and national consortiums and listservs, and shared invaluable information and resources to address student, agency partner, and community needs during the pandemic (Holcomb, 2024). The combination of these efforts focused on providing student and agency support, with hopes that upon graduation students would be able to fill gaps within the workforce (Reitmeier et al., 2023).

In response to the pandemic, CSWE provided much latitude and flexibility to programs. CSWE reduced the required internship hours students needed to complete satisfactorily, allowed for remote practicum activities, and expanded the ability for students to engage in employment-based internships. While CSWE previously allowed for employment-based internships, the requirements had been more restrictive. CSWE allowed interns to receive supervision from their direct supervisor, and also allowed students to use job-related tasks, as long as they could be clearly linked to the nine competencies

Postpandemic, CSWE has continued to allow for remote practicum activities and employment-based internships under the previously outlined COVID-19 rules. Practicum hours reverted to prepandemic requirements; however, there has been a lack of assistance provided by CSWE to programs in transitioning to a new norm. Practicum education has undergone significant changes during this time, and programs would benefit from receiving direction on how to best support students, agencies, and faculty while adhering to the rigor of the signature pedagogy of social work education.

Gaps in the Literature

Existing literature accentuates the importance of supervision in education and practice; highlights the significance of trauma-informed supervision; and details the benefits of supervision across administrative, educational, and supportive domains. However, there is minimal research related to frameworks that guide relationally based, trauma-informed and culturally competent supervisory practices, particularly as they relate to postpandemic social work practicum education (Kostecki et al., 2021). Compounding

matters, current accreditation standards provide minimal guidance related to supervision, resulting in inconsistent expectations, application, and alignment across social work programs (Skeen, 2023), thus creating a disparity between theory and practice. Minimal literature captures the experience of social work practicum faculty within CSWE-accredited institutions as it relates to supervisory supports. There is emerging literature exploring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on practicum education; however, this is only beginning to be understood.

While social work is relationally based, Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) principles are not fully integrated in supervision practices and lack widespread systematic application within agencies (Duffey et al., 2016). There is minimal existing literature focusing on relationship-building within the context of practicum education supervision, which is of concern given the evolving practice landscape postpandemic (Holcomb, 2024; Russett & Griffiths, 2024). Additionally, there is a scarcity of research related to trauma-informed supervisory models (Knight, 2018), with no systematic evaluation of supervisory policies or practices (Berger & Quiros, 2014). Further, while there is consensus that supervision serves to support individuals across administrative, educational, and supportive functions, there is great discrepancy relative to the attention given to these roles (Mo et al., 2021). A clear model of supervision that incorporates these roles is absent. Since this conceptual framework proposes a new set of integrated components, it is vital to determine its viability and impact through future research. Additional areas that would be beneficial to explore are the development and implementation of supervisory curriculum for students, agency partners, and practicum faculty using the components highlighted in this conceptual framework.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework presented is a road map to providing relationally based, trauma-informed supervision for students throughout their practicum education experience. This perspective is important given the significant changes the profession and the workforce have faced both during and postpandemic. Through the integration of RCT tenets, trauma-informed principles, and the roles of supervision in practice, supervision can serve to prepare and support emerging social workers in a manner that is consistent with the profession's core values and expectations. To understand these components more thoroughly, each will be explored individually. Following this, a discussion will be presented identifying how each component is integrated into this framework. Finally, a summary of the conceptual framework is presented.

Relational-Cultural Theory

The main theory integrated within this conceptual framework is Relational Cultural

Theory (RCT), originally developed by Jean Baker Miller, a renowned feminist scholar, activist, and psychiatrist. RCT asserts that growth occurs through connection, mutual and empathic relationships, and empowerment (Jordan & Hartling, 2008; Miller, 1987). Initially, RCT was developed as an alternative to mainstream psychological theories that neglected to acknowledge the concepts of subordination, dominance, and the complexities of human connection (Wellesley Centers for Women, 2024).

RCT has two implicit assumptions that apply when considering the supervision relationship in practicum education. First, this theory is social justice-oriented and centered on power imbalances, with a particular focus on connection through the healthy navigation of conflict (Wellesley Centers for Women, 2024). The importance and value of culture is at the heart of RCT, as this allows for a more accurate and complete picture of the human experience where possibilities and growth emerge (Wellesley Centers for Women, 2024). Second, RCT emphasizes the importance of building relationships centered on mutuality, trust, and respect (Jordan & Hartling, 2008).

Explicit assumptions of RCT also connect to supervisory relationships. The core belief of RCT is that people seek connection, which can be achieved through empathy and empowerment (Jordan & Hartling, 2008). Growth-fostering relationships are actualized by increasing a person's sense of worth, which ultimately allows for the person to view themselves more clearly within the context of the relationship (Duffey & Trepal, 2016; Jordan & Hartling, 2008). Finally, RCT emphasizes the necessity of environmental responsiveness to individual needs through outwardly recognizing and correcting the power differentials and oppressive imbalances that can be found within agency systems and the supervisory relationship itself (Comstock et al., 2008). There is a power imbalance inherent within the supervisory relationship, as supervisors are charged with gatekeeping and evaluation responsibilities (Bradley et al., 2019).

Employing supervision consistent with RCT principles accounts for these power imbalances by allowing relationships to be created mutually in an environment where supervisors and students grow through connection (Bradley et al., 2019). Creating spaces of vulnerability and authenticity that embrace connection assists students in exploring and growing professionally, meeting learning objectives, and developing the skills necessary for their own practice (Bradley et al., 2019; Chan et al., 2022; Lenz, 2014). Ultimately, creating these spaces can promote growth and serve to negate challenges found within agencies that have rigid hierarchical structures, employ pseudorelational practices, or are marked by survival cultures (Hartling & Sparks, 2008). The tenets of this theory, particularly as it relates to the need for connection, use of empathy and empowerment, and overall formation of growth-fostering relationships, is timely and much needed, given the postpandemic realities of the profession.

Trauma-Informed Care Principles

Another element integrated into this supervisory conceptual framework is the use of trauma-informed principles. The trauma-informed model provided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) offers six key principles (SAMHSA, 2014), which can be applied to postpandemic social work internship supervision practices. These principles include safety, trustworthiness and transparency; peer support; collaboration and mutuality; empowerment; voice and choice; and consideration of cultural, historical, and gender issues (SAMHSA, 2014). Trauma-informed supervision integrates the six principles of trauma-informed care and is an essential component to supporting students in practicum education (Lewis et al., 2022) in a postpandemic learning environment (Barros-Lane et al., 2021).

Further, a growing awareness of the prevalence of traumatic experience, particularly among service providers (Fallot & Harris, 2008; Steen et al., 2021), reinforces the need for trauma-informed supervision (Knight, 2018). Trauma-informed supervision recognizes the sociocultural realities of the supervisory relationship and the influence of systemic and institutional factors (Bryant-Davis, 2019). Trauma-informed supervision places an emphasis on building trust and collaboration (Knight, 2018) through the use of reflective supervision practices that enhance mutuality and compassion (Birrell & Freyd, 2006). This approach also focuses on reducing the power differential between supervisor and supervisee (Poole, 2010). Ultimately, supervisors are responsible for providing education to the student, creating an environment conducive to learning, and attending to the students' reactions throughout their internship (Knight, 2019).

Supervisors are tasked with offering interpersonal modeling and practices that take into consideration alternative frameworks of supervision (Gray & Smith, 2009; Hair & O'Donoghue, 2009). Supervisors also must consider the supervisee's experience with trauma (Borders, 2023) and its subsequent impact on interpersonal connection (Birrell & Freyd, 2006). The use of open dialogue in co-constructing cultural narratives, cultural sensitivity, and self-awareness of cultural and identity assumptions (Hair & O'Donoghue, 2009) is of importance in trauma-informed supervision, particularly when race between individuals differs (Pieterse, 2018). Using a trauma-informed supervision model addresses the influences of traumatic experiences on both clinicians and clients (Martin et al., 2022), which is of particular importance in postpandemic supervision.

The Roles of Supervision in Practice

The final component integrated into this conceptual framework relates to the three

roles of supervision (administrative, educational, and supportive) in professional practice. Supervision is a critical component of students gaining and understanding the value of the profession, as well as acquiring the skills necessary to become an ethical and competent social worker (Bruning et al., 2024; Kostecky et al., 2021; Mo et al., 2021; Noble & Irwin, 2009). Structured and consistent supervision has been shown to influence the education, socialization, effectiveness, identity, confidence, and autonomy of social workers across the professional spectrum, while also contributing to a positive work culture where agency functioning is enhanced (Barbee et al., 2009; Bruning et al., 2024; Hensley, 2003; Kostecky et al., 2021; Mo et al., 2021; Noble & Irwin, 2009; Tsui, 2004).

Providing supervision across the three roles is critical to the cultivation of the next generation of social workers (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). Administrative forms of supervision allow interns to become acclimated to the daily functioning of the agency, including gaining an understanding of the agency's goals, policies, and procedures (Henderson, 2009), while monitoring their overall performance (Tsui, 2004). Educational forms of supervision allow interns to enhance the knowledge they learned in the classroom and apply those skills to real-world practice environments (Caspi & Reid, 2002), thus enhancing their areas of expertise (Tsui, 2004). Students grow in their ability to respond to client and community needs effectively and confidently through continuous modeling, feedback, and practice. Finally, supportive forms of supervision allow interns to increase effectiveness through diminishing personal and professional stress and increasing motivation, which contributes to the overall success of the agency and the clients served (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). When interns feel their contributions are valued, they often report the agency is a good fit, which leads to increased confidence (Bruning et al., 2024). Students who receive dedicated time to process difficult cases or challenges report feeling supported and engaged within the agency environment (Bruning et al., 2024). Students who receive inconsistent supervision note an increase in issues related to their internship and overall satisfaction (Bruning et al., 2024).

While supervision should focus on each role, interns require an approach that is more educational and supportive in nature as they establish their professional identity and skill set (Mo et al., 2021). This form of intentional support is critical as students transition to being professional social workers and responding to the complex needs of clients and communities postpandemic.

Integration of Components

When considering integrating the three components of this conceptual framework, the authors sought to connect trauma-informed practices as a way to support the professional development of student interns within the context of a supervisory

relationship. RCT serves as the theoretical underpinning of this conceptual framework and connects to the profession of social work and to the overarching goals of social work education. Trauma-informed practice and RCT have a shared emphasis on challenging power dynamics, promoting equity, alleviating systemic injustices, and fostering environments rooted in safety, trust, collaboration, and empowerment, which are essential to the supervision and professional development of social work interns.

The infusion of RCT with trauma-informed supervisory principles prioritizes supervisee well-being and recognizes the importance of creating collaborative, culturally responsive, and socially just supervisory relationships through fostering critical thinking, reflexivity, and sharing of knowledge and experiences (Morley & Stenhouse, 2020). Using these two components, and focusing on the three roles of supervision, allows students to demonstrate professional development within the supervisory relationship. These three roles serve to acclimate the student to the agency, relevant policies, and procedures; provide a space for the intern to practice skills and demonstrate competency; increase confidence in abilities; and overall create a sense of belonging and satisfaction. Table 1 depicts this integrated conceptual framework.

Table 1

Conceptual Framework for Supervision

		Student	Agency supervisor	Practicum faculty
RCT	<p>Growth occurs through connection, empathy, and empowerment</p> <p>Responsive environment</p> <p>Rebalance power differentials through intentional focus on hierarchical relationships</p>	<p>Actively participate in supervision, engage in conversations regarding areas of strength and opportunities for growth. Reflect on goals and needs and cocreate meaningful opportunities to enhance professional development. Acknowledge feelings of discomfort with conflict and commit to healthy resolution of differences. Address areas within the environment that are unresponsive through advocacy. Acknowledge areas of privilege. Cocreate a relationship that is mindful of hierarchical power dynamics and honor each person as an expert of their own experience.</p>	<p>Impart professional knowledge, skills, and values to promote ethical practice and student development. Recognize the importance of relationship-building through modeling vulnerability and openness. Provide clear expectations and cocreate supervision expectations, needs, and goals. Acknowledge conflict and commit to healthy resolution of differences. Empowerment occurs through building confidence and success. Address agency challenges and mitigate impact on student. Acknowledge areas of privilege. Cocreate a relationship that is mindful of hierarchical power dynamics and honor each person as an expert of their own experience.</p>	<p>Support student and agency supervisor, acknowledging roles all parties hold. Create opportunities for professional development of student, agency supervisor, and social work faculty on effective practicum education supervision. Review curriculum and infuse principles of relationally based supervision. Acknowledge supervision requires time and seek feedback on barriers to implementation. Engage with agency partners to acknowledge supervision commitment (i.e., reduction in supervisor workload, dedicated time in supervision, and compensation). Normalize conflict and frame as opportunities for growth in their relationship.</p>
Trauma-informed principles	<p>Safety</p> <p>Trustworthiness and transparency</p> <p>Peer support and mutual self-help</p> <p>Collaboration and mutuality</p> <p>Empowerment, voice, and choice</p> <p>Cultural, historical, and gender issues</p>	<p>Prioritize supervision and relationships. Engage in open communication with institution and agency; advocate for individualized supervision. Explore and commit to culturally responsive practices that address historical trauma. Reflect on sociocultural experiences in practice and consider systemic influences on agency culture, policy, and interventions. Identify and implement self-care strategies.</p>	<p>Prioritize supervision and relationships. Assess the agency's capacity to provide effective supervision. Model reflective practices, compassion, self-care, and equitable relationships, while considering students' trauma history. Foster peer support and collaboration. Offer strategies to address bias, inequity, and systemic issues. Engage in training to improve trauma-informed, culturally responsive supervisory practices.</p>	<p>Prioritize supervision and relationships. Faculty share supervision, focusing on competency development and education. Faculty help students build professional supervisory identity. Supervision adheres to trauma-informed principles. Scaffold trauma-informed, culturally responsive supervision practices throughout the curriculum. Provide training for agencies.</p>
Roles of supervision	<p>Administrative</p> <p>Educational</p> <p>Supportive</p>	<p>Prioritize and participate in professional development, applying classroom knowledge to practice. Prepare for, and engage in, supervision consistently. Engage in open communication. Receive feedback from supervisor and faculty and use to enhance social work skills. Evaluate skills and competency development across all CSWE domains.</p>	<p>Onboard student to agency policies, procedures, and practices. Cocreate learning opportunities and model social work skills. Provide feedback and evaluate student performance. Address challenges in a timely way. Values intern insights and knowledge.</p>	<p>Onboard practicum team to program policies and expectations. Recruit and retain agencies and supervisors. Integrate framework principles into practicum education. Develop program resources for student and supervisor growth. Model supervisor role in educational setting. Apply framework to address concerns. Recognize student and agency expertise and strengths.</p>

Discussion

The framework provided here considers the influence of the pandemic on community needs, practicum education, and the social work profession. Providing trauma-informed and relationally based supervision that encompasses the three roles of supervision is critical to guiding interns through practicum, and ultimately to developing the next generation of practitioners. While this task is accomplished primarily within the agency supervisor/student relationship, practicum education faculty, and, in particular, practicum education directors, play a pivotal role in

implementing this partnership (Au et al., 2023; Ayala et al., 2018; Beaulieu, 2020). Each person in this partnership holds a critical position and thus requires active engagement for it to be implemented successfully. Social work interns must be willing to engage in honest conversations regarding strengths and areas of growth, be open to feedback, reflect on biases, seek opportunities that challenge beliefs and practices that are incongruent with social work values, and remain curious through asking questions and engaging in critical (but respectful) dialogue. Interns must note when the agency environment is unresponsive and brainstorm ways to address the situation. Interns must take initiative to gain knowledge and strengthen skills, avail themselves of opportunities that stretch their level of comfort, and engage in work related to privilege.

Agency supervisors must take an active role in creating a transparent relationship with the student where honesty, openness, and clear expectations are communicated. Agency supervisors, given their role within the relationship, must reflect on areas of their own privilege and work to empower and give voice to interns by inviting their thoughts and opinions. It is critical for agency supervisors to model practice skills, empathy, and cultural responsiveness. Supervisors must create a space where supervision is sacred, intentional, and reflective. Supervisors must be open to feedback from interns regarding agency conditions and practices that are punitive or marginalizing, and need to respond to these concerns. Supervisors must ensure that they are attending to all three of the roles of supervision outlined within this conceptual framework.

Finally, practicum education faculty maintain various roles within these relationships and are tasked with modeling and providing supervision that covers administrative, educational, and supportive roles. Seminar instructors, faculty liaisons, and practicum education directors are responsible for cultivating relationships with agencies and supervisors, training and supporting students and agency partners, and overall ensuring the agency provides opportunities consistent with the nine competencies. It is imperative that practicum education faculty model and utilize trauma-informed, relationally based supervision within their respective roles. These principles should be infused into seminar assignments, modeled in site visits and classroom activities, reflected in programmatic policies, and included in training workshops. As with any new initiatives, practicum education faculty should be open to feedback and recognize the need to adjust support provided to students, agency supervisors, and the broader faculty.

Practicum education faculty should also be aware of the power dynamics within the supervisory relationship and in their position as faculty, and actively work to mitigate these. When called to address conflicts within an internship placement, practicum education faculty should frame conversations through a collaborative,

problem-solving, and empowering lens consistent with principles highlighted in this framework. This shared supervision model provides a more equitable balance of supervisory responsibilities between social work faculty and agency supervisors, which is important in a postpandemic environment.

Additionally, it is critical that programs implement a mechanism for assessing and evaluating current supervisory practices within student internships, and establish clear expectations for practicum supervision and the agency partnership. Consideration must be given to agency conditions, capacity for a more intensive supervision model, and current trauma-informed supervision practices. While this framework requires time and energy, utilizing supervision consistent with this framework may lead to reduced placement disruptions and a greater level of satisfaction and feelings of support due to the shared responsibility of student supervision. Ultimately, this support may positively influence student development and could lead to a more prepared student entering the profession.

To fully integrate this framework, social work programs and higher education institutions must consider programmatic strengths and challenges. To facilitate this process, programs must thoroughly analyze their current student body, faculty and staff composition and capacity, curriculum, practicum policies and procedures, and agency partnerships. This assessment will allow programs to understand their unique strengths and needs as they relate to prioritizing, and implementing, this framework of supervision. Further, programs must gauge the capacity of their practicum education office, particularly as the landscape has changed significantly since the pandemic. Historically, practicum education offices have been underresourced and understaffed (Beaulieu, 2020; Ellison & Raskin, 2014; Lyter, 2012; Wertheimer & Sodhi, 2014). In many cases, the resourcing and staffing of practicum education offices have not improved since the pandemic, and, overall, institutions have not recognized the increased burden and workload that has been placed on practicum education offices as a result of the changing landscape (Cleak & Zuchowski, 2020).

To implement these types of structural changes, practicum education needs to be prioritized in action, not just deemed the signature pedagogy of social work education without the required support behind these offices. This requires CSWE to consider implementing more direct policies of support in terms of the resourcing and staffing needs for practicum education offices. One area that CSWE could consider for appropriately resourcing practicum education offices would be to implement a tiered structure for programs based on student enrollment and program size. Instituting a blanket policy as it relates to release time for practicum education faculty does not adequately appreciate the unique needs of programs or students; a tiered approach may allow institutions to resource practicum offices more robustly. Additionally, guidance from CSWE would be beneficial for programs so that the relationship

between supervisor and student can be focused on, thus fulfilling the signature pedagogy designation for practicum education (Ketner et al., 2017). If practicum education is truly the signature pedagogy of social work, social work educators and CSWE should provide strong advocacy as it relates to appropriate resourcing and staffing. This is particularly important given the new challenges our profession faces in a postpandemic environment. Therefore, CSWE should consider adopting language within the EPAS related to a focus on providing a more supportive model of intentional supervision for interns.

Future Research

While the importance of supervision within practicum education is widely researched, further study regarding this topic, from a relationally based and trauma-informed lens, is warranted. There is a lack of literature related to implementing supervision within the conceptual framework discussed here. Both quantitative and qualitative research is needed to explore whether this framework is a viable model for practicum supervision. Further, social work programs should assess whether their current practicum education structure and levels of support align with this proposed model. Creating curriculum based on the integrated components of this conceptual framework would provide a professional knowledge base to agency supervisors, students, practicum faculty, and social work programs that wish to implement a supervision model based on these principles. Further, programs should conduct evaluations on the satisfaction and effectiveness of implementing supervision consistent with the principles outlined in this framework. Finally, it is incumbent on social work programs to respond to the evolving needs of students, agencies, and the profession postpandemic. As the landscape of social work education and practice has changed, supervision models must also advance. Research into best supervisory practices, incorporating these principles, should be explored further.

Limitations

The topic of supervision as a mechanism for professional development is complex. Thus, there are multiple avenues to explore when developing a supervision model that best supports students as they grow within the supervisor/student relationship and become social workers. As this article is conceptual in nature, it presents one perspective on how to view, organize, and study relationally based, trauma-informed supervision in practicum education. This approach may not work for all agencies or institutions. Each institution has its own unique structure regarding the delivery of practicum education and the various levels of resources and support available. As noted previously, multiple approaches to supervision have been considered and implemented within practicum education. This conceptual framework adds to the existing body of literature on the topic and warrants further exploration and testing

to ascertain its viability within practicum education offices to support students and agency partners using this level of intentional supervision.

Recommendations

Due to the importance of this topic, future research on best practices in structuring internship supervision from student, agency supervisor, and practicum faculty perspectives is warranted. Research on providing trauma-informed, relationally based, collaborative supervision among all involved within practicum education is critical to ensure student growth and demonstration of competency. To ensure that supervision is a priority, it is imperative that CSWE provide robust guidelines for programs as related to the focus and content of supervision. Simply indicating who is qualified to provide supervision, and the time required, seems insufficient for the signature pedagogy of social work education.

CSWE should provide supports related to supervisory curricula, workshop topics and resources to bolster meaningful relationships, and toolkits for practicum education directors to use with students, agency supervisors, and faculty. Additional training related to RCT as a mechanism to frame and guide supervision should be provided to all parties, thus deepening the collaboration between student, agency supervisor, and practicum education faculty. Specific trainings should include ways to develop and strengthen authentic relationships within supervision and co-construct learning expectations, mechanisms of delivering critical feedback, best practices in navigating conflict, and approaches to address inherent power and hierarchical dynamics. Additional training related to utilizing trauma-informed care principles should also be provided to all parties. Trainings should include developing a safe and trustworthy supervisory space, building compassion and empathy as students navigate skill development, and ensuring collaboration between all partners. Finally, training should focus on effectively attending to the three roles of supervision while navigating the complexities of practicum education. The most effective method of delivering content and trainings should be left to the respective programs. Delivery of this content could occur through seminar courses, a series of workshops, faculty development sessions, practicum education-focused retreats, or even through asynchronous learning modules paired with synchronous meetings and opportunities for discussion and connection.

Conclusion

Relationships are the basis of social work practice. As such, an intentional focus on relationship-building, utilizing the tenants of RCT, trauma-informed principles, and the three roles of supervision, should extend to the supervisory partnership (student, agency supervisor, and practicum education faculty). As practicum education is the

signature pedagogy of social work, it is imperative that the supervisory relationship be elevated in importance, and a unified approach grounded in this frameworks' principles be considered. Supervision that implements the tenets of this conceptual framework is a step forward in combating feelings of isolation and disconnection, which continue to be experienced in the postpandemic environment. Implementing supervision guided by the principles situated within this framework serves to create a structure where all feel a sense of connection, belonging, and support, which is of particular importance postpandemic.

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