




Supervisors are not cops

Thinking with abolition in psychological
training and mentorship



a woke agenda (audience laughs)


Context: why this matters

Are supervisors cops? Thinking through power dynamics in supervisory relationships

What does an abolitionist lens offer?

Reimagining Supervision Approaches

Questions and discussion



Context: on why this matters

- + Supervision is a context that can replicate broader dynamics of social oppression
- + These dynamics can be particularly salient for racialized and Indigenous students where these concerns are not abstract but material

Two Weeks, Six Dead: Police Violence, Indigenous Dehumanization & Canadian Indifference



by Michaela M. McGuire - Jaad Gudgihliwah

THE DEHUMANIZATION of Indigenous peoples is reflected in the indifference of Canadians today – so much so that our deaths become merely passing bylines.

Over a two-week period (August 29 – September 9, 2024), police have killed six Indigenous people.

The details of the cases range.

- In two separate instances, Tammy Bateman and an unnamed 31-year-old man were struck by police vehicle(s) and died.

These are not isolated incidents and reflect a long trend of police violence against Indigenous people. There are significant racial disparities in Canada when it comes to police violence, with Indigenous peoples vastly overrepresented in those incidents.

It is difficult – especially in moments like these – to ignore claims that genocide in Canada is ongoing, despite our supposed era of reconciliation. The state continues to apprehend, incarcerate, confine, abuse, and

Featured National News

Quebec's police watchdog says twins shot after 911 call

By Mark Blackburn
Nov 05, 2024



Quebec's police watchdog investigates Salluit shooting death involving police.



Members of the Salluit community are protesting against the Nunavik Police Service after a police intervention where Joshua Papigatuk, right, is said to have died during an altercation with police officers in Salluit, and his twin brother Garnet Papigatuk, left, was medevaced

Toronto

Toronto cop demoted for unlawful arrest of Black U of T student

Sgt. Rachel Saliba pleaded guilty to using unnecessary force on student arrested, Tasered



Ryan Patrick Jones · CBC News · Posted: Oct 07, 2024 4:45 PM EDT | Last Updated: October 7



A Toronto police officer has been temporarily demoted for her role in the 'mistaken identify' arrest of a Black university student in August 2021. (Evan Mitsui/CBC)

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Are supervisors cops? Thinking through supervisory dynamics

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Overview of conventional supervisory models



Competency based

Developmental

Orientation-focused

Integrative models



Surveillance and Self-Monitoring in Supervision

- + Emphasis on surveillance restricts authentic engagement.
- + Simon (2010) and Foucault's panopticism: Supervisees internalize an 'invisible monitoring authority.'

Conventional models and cultural dissonance

- + Models enforce conformity and cultural dissonance (Simon, 2010).
- + Abolitionist perspective: Moving from discipline to support.
- + Williams et al. (2023): Need for antiracist, equity-centered supervision.



Heirchical Structures and Gatekeeping



Supervisors as primary authority, enforcing Eurocentric standards (Calhoun et al., 2023).



Impacts Indigenous and Black trainees by marginalizing cultural contributions.



Surveillance practices reinforce judgment over support.

Competency Models as Surveillance

Rigid standards become tools of surveillance.

Competency policing excludes non-Western perspectives.

Fear-based dynamics mirror societal policing, retraumatizing racialized trainees.

Orientation and Integrative Models: Superficial Inclusivity



Orientation models enforce rigid frameworks, suppressing cultural perspectives.



Integrative models create tokenism without real inclusion.



Cultural knowledge validation required through Western lenses.

Performance Evaluations as Policing

- + Subjective, deficit-based evaluations echo carceral logics.
- + Fear and insecurity for racialized trainees (Yabes, 2024).




Toward Transformative Supervision

- + Move beyond hierarchy and surveillance.
- + Prioritize relational and culturally responsive approaches.
- + Supervision as a partnership for growth, safety, and cultural affirmation.

Towards an Abolitionist and Decolonizing Lens in Supervision

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Abolitionist supervision isn't just about reform—it's about dismantling oppressive systems and fostering transformative, equity-centered relationships.

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Transgressive Partnerships

Moving beyond top-down models to
collaborative partnerships

Key Principles of Abolitionist Supervision

- + Mutual Aid and Solidarity
- + Flattened Hierarchies and Power Shifts
- + Liberatory Praxis and Direct Action
- + Reynolds (2011) on “supervision of solidarity”

Radical Imagination in Supervision

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Encouraging new, culturally resonant approaches

2

Centering Indigenous knowledge and community-led practices

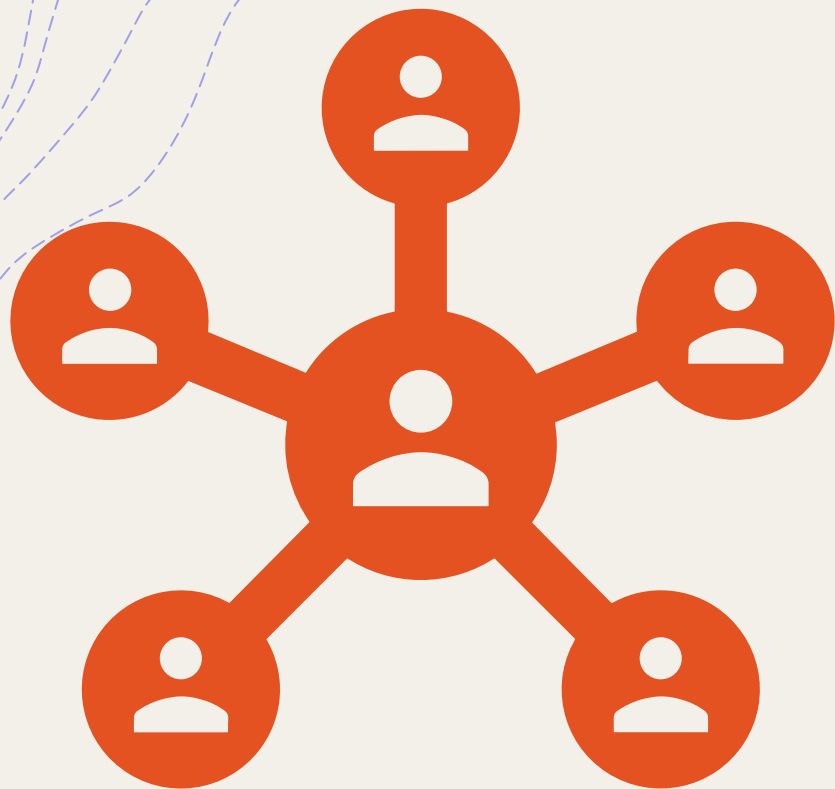
Transformative Justice and Repair



- + Conflict resolution through accountability and repair
- + Shifting away from punitive measures towards dialogue and growth
- + **Practice:** "What support do you need to meet your goals?"

Collective Liberation and Autonomy

- + Interconnected well-being for supervisors and trainees
- + Empowering trainees' autonomy and self-determination





Benefits of Abolitionist Supervision

- + Fostering a culture of belonging and psychological safety
- + Rejecting punitive norms, embracing cultural knowledge
- + Building dynamic, trust-based relationships

Reflection and Discussion

How do power dynamics show up in your supervisory roles or student support work?

What steps can you envision taking toward an abolitionist approach to supervision in your current context?

What challenges do you anticipate in moving toward these practices, and what support might you need?

Key take aways

Relational Accountability and Mutual Aid

- Prioritizing relationships built on trust and collective support.

Empowering Cultural and Intellectual Exploration

- Making space for diverse identities, cultural practices, and ideas.

Commitment to Justice and Radical Transformation

- Imagining supervision as a process of liberation and equity.

Calls to action

+ **One Actionable Step:** Identify one change you can make toward abolitionist supervision in your role.

+ **Resources Available:**

+ https://criticalresistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CR_GuideforTeachingLearningAbolition-1.pdf