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HOLDING SACRED: THE WOMAN'S BODY IN SUPERVISION

By Annette Schwalbe, Sue Curtis and Christina Greenland



Introduction

This chapter presents a way of being with each other in supervision that serves the woman therapist and her woman clients to recover trust, presence and joy in their bodies. It aims to convey relational tones and themes that intertwine along the line that connects supervisor of supervisor – supervisor - therapist and client.

At the centre of this chapter rests the body of woman. A body that came into being, grew and developed in a world that still considers women as less than men, or as too much. A body that knows, historically and presently, collectively and individually, the potential or the experience of being objectified or violated. A body that, in places, has become timid, fearful and often unable to make itself felt and heard in life, in therapy and also in supervision. Her body, body of a woman with breasts and without, with womb and without, with menstrual blood flowing or not, with labia and clitoris or not. Body of a grandmother, body of a mother, body of a daughter. Body of a sister, body of a friend, body of a lover.

It is important to recognise that the experience of being a woman is not universal. There are, for example, ways of being a woman that do not depend on having a body that was assigned female at birth. Having a body assigned female also does not necessarily make one identify as a woman. Nor does a woman necessarily perform all or any of the roles mentioned above. Experiences of womanhood are influenced by social, cultural, political, religious and geographical factors, among others.

It is acknowledged that this chapter is written by three white, Western and cisgender women, assigned female at birth and identifying as women. It is this particular combination with its particular herstory and limitations that informs this chapter's approach to the woman's body whilst knowing that there is more. It neither attempts to speak for all women nor exclude anyone who finds this text relevant to their experience.

The three co-authors speak to their own and each other's bodies in their supervision encounters and supervisory relationships over time. In their roles as supervisor of supervisor, supervisor and supervisee, they identify key aspects of their supervision experience that hold sacred their embodied presence as woman practitioners and enables the client to heal her embodied wounds.

Far from being a purely academic exercise, the writing of this chapter is based on a ritual and creative research process. It includes various forms of personal and visceral storytelling that convey the sacred nature of the subject matter at hand. Most importantly, it has come onto page by taking turns, one woman's words inspiring another woman's writing. The resulting text is born of ongoing relationship.

The Three Co-Authors:

Sue



As I begin this writing in April 2020 I am in a 12-week lockdown in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. I have been placed in the UK governments 'at risk' and vulnerable group due to health considerations. The invisible virus outside reminds me of the invisible cancer cells that 10 years ago lived in my blood and wreaked havoc in my peripheral nerves leaving me disabled. Now 10 years later, I am recovering from bilateral breast cancer and awaiting radiotherapy – another treatment that will invade my tissues.

My body knows loss and grief at the depths of my being. I am in my sixties, post-menopausal and lived through two miscarriages and the emotional pain of lives unlived. The grief touches a place that has been present in my own body's formation in the womb and resonates at the core of my thirty years of supervision practice. Mid pregnancy with me my mother's mother passed away and I have always sensed the loss. When I was born her milk did not sustain me and unable to 'thrive' I was bottle fed. The sense of struggle to receive and nurture during an embryonic process and post birth is deeply embedded and I have come to trust my body's searching with all my senses the 'unformed' mystery of bringing to life.

I love supervising trainees and newly graduated therapists, to touch and be alongside the embryonic stage of practice, tending to, like a gardener, the unseen seeds and bulbs within the soil and having the privilege of witnessing early growth and later blossoming.

I remember my first encounters with Annette as she entered the Dance Movement Psychotherapy training, as her tutor and supervisor. She had a vibrancy, vitality and deep care for the world and her peers that opened spaces of reflection. I was fascinated and moved by her stories from around the world and her cultural sensitivity. Once she had qualified, I was honoured to continue supervising her work across countries and witness the development of her somatic body mapping work, where the body's innermost, raw experience is moved, revealed and manifest in a visual life size map (Schwalbe, 2019). Fifteen years later when I got cancer, she guided me through my own body map that spanned five years of illness to recovery, and that I presented at an exhibition she organised entitled 'Seasons of a Woman' (2015). Today, I still supervise Annette's supervisory practice.

I met Christina on a somatic body mapping weekend whilst working on my own map. Eyes closed and lost within my own body sensations I heard the sound of scratching; rhythmic, subtle and continuous. My body was exploring again being in the depths of the earth, my known place of not fully formed and the gentle scratching sounds surrounding me felt like an archaeologist gently scraping away the earth to find me. Upon re-entry to the conscious space I found Christina laying hidden underneath her body map quietly scratching its unseen side.

This memory is deeply imprinted within me, bringing to life symbolically the place I hold sacred in supervision; the unseen and unformed depths. Whilst delighting with supervisees who have gone on to birth their own children, it has also been vital in supervision to explore with those who, like myself, have little ones who breathe elsewhere.

Annette



I am a dance movement psychotherapist in menopause, nearing the end of my 40s. My supervisory practice started 20 years ago when I was living in Pakistan with my husband and was pregnant with our first child. I was assisting a psychiatrist and psychotherapist from Islamabad in weekly group supervision at a local organisation supporting women and children who were experiencing domestic and institutional violence. My role was to add a body perspective to the therapeutic

work discussed.

My own body was with child at that time, and so was one of the psychotherapists in the group. In supervision, this was cherished and thought about. As her baby grew, however, and her bump started to show she had to stop facilitating a psycho-educational group with members of the police force. In this context, the sight of her pregnant body – evidence of her being a sexually active woman - was deemed offensive by the policemen. With limited cultural scope to challenge this openly my colleague returned to the back office where, in time, she set up a crib for her child, then a playpen. Throughout, she continued to work in various capacities as psychotherapist, with her early motherhood and changing body, however, often held a secret.

My own path was different, leading my family to live in Uganda shortly after giving birth. Here I became part of a wider as well as professional culture that openly referenced the sexual body and honoured the mothering body of a woman. Working as a lecturer and clinical supervisor at university, I was able to breast feed during meetings and later bring my toddling daughter into class. When I got pregnant again, I was treated with awe by colleagues and supervisees who insisted on carrying my bags across campus in order to protect mother and unborn child.

Throughout those years, I received supervision on the phone from Sue who had continued to supervise me after the end of my training in the UK. I remember vividly the time when, between the birth of my first and second child, I lost a third through early miscarriage. In supervision, this was attended to by Sue with great care and understanding of how this was temporarily affecting my trust in my embodied ability to hold clients, students and supervisees.

These experiences have shaped the way I supervise today and endeavour to hold safe and sacred, but not secret, my own and the bodies of woman supervisees. The visible and invisible life that we

have, kindle, hold, give, lose and renew in and through our bodies, whether childbearing and child raising or not.

That this renewal doesn't just happen in and through one woman's body but also in community and lineage became clear to me when I met Christina, first as a trainee client, then as supervisee and somatic body mapping colleague. I remember sitting together in my studio, witnessing her gentle self-touch in service of psychic exploration and appreciating her profound courage to come up close with raw and tender experiences in herself and others. Suddenly, a deep knowing of professional passage surfaced and rejoiced in me. Nurtured over so many years by Sue's example of loving, longstanding and deeply committed supervisory relationships with me and many others, I recognised Christina as one next in line and remember clearly thinking: "it's your turn now!"

Christina



I have practiced as a Dance Movement Psychotherapist in NHS secondary mental health services since qualifying four years ago. Annette was my therapist during training and, after a break of two years, became my supervisor. We have always remained conscious and taken great care over the transitions and multi-dimensions in our relationship which now also includes being colleagues.

While it is uncommon to move from a client/therapist to a supervisee /supervisor relationship, I found it very beneficial. I appreciate our shared understanding of my personal story including points of comfort and discomfort, strengths and struggles that are inevitably sparked by the experiences my clients bring to therapy. I also value the trust between us that continues to deepen through the supervisee /supervisor relationship. As Annette became my supervisor and I began to know her differently, less idealised, we openly named those changes.

It was in Annette's presence that I first experienced moving before a witness. There I stood, a little shy to be moving in front of another. I felt her body before me and heard her steady voice, like an anchor in these strange new waters. Gradually, I became emboldened and soon found that my body had a voice and was compelled to speak. It spoke words that I had not carefully chosen to lay before a stranger. They were powerful, unexpected and exhilarating. After moving, in that moment of stillness, when the orchestra ceases and the silence resonates, I opened my eyes. And there I saw my blue-grey eyed audience, Annette. But she was no casual observer, she had travelled with me and now her gaze met mine, unflinching and utterly alive.

Over the years we have worked together, in the many different iterations of our relationship, her way of seeing has become so familiar to me. It is not however, something I take for granted. Time and again, I have emerged from some movement exploration, be it painful or playful, frightening or joyous, to be greeted by her compassionate, fearless witnessing. It is in this supervision space, where all is welcome, that I have endeavoured to bring my whole self in the service of my clients, allowing their stories to collide with mine, to echo in my body and so be seen and known.

I work with women for whom it has not been easy or possible to feel safety, love or pleasure in their bodies, and this can touch on aspects of my own life. However, I have also known much love, sensual

and sexual delight, enjoyed the sounds, shape and rhythm of my body. At forty, it is a place I can call home. In supervision I continue to explore and relish the pleasures of my sensory realm. I have learned not to see this as frivolous or self-indulgent but as a way of familiarising myself with my bodily landscape and holding it sacred so that, with authenticity, I can invite my clients to explore theirs.

My memory of meeting Sue on a somatic body mapping retreat resonates with this joyfulness. I see her standing in front of her body map singing at the top of her voice, paint brush in hand, smiling. Her energy was infectious and soon I too was singing with gusto. Since then, we have become collective body mapping colleagues and I have immense respect for her humour, kindness and wisdom. Together, Annette and Sue form part of a strong ancestry of women in the profession from its birth to the present that allows me to feel affirmed, assured and proud.

Holding Sacred the Woman's Body: A Collective Body Mapping Ritual as artistic enquiry

In September 2019, the three of us came together to explore further how we hold sacred the woman's body in supervision.

'Holding sacred' in this context we define as both an attitude and an act. As an attitude, it is based on a belief in something bigger and deeper than us individually and collectively, and beyond the human form. This is linked to an appreciation of the individual and collective unconscious as conceptualised by C.G. Jung (1968) and fleshed out in somatic terms by Jungian woman scholars, mystics and dance movement psychotherapists such as Marion Woodman (2008), Janet Adler (2002), Joan Chodorow (2015), Jill Hayes (2013) and Tina Stromsted (2014). Love comes into it as an orienting towards heartfelt connection and a quality of cherishing the other. So does the recognition of an innate life force that orients towards growth and healing. All this combines to what shamanic practitioner and dance movement psychotherapist Megan N. Ramos (2018) coined "a sacred holding environment based in spirit rather than personality....whereby both parties are able to engage in a sense of allowing and surrender, and whereby natural intelligence of body and spirit guides the unfolding of the healing process and the therapeutic interaction." (p.75).

In order to explore what such a sacred holding environment might look like enacted, sound like when articulated in the context of supervision and serve in the work with clients, we decided to engage in a process of artistic enquiry. This is defined by McNiff (2008) as a process of "knowing through art" that counter-acts a tendency of 'clinification' (Brown, 2008) which under-values and marginalises the meaning that emanates from creative expression, in this case body movement. To instead bring the creative and knowing body centre stage, we chose to perform a Collective Body Mapping Ritual (CBMR). This is a form that we have been developing outside of supervision with a group of colleague therapists and artists since 2015.

At the centre of the CBMR is a large round canvas on which a group of people come together. Through a series of ritual rounds, participants attend to body sensations, trace each other's bodies on the canvas, honour them with creative markings and playfully engage with the co-created bodily landscape. Natural and evocative materials that are specific to the site and occasion of the ritual are used to make tangible and visible the context in which our bodies come into shape and shape each other. Witnessing and speaking during the ritual is formalised and informed by the practice of Authentic Movement with a focus on here-and-now experience and essential, non-interpretive wording (Adler, 2002). In the past, the CBMR has served as participatory performance in public

health and arts related spaces, as contemplative offering at academic conferences and as group process in retreat settings. (Schwalbe, Greenland, Curtis & Best, 2017a, Schwalbe, 2017b).

In order to engage with the CBMR as artistic enquiry for this book chapter, we gathered diverse material: not just thoughts and themes but also things that we could touch, hold, hear, smell, taste, and pass to each other, thereby “weaving webs between discourse and matter” (Frizell 2020, p.2). We chose materials that inspired multiple associations – mundane and mythical - with a woman’s body and our lives as supervising and supervised practitioners: soil that had composted in Sue’s garden for many seasons, beetroot juice that was intended to be slowly cooked in Christina’s kitchen but was quickly bought in the supermarket. Apples, fallen or picked from the tree in front of Annette’s therapy and supervision studio. Sways of delicately translucent as well as stiffened white fabric; hydrangea flower heads, their colours turning; bulbs with dried-up roots and emerging shoots.

The day we brought it all together and into motion (seen in a selection of pictures below) we were joined by two colleagues, artist Emma Scott and dance movement psychotherapist Hannah Murdoch-Payne, who accompanied the ritual as witnessing photographer and scribe respectively. Their seeing and hearing presence further added to the field of embodied knowing that we stepped into.



Preparing the ground

Gathering material





Tracing each other

Honouring our bodies



Exploring and playing

Marking the co-created bodyscape



Three Acts and Articulations of a Woman's Body holding and held sacred in Supervision

Sacred Act One: The Fertilising Body (Sue)



The following enactment from the CBMR invokes and evokes the body that **nurtures embryonic states of knowing in supervision.**

My fingers roll bulbs onto the map and I place one within my belly button, sensing its weight deep within this tiny crevice of my body, extending downwards like an umbilical cord. The smell of beetroot juice pervades me as I lie at the edge of the map underneath the fine gauze cloth. It's draping folds lightly touch my skin and I feel veiled and encased as if in my own, lone, amniotic sac. Hannah notes "is she in or is she out?" I am neither and I am both. I wait, gaze, feel and sense. I am embryonic, forming, allowing, noticing the quiet within and just being.

As I gaze outwards from my 'edge' place at the vitality and symbols of creativity before me my body feels silent and still, expectant of the surety that an inner growth is developing and revealing. The words 'inscribed & embryonic' face me. Both words I brought to the map and they intrigue me. I am reminded of my favourite psalm:139 'my frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately wrought in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance;' p. 570 verses 15-16.

Sometime later and not quite sure what inner urge calls me forth, I emerge, crawling then standing, attentive to my body's emotional curiosity at what lies before me. Stepping into the map I place apples as breasts and a hydrangea as a womb on Annette's outline and drip beetroot juice like blood from the vagina of Christina's outline, watching it trickle down the outline of her thighs. I am captivated and entranced by my own delight in their fertility, possibility and nurture. I think of the potential for life, the pain of birth and the grief at babies that never breathed. Celebration and grief intertwine like converging streams, coursing through my veins in a fleeting moment of time; known, felt and marked within.



Journeying on I meet Christina who picks up one of the apple breasts gesturing it towards her mouth. Her eyes widen like a mischievous child and we giggle together as she bites into it

I laugh deeply from a child-like place within me, like she has dared to break through some ancient Taboo. Yet at the same time I marvel at her courage to bite deeply into it's flesh, grateful for her sensual womanhood that so confidently takes her feed!

I notice how different it is from the shame and humiliation I experienced during my own puberty and navigating my changing body and budding breasts.

I move on through the landscape of us three women, aware at times of my own stumbling, disabled feet, my ageing woman's body and feeling like a grandmother among the generations of women that follow. The sensory landscape of soil, bulbs, flowers and beetroot juice articulating and bringing to life our ongoing trust in each other and the revealing exploration.

I return to my edge place and read again my two words - 'inscribed & embryonic'. They resonate with a known place I experience as a supervisor – beholding and holding sacred developing and unfolding material deep within my supervisee. An embryonic offering or seed, planted within our relationship and one which requires time to ripen.

In supervision I have learned to trust the unformed stirrings within my supervisees, to search, listen, wait when they have no words or struggle to bring forth clear thoughts, images or words. To hold their fears, anxieties and sometimes shame at not 'knowing' in a form they think is expected. Yet it is within this deeply muddy earth that we thrive and I offer a supervision womb in which they can implant and grow. They are inscribed within me, embedded, embryonic and unfolding as, together with their client's stories they form, shape and emerge.

I remember my own analyst's words "you don't know what you know!" I now know that 'I know' in a sensory landscape and my role as supervisor is to facilitate supervisees to 'know what they know' and how they know it. As a supervisor my body is expectant and on sacred ground as I watch and wait for what feels like a small baby, supervisee heel to gently push against its amniotic sac, imprinting itself into my supervisor womb.

Sacred Act Two: The Renewing Body (Annette)



The following enactment of the CBMR follows the body that **reclaims violated aspects of being in supervision.**

We play with the beetroot juice still pooling on the paper. I am standing and pausing for a moment when Sue dips her brush into the deep red and starts to paint my toenails. I delight in the attention, then my feelings change: the juice seeps into the skin of my toes and leaves them red-rimmed. They now look bloodied, like tortured feet.

I think of the ballet dancer and high-heeled woman, elevated to an icon to be consumed. I think of broken and bound feet of women in some cultures of the past, reduced to an ideal to be controlled.

I start to trace on the ground with my oozing toes and, without intent, leave a mark that looks like the face of a ghost. I let it be. For now. I move on, don't speak of it. Not yet. Instead, not far from

this place of body-less presence on the map I see Christina laying soil on the ground in front of a note pinned to apple: 'to behold' it says.

All three of us are now engaged in bringing different things to this place that starts to look like an altar: more soil, more apples, bulbs, a hydrangea flower head. I think of the client who we serve in supervision. The client, who on this map, does not have a solid body outline. However, her altar is here. She is all ingredients whilst she remains unseen, untouched, unnamed in her full form.

As my gaze wanders, I see another note: 'clinical' it says. I remember having placed this word, with client in mind, into the folds of the gauze-like fabric around the map early on. Clinical practice, clinical supervision, clinical client - a chill runs down my spine. How can she find her feet in such labelled land? How can we call her in during supervision without re-casting her in objectifying terms?



I go back to our place of sacred assembly. This time, I dip the brush into the red juice myself and write around the place: "for you"

We offer, we don't take. We approach her through our own zest and weariness of being women on this earth. We offer a bite from the apple of our collective truth, offer to help her find a way through the gate so that she can leave what had been sold to her as paradise.

We know that it takes a different kind of garden to raise her up again, this time in full flesh and blood. Not abused, not violated, not shamed, not drained.

In supervision we cultivate what is needed for such renewal and unhindered growth: a shared ability to let the blood flow again, through veins and body places that are lifeless or in pain. And a willingness by supervisor and supervisee to bear the pins and needles as the blood flow re-awakens limbs, gestures, and utterings that were lost when she was stopped in her tracks before. This work of 'body-visory' regeneration is not a job to be completed. It is ongoing and cyclical as it assists "...the birth that is never accomplished, the body never created once and for all, the form never definitively completed, the face always still to be formed. The lips never opened or closed on a truth" (Irigaray, 1985, p. 217).

Sacred Act Three: The Relishing Body (Christina)

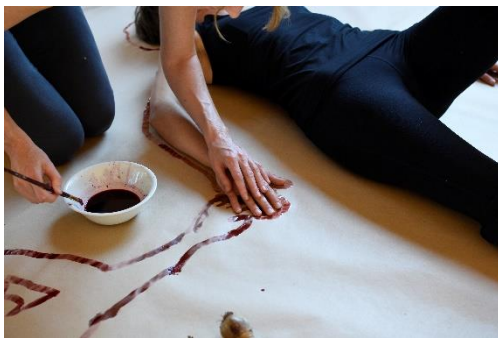


The following enactment of the CBMR brings alive the body that **cultivates sensory and relational pleasure in supervision.**

It's your turn. With your eyes half closed you step across our shared landscape, exploring it, finding your place. Your body, the way you move, it's so familiar to me. I'm restful yet curious. Slowly you lower yourself to the ground. You are close to finding your place from where I will trace your outline. It will be my turn next.

You lie down, your long, slender body curves towards Sue's shape, already traced. Gently, you place your hand, with gold ring finger, over the outline of hers. This gesture to your teacher, your guide, it feels intimate, respectful. I imagine wet beetroot under palm. As I see you there, my own teacher, my guide, I wonder, "will there be space for me?" Then, after a moment, with your hand still in place, you stretch out and I see there is room for me now. An internal, grateful sigh escapes me.

You become still but I wait, silently witnessing, respecting your right to be particular, to change your mind. I hold sacred the wisdom and authority of your body, as you have held mine, over and over again, so that in time I learned how to do this for myself. Now I do it for you.



With tenderness and attention, I paint Annette's body outline, working my way around her contours. The iron, bloodlike smell of the beetroot accompanies me. I relish the earthy taste in my mouth. I come to her ring fingered hand that rests over the outline of Sue's hand, as if gaining some quiet strength from her. Placing my hand over both, and with another sigh, I join this intimate company of touch.

I recognise these little sighs of mine, accompanied by a sense of landing gently in this world where I am not alone. I remember how we had explored them in supervision some months ago. That time, we had both sat on the floor and I had closed my eyes to sense my body whilst also lightly holding my clients in my mind: their bodies and experiences of trauma. I knew that whilst I was doing so, Annette was witnessing my movements from her place in the room. Her quiet presence was familiar and reassuring.

I took my hand to touch the contours of my face, gently contacting my skin, tracing what I know to be me. Little sighs escaped my lips, very small sounds. Sounds that I was familiar with from moments of stirring from sleep at night. I attended to how they landed in the space, how they sounded to me, and how I wondered they might sound to Annette, too. For me, they were little moans of sorrow and pleasure in one.

During that supervision session, still sighing intermittently, I turned my hands to the space in front of me as if making contact with my clients who, I imagined, were facing me. My fingers moved gently up and down, as if caressing the tensions in their bodies. After some time, I eased myself into the softness of the cushions behind me and slid down onto the warm, firm ground. My body felt open, without need to defend, and I relished a sense of safety in this room, with Annette. I had a strong sense of her embodied presence, as if it provided a soft landing that breaks my fall into this world and into the world of my clients.

Again, a vision of my clients emerged: that I, in turn, can be the body that provides a soft landing and teaches my clients to slowly relax (back) into life.

Embodied Modes of holding sacred in supervision

The three acts above hold sacred the woman's body in supervision in different ways. Each is informed by the individual nature and life story of the one enacting. Each act also goes beyond personal inclination and touches on collective themes and struggles of embodiment that are specifically, yet not exclusively, relevant to the experience of women. Knowing in body, respectfully naming, and sensitively engaging with these experiences, themes and struggles is crucial for the creation of a sacred holding environment in supervision.

One embodied mode of holding sacred, here articulated as the Fertilising Body, is the sustained and womb-like appreciation of what is subtle, barely perceptible and knowable in supervision. The practice of this appreciation allows both, supervisor and supervisee to hold the supervisee's growing skills and understanding of her work as if it was an embryo that is forming and needs to be nurtured and connected with intuitively and through a bodily felt sense. It is a practice of tending to and keeping fertile the ground from which the supervisee can grow and draw.

The choice of embryo as metaphor is not by chance. Menzam-Sills (2020), a scholar and practitioner of pre-and perinatal psychology, describes the significance of early development "as the embryo folds into a more three-dimensional form, where the heart meets an energetic heart center and miraculously begins to beat. The little one begins to resemble more of what we are used to considering as a body. I have heard that some spiritual traditions consider this the time when the soul or spirit enters the body. There seems to be more of a body to enter into" (p.448).

It is the heartbeat in the supervisee's forming practice that supervisor and supervisee feel and listen to. That this is not a rational or analytic process but an embodied and heartfelt one is further supported by Appleton (2020) who integrates prenatal, transpersonal and somatic psychology. With the embryo biologically forming around its heart as life-sustaining and life-organising centre long before there is a brain, he states that "the intelligence of the heart is primary to the intelligence of the brain" (p.103). To reveal the significance and felt quality of such intelligence, he speaks of this stage of embryonic development as one of "the embryo dreaming itself into existence", a dreaming that is done by its heart "as the fulcrum around which form takes shape" (p.103).

Tuning into the intelligence of the embryonic dream, that is the role of the Fertilising Body in supervision. Or, as Davis (2000) puts it in her article that explores the meeting of sacred ritual and psychotherapy: "We are performing an act of imagination, one that has the possibility of transforming what "is" into "what yet could be" (p.128).

Another mode of holding sacred in supervision, here articulated as the Renewing Body, is the explicit and shared embodied resonance with the collective (historical and contemporary) experience of the violated woman's body. In this context, 'holding sacred' in supervision can be close to 'holding alive'. When exploring phenomena of dissociation in the work with clients who have experienced trauma, McGinty (2008) argues that supervisor and supervisee need "to contact the somatic unconscious" (p.90) and develop a sensitivity and capacity for "very painful states of being to be more fully alive in ourselves and in our patients" (p.100).

That supervisor and supervisee need to do this work together is emphasised by Frizell (2012) in her writing entitled 'Embodiment and the supervisory task' and by Klapisch-Cohen (2015): "When one comprehends therapy and supervision as being-in-becoming, one no longer relates only to the individual as separated but rather to the 'becoming through the dialogue'. The acceptance of both supervisor and supervisee, to share an embodied emotional experience and create an open authentic dialog, enables this meeting to take place" (p.151).

Such authentic dialogue in supervision also needs to include a critical awareness of power relationships observed in the client's life, between client and therapist as well as between supervisor and supervisee. There is always a possibility that one woman might be participating in and embodying systems that violate another woman. Taylor (2013) in her reflections on relationship in feminist therapy reminds us and herself "not only to accompany my clients as they examine the texture and intricate details of their experience, but also to not be naïve to the likelihood that my privilege is underwritten by another's oppression" (p.30).

A third mode of holding sacred, articulated in this chapter as the Relishing Body, is the embodied intimacy with self and other through non-directed movement and reciprocal witnessing by supervisor and supervisee. This includes moving with remembered client gestures, movements and bodily states during supervision. As cultivated in the practice of Authentic Movement (Adler, 2002), the witnessing of such non-directed movement does not treat the supervisor's, supervisee's and (imagined) client's bodies "as objects of analytical scrutiny" (Panhofer et al, 2011, p. 10). Stromsted (2019) elaborates that the witness "is not *watching* or *observing* the mover, but rather *holding* her in a receptive, compassionate gaze – without interpretation or judgment..." (p.95 Italics in original).

Witnessing as a mode of holding sacred also extends to the language that both supervisor and supervisee use to name movement and bodily experience in supervision. It is phenomenological or "essential" (Stromsted, 2019) in that it describes what is physically seen and strives to differentiate - i.e. 'hold separate' - the various ways in which supervisee, supervisor and clients might internally experience and interpret the physical phenomenon. It is through the modelling and practice of such compassionate gaze and differentiated speaking that supervision can contribute to a field of potential embodiment in which it becomes possible and safe for the client to (re)discover joy and aliveness in and through her body.

Concluding Thoughts

Our collective and creative exploration has brought to paper how we as women hold sacred the woman's body in supervision. In her recollections, reflections and analysis, Sue has illustrated how this can support the woman supervisee in developing and maintaining trust in the fertility of her skills as therapist. Annette has shown how holding and being held sacred can renew the woman supervisee's capacity to stay present in body when working with women clients who have experienced abuse and violence. Christina has demonstrated that this resources the woman supervisee with body visions of what is possible when working with woman clients towards a greater appetite for life and joy in her own body.

Our writings combined reveal how the quality of our holding sacred is linked to the depth of our relationships grown over time. The process itself of creating, discussing and refining our words on these pages has enriched our relational practice as supervisors and supervisees. The closing act of our research ritual (see photograph below) speaks to the core of this practice:

We take the edges of our collective map, the edges of our body knowledge made visible. We roll them towards each other, inward, to the centre of the map. The further we come the more there is to handle. Our hands are now kneading the body-marked paper, incorporating all materials and words that we have used. It feels like making bread.

*Right at the end, there is only one apple left, and one word: to behold. To be and to hold, to be whilst we hold. To be **because** we hold, in our bodies and with our bodies, the seeds and fruit of what **can** be.*



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