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Article 43

When the Rubber Hits the Road: Applying Multicultural Competencies in Cross-Cultural Supervision

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When the supervisor and supervisee each come from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, they bring with them culturally conditioned beliefs about each other's cultural group (Jordan, Brinson, & Peterson, 2002). These beliefs and attitudes can be positive, negative, and neutral. When these beliefs lead to misperception (Riley, 2004) and negativity (Jordan et al., 2002) in the supervisory relationship, they can shut down communication and growth within the supervision process and between the supervisee and client. Intentional clinical supervision models that promote the supervisee's multicultural competence in appropriate ways are of recent interest (Ober, Granello, & Henfield, 2009). What happens when the rubber hits the road within the clinical supervision session? The purpose of this article is to illuminate the importance of applying multicultural competencies to cross-cultural supervision in order to increase multicultural understanding and awareness between supervisor and supervisee, which in turn impacts multicultural awareness between counselor and client.

Clinical Supervision

Clinical supervision is one of the core duties of the counseling profession (Loganbill, Hardy, & Delworth, 1982). Loganbill et al. (1982) defined supervision as "an intensive, interpersonally focused, one-to-one relationship, in which one person is designed to facilitate the development of therapeutic competence in the other person" (p. 4). Building on this, Bernard and Goodyear (2004) explained that

Supervision is an intervention provided by a more senior member of a profession to a more junior member or members of that same profession. This relationship is

evaluative, extends over time, and has the simultaneous purposes of enhancing the professional functioning of the more junior person(s), monitoring the quality of professional services offered to the clients that she, he, or they see, and serving as a gatekeeper for those who are to enter the particular profession. (p. 8)

These definitions illuminate that supervision involves oversight of supervisees' clinical duties and the clinical profession. Thus, supervisors utilize multiple skills in order to facilitate the teaching and learning process of supervisees (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004). This teaching and learning process includes increasing one's multicultural competence and awareness (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Jordan et al., 2002).

Multicultural Competencies

As part of counselors' and supervisors' professional ethical standards (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2005; Association for Counselor Education and Supervision [ACES], 1993), it is essential that educators, supervisors, and counselors are competent in the services they provide. The *ACA Code of Ethics* (2005) clearly states that supervisors must have multicultural awareness and explore the effect it has on the supervisory relationship. Multiculturalism is a dynamic and constant force in all supervision interactions (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004); therefore, supervisors must contain awareness of multicultural competence in order to facilitate this process.

Multicultural counseling competence aids in the service of ethnic and minority clients; thus, to do so, clinicians and supervisors utilize a variety of knowledge, awareness, and skills (Chao, 2006; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). The most widely accepted multicultural competencies include three main elements: (a) counselor awareness of own assumptions, values, and biases; (b) understanding the client's worldview; and (c) development of culturally appropriate interventions and strategies (Sue et al., 1992). In order for clinicians to embrace and be sensitive to the client's worldview, it is vital that supervision is facilitated from a culturally centered perspective as well.

Multicultural Supervision

Multicultural supervision is a dynamic process in which the supervisor assists supervisees with increasing their awareness about race/ethnicity while also promoting awareness of cultural differences between supervisor and supervisee and between supervisee and client (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). It is important that supervisors are willing to contrast their own beliefs and attitudes with those of their supervisees in a nonjudgmental manner (Sue et al., 1992). Therefore, understanding the dynamic interchanges that take place within the supervision relationship, such as cross-cultural interchanges, can inform the supervision process and be a model for the clinical session.

Cross-Cultural Supervision

In order for the supervisor to understand the dynamic interchanges, it is essential that the supervisor has awareness of all the multicultural facets impacting the process. Cross-cultural supervision takes place between a supervisor and supervisee from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds (Jordan et al., 2002; Leong & Wagner, 1994). This could include a supervisor who is male and White, a supervisee who is

female and Latin American, and a client who is male and Black. This cross-cultural experience could increase the chance of misinterpretation. In fact, Riley (2004) reported that diverse supervision dyads are vulnerable to misperceptions, so it is important for the supervisor to explore the supervisee's perceptions in order to lessen miscommunication.

Impact of Culture

Supervisors and supervisees bring with them their cultural conditioning, which accounts for their projection of expectations on culturally different individuals or groups (Jordan et al., 2002). In addition, power and authority are also a concern during cross-cultural supervision. Therefore, gaining knowledge about the supervisees' cultural qualities (i.e., gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, age, socioeconomic status, and disability) is an essential component of cross-cultural supervision. In fact, these cultural qualities can impact how one perceives the supervision process and can result in dynamic supervision interchanges (Ober et al., 2009). These cross-cultural interchanges within clinical supervision serve as critical incidents that have the ability to help or hinder the clinical supervision process.

Critical Incidents in Supervision

There has been a vast amount of research done on cross-cultural supervision and reports of critical incidents. In most cases, critical incidents were reported experiences from the supervision process that brought the supervisee satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Multicultural critical incidents in clinical supervision that have been identified as unsatisfactory have been illuminated in the literature to include: using offensive slang, not understanding the supervisee's cultural pride, being unaware of cultural specific norms (Fukuyama, 1994), interpersonal discomfort, and negative communication (Toporek, Ortega-Villalobos, & Pope-Davis, 2004). Critical incidents reported that have brought the supervisee satisfaction include: raising the topic of cultural differences, being interested in the supervisee's culture, feeling respected, and getting support from supervisors (Duan & Roehlke, 2001). These reports of critical incidents highlight the need for appropriate cross-cultural clinical supervision and appropriate application of these models.

Kyung, McCarthy, and LeRoy (2009) looked at 124 genetic counselor supervisors and reported that supervisors felt more knowledgeable about their multicultural awareness when they felt more developed as supervisors and when they had more counseling supervision experience. As supervisors are sufficiently prepared to explore multicultural issues in supervision, their supervisees gain knowledge and awareness about how to deal with multicultural issues with their clients. Supervisees reported that supervisors were able to increase their multicultural knowledge, skills, and awareness through, multicultural learning and conceptualization, vicarious learning of multicultural issues, extra-group events (trainings and seminars), and supervisors use of their hierarchy to influence multicultural development (Kaduvettoor et al., 2009).

Failing to address race and culture shows a lack of understanding about the supervisee, which could impede growth opportunities. A dissertation study of 76 Master's and Doctoral level psychology and counseling students found that not addressing cultural issues in supervision was considered a negative event (Moreno, 2010). To do this, it has been suggested that building and monitoring the clinical supervision relationship is essential and will impact how supervisees perceive the

multicultural discussions (Toporek et al., 2004). It has been identified that clinical supervisors should initiate discussions with supervisees on culture and race along with cultural differences and racial identity work, but appropriate training must be obtained to do so (Fukuyama, 1994).

Supervisors' Responsiveness in Cross-Cultural Supervision

The literature provides that a supervisor must be reactive to cultural diversity in a supervisory relationship (Constantine, 2001; Estrada, Frame, & Williams, 2004; Leong & Wagner, 1994). Specifically, the failure of supervisors to be sensitive to these cultural differences can impact the supervisee and the client in a negative way. One study found that not addressing cultural issues in supervisory relationships was associated with problems in supervision, different counseling goals for the client, and incongruent expectations of supervision (Daniels, D'Andrea, & Kim, 1999). The friction related to objectives for both the client and the supervisory relationship was directly related to the cultural differences between the supervisor and supervisee and the failure of the supervisor to acknowledge these differences.

Burkard and colleagues (2006) completed a qualitative study where they examined supervisees' experiences of cross-cultural supervision. The results found culturally responsive supervision occurred when the supervisees felt supported in exploring cultural issues. Unresponsive supervision occurred when the supervisor paid no attention to the differences in culture between the supervisor, supervisee, and/or client and disregarded or dismissed diversity issues. The failure of the supervisor to respond to cross-cultural concerns in supervision resulted in the supervisee being negatively impacted, the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee being non-productive, and less positive outcomes for the client (Burkard et al., 2006).

It is not only important to address diversity in supervision, but to be aware of the personal traits of both the supervisor and the supervisee (Leong & Wagner, 1994). Specifically, addressing cross-cultural issues in the supervisory relationship is not a simple process, but a multifaceted and intricate interaction of distinct personalities of the supervisor and supervisee(s) with cultural considerations complicating the relationship. In order for a supervisor to navigate the complexities of being responsive to cultural differences in the supervisory relationship, the supervisor needs to acknowledge the cultural differences in the relationship (Ancis & Marshall, 2010), gain knowledge of the supervisees' cultural qualities (i.e., gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, age, socioeconomic status, and disability; Sue & Sue, 2003), understand the power differential that exists in the relationship (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004), and be open to initiating discussions regarding diversity with the supervisee (Constantine, 1997).

Acknowledgment of Cultural Differences

Leong and Wagner (1994) completed a comprehensive review of the literature on cross-cultural supervision and found that diversity of race and ethnicity between supervisor, supervisee, and/or clients deeply impacts the supervision process. However, many supervisors often avoid discussing these culture differences in supervision and assume a colorblind rationale (Sue & Sue, 2003). When this occurs, supervisees "are provided little and sometimes no direction in supervision about how to address race,

ethnicity, and culture in counseling" (Estrada et al., 2004, p. 310). Specifically, supervisees find that discussing diversity issues in supervision relates to more positive outcomes for clients (Ancis & Marshall, 2010). Additionally, research indicates that when culture is acknowledged in supervision, supervisees find a more meaningful working alliance with the supervisor and increased satisfaction with the supervision experience (Inman, 2006).

When cultural differences are present in a supervisory relationship, it can take the form of different dyads (e.g., majority supervisor – minority supervisee, minority supervisor – majority supervisee, other types of cross-cultural relationships). These dyads are further complicated when the culture of the client is integrated into the interactions. It has been found supervision impacts "client outcomes and . . . culturally competent supervision is one way to increase the quality of the therapy that trainees provide with diverse clients" (Ancis & Marshall, 2010, p. 282). Specifically, when diversity factors are acknowledged in supervision, supervisees feel they are better trained to utilize diversity in their clinical work with clients. This is important given that "counselors who are not fully cognizant of the ways in which they import racism into the counseling and supervision relationship may be unable to effectively meet the mental health needs of racially and ethnically diverse individuals" (Utsey & Gernat, 2002, p. 481).

Majority supervisor – minority supervisee. For many White supervisors having an open and candid conversation regarding race, culture, or ethnicity with their supervisees is difficult (Constantine & Sue, 2007; Utsey, Gernat, & Hammar, 2005); in that, there may be an "unspoken tension, fear, and lack of knowledge about these issues on the part of supervisors perpetuates the marginalization of race and ethnicity in counselor training" (Estrada et al., 2004, p. 310). However, Cook (1994) provides that supervisors who do not engage in discussions regarding diversity issues may create an environment in which minority supervisees may feel frustrated and powerless. Additionally, these supervisees may be given the unspoken message that issues of culture are not important. Fong and Lease (1997) purport that White supervisors attempting cross-cultural supervision face specific and unique challenges, including mistrust in the supervisory relationship, unintentional racism, and miscommunication issues.

To counter these specific challenges, majority supervisors must be willing to initiate and engage in discussions with minority supervisees regarding diversity issues. White supervisors need to be racially and culturally aware in cross-cultural supervisory relationships in order to provide competent supervision to the supervisee and protect clients from damaging consequences (Constantine & Sue, 2007). Specifically, majority supervisors need to be the ones to acknowledge that a cross-cultural supervision relationship exists and be willing to have open discussions with supervisees to process what this means to the supervisee.

Minority supervisor – majority supervisee. Some suggest that majority supervisees in dyads with minority supervisors expect supervision to be non-productive or even a negative experience (McRoy, Freeman, Logan, & Blackmon, 1986) because majority supervisees assume that minority supervisors do not have the same expertise as majority supervisors (Priest, 1994). This may lead to minority supervisors feeling that they must constantly prove themselves. For some majority supervisees the fact that the supervisor is a member of the minority population may result in the supervisee expecting that the supervisor is an expert on all cultural issues (Tummala-Narra, 2004).

Additionally, the supervisory relationship may be affected by what is occurring in society at large (Hernandez & McDowell, 2010). Minority supervisors may find themselves “being the focus of the supervisee’s racial misconceptions or antagonisms and subsequently expending energy attempting to avoid feelings and emotions associated with the situation” (Priest, 1994). The minority supervisor should be willing to address these mistaken beliefs with the majority supervisee in order to facilitate a more satisfactory supervisory alliance.

Other cross-cultural supervision relationships. Little research has been conducted when the supervisor and supervisee are both from the minority population (Jernigan, Green, Helms, Perez-Gualdrón, & Henze, 2010). Hernandez and McDowell (2010) described a supervision dyad where the supervisor was a Latino woman and the supervisee was a White gay male. In this instance, the supervisor and supervisee were able to discuss the oppression they both experienced in society. This connection allowed them to challenge each other regarding their perceptions of privilege related to gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. This suggests that when the supervision dyad consists of two members of the minority population, the interaction can enhance the supervisor relationship. Jernigan and colleagues (2010) examined supervision dyads where both the supervisor and the supervisee were individuals of Color and found that supervisees were the first to initiate discussions regarding race. However, they found that once the issue was brought up most of the supervisors were open to the discussions.

Understanding the Power Differential

Supervisors must assess supervisees to ensure that clients are receiving quality services. This dynamic provides supervisors with power over supervisees (Estrada et al., 2004). In particular, there is a power differential that is inherent in supervisory relationships (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004; Gloria, Hird, & Tao, 2008). Supervisors must acknowledge their personal and professional power (Estrada et al., 2004) as well as “their own cultural assumptions [that] influence their thinking and their interactions with others” (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004, p. 118). For majority supervisors, White privilege affects the power hierarchy of the supervisory relationship (Fong & Lease, 1997) and this in turn can create an atmosphere that makes it more difficult for minority supervisees to discuss diversity issues (Gloria et al., 2008).

Due to the positions of power that supervisors have in the supervisory relationship, supervisors are typically responsible for making sure that diversity issues are addressed in supervision (Constantine, 2003). Hernandez and McDowell (2010) provide that supervisors need to have *cultural humility*; this allows supervisors and supervisees “to build the trust and safety necessary to encourage growth across cultural and social differences” (p. 29). Given that a power differential is present in supervision and it is further complicated when cultural diversity exists between the supervisor and supervisee, it is important for the supervisor to be open to initiating discussions with the supervisee regarding their differences.

Initiating Discussions Regarding Diversity

It has been found that supervisors and supervisees both advocate for increased discussions of cultural issues to improve the supervisory relationship; especially when cross-cultural supervision is occurring (Constantine, 1997). However, both members of

the supervisory dyad may find it difficult to openly discuss diversity issues that occur in supervision (Gloria et al., 2008). Therefore, these discussions should occur early on in the supervisory relationship in order to deal with any misconceptions or preconceptions that might interfere with the supervisory alliance (Hird, Cavalieri, Dulko, Felice, & Ho, 2001). Additionally, supervisors should ensure that discussions regarding cross-cultural issues are clear and understandable to supervisees. Duan and Roehlke (2001) found that while 90% of supervisors surveyed said that they addressed ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation issues in supervision, only 50% of their supervisees acknowledged these discussions.

Lawless, Gale, and Bacigalupe (2001) investigated how discussions about race, ethnicity, and culture were achieved in supervision using conversation analysis. Conversation analysis is a methodology that looks at patterns of communication across naturally occurring verbal interactions. These researchers found that culture was introduced into conversations in four domains: a) issues of case demographics, b) supervisee's self-examination, c) cross-cultural issues in the client therapeutic relationship, and d) cultural issues affecting the supervisory relationship. Basically, discussions of cultural issues in the supervisory relationship had ambiguous beginnings and were not neat or orderly conversations. Lawless et al. (2001) provide that this style of allowing conversations of cultural issues in supervision to occur naturally may be more helpful for supervisees, in that "supervisees may feel less threatened thus more willing to examine issues" related to diversity (p. 194).

However, Estrada et al. (2004) provide that it is up to supervisors to intentionally bring up issues of cultural differences; specifically, to address concerns about expectations and fears relating to this subject. They state "when such openness is established, when delicate issues such as race are addressed, and when supervisees feel that they are engaging in collaborative work with a supervisor, the supervisory process is more likely to be satisfying and effective" (p. 314). Similarly, Ancis and Marshall (2010) found that supervisees with supervisors who were open to discussing their own cultural heritage and biases felt more comfortable about self-disclosing their own backgrounds and biases.

It is important not only for supervisors to be open and willing to engage and initiate discussions of diversity issues in cross-cultural supervision, but also to facilitate quality, constructive discussions. Supervisors need to create a safe and supportive environment for supervisees so that they feel free to engage in open dialogues regarding cross-cultural issues (Estrada et al., 2004). Supervisees should be encouraged to "understand the impact of both their own cultural experiences and biases in their work with clients" (Ancis & Marshall, 2010, p. 282) and to recognize their clients' perceptions of culture. Specifically, supervisees should be supported in discussing their perceptions with clients in order to improve the relationship between the supervisee and the client. "The supervisee's approach to the therapeutic relationship rests heavily on the supervisor's ability to initiate discussions on diversity in the context of working with both ethnic minority and majority supervisees and clients" (Tummala-Narra, 2004, p. 309).

The training of supervisees is not complete until issues of diversity and culture are completely integrated in the supervision process (Constantine, 1997). Supervisees perceive that they gain increased multicultural competency when supervisors initiate positive discussions of cultural issues (Toporek et al., 2004) and when supervisors are

willing to discuss their own limitations regarding multicultural knowledge (Ancis & Marshall, 2010). This assists supervisees in modeling how to initiate constructive discussions regarding diversity with clients and in understanding that multicultural competency is an evolving process.

Barriers to Cross-Cultural Supervision

As stated above, the literature and ethics of the counseling profession emphasize the importance and necessity that supervisors acknowledge and address cross-cultural issues in supervision. This not only increases the effectiveness of the supervisory relationship, but also facilitates better outcomes for clients (Burkard et al., 2006). However, there are challenges to addressing cross-cultural issues with supervisees. These challenges include the supervisor being unaware of their own predisposed perceptions and biases, supervisor's lack of training, and legal and ethical considerations.

Supervisors' Perceptions and Biases

Researchers have consistently provided that supervisors need to be aware of their own cultural biases (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004; Brinson, 2004; Brinson & Cervantes, 2003; Jordan et al., 2002). Specifically, supervisors need to become conscious of cultural biases around all aspects of the supervisory relationship (e.g., cognitive, affective, and behavioral). Brinson (2004) provided that it is challenging for supervisors to admit their own cultural biases, in that it may be difficult for supervisors to openly discuss their biases. This difficulty may be due to the fact that the words *cultural bias* illicit a negative connotation (Brinson, 2004).

Supervisors who have not gained awareness of their own personal biases regarding race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and other cultural factors may inadvertently create friction with supervisees who are hesitant to discuss their own preconceived notions (Constantine, 1997; Constantine & Sue, 2007). Many supervisors facilitate the supervisory relationship with a culturally encapsulated approach, which in itself, may be culturally biased supervisory behavior. Therefore even if supervisors are aware of their own personal biases, supervisors' propensity to engage in an ethnocentric approach to supervision can result in damage to the supervisory relationship.

Supervisory Training

In order to meet the needs of the diverse population, trained and competent clinical supervisors are an essential priority in implementing cross-cultural supervision in the counseling profession. Counselors must be prepared to treat diverse clients and formulate culturally sensitive and ethical decisions (Kocet, 2006). When supervisors are not adequately trained or developed as supervisors, they risk misapplication of cross-cultural supervision. This misuse of multicultural theory in group supervision leads to higher levels of group supervision conflict (Kaduvettoor et al., 2009). A study of 15 graduate students in counseling psychology, who reported about their internship and practicum supervisors, found low levels of cross-cultural competencies (Wong & Wong, 1999). Therefore, supervisors who are not adequately trained to handle multicultural discussions in supervision have the added responsibility of gaining competence in their abilities (Leong & Wagner, 1994).

Due to the need for adequately trained cross-cultural clinical supervisors, training models have been outlined in the research. Miville, Rosa, and Constantine, (2005) offer multicultural guidelines that mental health training administrators and educators can utilize to evaluate and update their programs. Their guidelines will help assure that graduates and current supervisors are appropriately trained to work with cross-cultural clients and supervisees. In addition, developmentally specific supervision models that spotlight the supervisor's and supervisee's multicultural competence, and provide clear application and content, can be applied. The Synergistic Model of Multicultural Supervision (SMMS; Ober et al., 2009) which incorporates developmental methods of supervision to help the supervisee grow cognitively. It includes awareness of multicultural competence and multicultural issues impacting the supervision relationship, and appropriate information in order for multicultural supervision and counseling to take place (Ober et al., 2009). It has been suggested as an appropriate model for cross-cultural clinical supervision (Ober et al., 2009). Most recently, Adams (2010) suggested an eclectic combination of social constructivist, postmodern psychoanalytic, and feminist perspectives to address cross-cultural interactions. Multiple methods are available for trainers, educators, and agencies to provide sufficient training to their students and supervisory staff. Clinical agencies, educational training programs, and clinical supervisors have the ethical responsibility to assure they are able to address the multicultural issues (ACA, 2005) of the diverse populations.

Future Research Needs

The preponderance of research found regarding cross-cultural supervision has been conducted with university supervisors. This has left a gap in the literature regarding applying cross-cultural supervision competencies in specific counseling settings (e.g., substance abuse, in-patient, schools, higher education) and regarding addressing differences between field supervisors and university supervisors. Additional research is needed to determine how supervisors are addressing diversity concerns in cross-cultural supervision in these distinct counseling sites. Specific topics that may need to be addressed are a) if the supervisors perceive they are receiving the institutional support they need to address these issues, b) if supervisees in these settings believe that they are having their diversity needs met, and c) most important, if the clients' needs are being met.

Another area where there is a lack of research is related to addressing problematic supervisee behavior in cross-cultural supervision. Diversity between the supervisor and supervisee is further complicated when supervisees are demonstrating problematic behavior that is negatively affecting clients and/or the counseling profession (Foster & McAdams, 2009; Kaslow, et al., 2007). Due to this lack of literature, supervisors may not be able to develop the needed tools to address problems with supervisees when the supervisor and supervisee have a difference in culture, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and/or race (Forrest, Elman, Gizara, & Vacha-Haase, 1999). Therefore, research is needed to address fears and inadequacies that seem to be present in supervisors when diversity issues coincide with competency concerns with supervisees.

Summary

Counseling professionals have put significant effort into providing literature on multicultural competencies regarding working with diverse clients, and much attention has been paid to the importance of supervisors addressing diversity issues in cross-cultural supervision. It is important that supervisors pay heed to this noteworthy research and ensure that they are diligent in addressing diversity in cross-cultural supervision. Specifically, when supervisors leave their graduate studies or training seminars and hit the road of actively overseeing supervisees, they must remember the importance of applying multicultural competencies in cross-cultural supervision. This will not only assist in enhancing the supervisory relationship, but will impact multicultural awareness between supervisees and clients which will result in better client outcomes.

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