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# Supervisor Cultural Responsiveness and Unresponsiveness in Cross-Cultural Supervision

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# Supervisor Cultural Responsiveness and Unresponsiveness in Cross- Cultural Supervision

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Thirteen supervisees' of color and 13 European American supervisees' experiences of culturally responsive and unresponsive cross-cultural supervision were studied using consensual qualitative research. In culturally responsive supervision, all supervisees felt supported for exploring cultural issues, which positively affected the supervisee, the supervision relationship, and client outcomes. In culturally unresponsive supervision, cultural issues were ignored, actively discounted, or dismissed by supervisors, which negatively affected the supervisee, the relationship, and/or client outcomes. European American supervisees' and supervisees' of color experiences diverged significantly, with supervisees of color experiencing unresponsiveness more frequently and with more negative effects than European American supervisees. Implications for research and supervision practice are discussed.

The development of multicultural competencies in clinical practice is considered essential to effective and ethical client treatment (e.g., Office of Ethnic Minority Affairs, American Psychological Association [APA], 1993; Pedersen, 1995). Perhaps one of the most significant factors to learning and integrating such competencies into practice is having had supervision experiences that promote growth as a culturally competent practitioner (Pope-Davis & Coleman, 1997). Of interest, Constantine (1997) found that 70% of supervisees had received training in multicultural counseling in graduate school, whereas only 30% of supervisors had received such training in their

academic programs. Furthermore, Duan and Roehlke (2001) found that 93% of supervisors in their study had no experience supervising trainees who were racially or culturally different from themselves. With supervisors having had such limited training in multicultural counseling and similarly limited experience with cross-cultural supervision, we wonder about supervisors' comfort, confidence, and competence in addressing cultural issues during supervision. Furthermore, the discrepancy between supervisee and supervisor training in multicultural issues may contribute to conflicts during supervision. For example, supervisees trained to be sensitive to cultural issues may expect supervisors to address such issues and, consequently, may feel conflicted and frustrated with supervisors who are unwilling to or are incapable of engaging in such discussions. Thus, supervisor responsiveness and unresponsiveness to cultural issues may have important implications for supervision, particularly for cross-cultural supervision.

Research on cultural responsiveness and unresponsiveness in supervision has been slow to emerge, although such research has been supportive of culturally responsive approaches in counseling and psychotherapy (see Atkinson & Lowe, 1995, for a review). Given the lack of training that many supervisors have received on multicultural issues, it is important to study the effect of cultural responsiveness and unresponsiveness on supervisees and supervision processes. In the present study, then, we sought to examine the cross-cultural supervision events in which supervisees experienced supervisors as culturally responsive or unresponsive. For this investigation, we used Atkinson and Lowe's (1995) definition of cultural responsiveness and have slightly altered this definition to address supervision issues: Supervisor "responses that acknowledge the existence of, show interest in, demonstrate knowledge of, and express appreciation for the client's [and supervisee's] ethnicity and culture and that place the client's [and supervisee's] problem in a cultural context" (p. 402). With regard to culturally unresponsive supervision, then, we included instances in which supervisors sought to intentionally dismiss the relevance of culture, or intentional and unintentional acts of omission regarding cultural issues. We believe that cultural responsiveness and unresponsiveness in supervision exists on a continuum, both within a supervision experience with a single supervisor and across supervision experiences with multiple supervisors. For example, a supervisor may

be culturally responsive at one time during supervision and at another time decide to be unresponsive to cultural concerns. For this study, however, we asked participants to focus on one culturally responsive and one culturally unresponsive event that occurred with separate culturally different supervisors. Prior to presenting the results of our study, we provide an overview of relevant research.

## **Research on Cross-Cultural Supervision**

Much of the literature on cross-cultural supervision consists of survey research, and these studies provide a preliminary glimpse into some important processes and outcomes. One important area of research is the frequency with which cultural or racial issues are discussed in supervision, whether as a topic related to the supervision relationship or to a client concern. With regard to the supervision relationship, supervisees and supervisors generally report disparate frequencies for such discussions, with supervisors reporting more frequent discussions of cultural/racial issues than supervisees (Duan & Roehlke, 2001). In addition, Gatmon et al. (2001) found that supervisees and supervisors reported discussions of similarities and differences regarding ethnicity issues in the supervision relationship 32% of the time in cross-cultural supervision relationships, with supervisors initiating this discussion 48% of the time. These findings suggest that cultural issues specific to the supervision relationship are infrequently (i.e., less than half the time) addressed by supervisors and that supervisors and supervisees report the frequency of such discussions quite differently. It is of interest to note, however, that many theorists believe that inclusion of multicultural issues in supervision is important to the growth and development of supervisees (Brown & Landrum-Brown, 1995; Constantine, 1997), particularly for supervisees of color who also need to integrate their ethnic and professional identity (Vasquez & McKinley, 1982).

In addition to the frequency with which cultural issues are addressed in supervision, we also wonder how often supervisees experience negative events in cross-cultural supervision. Supervisees report a relatively low rate of such occurrences. For instance, Ladany, Lehrman-Waterman, Molinaro, and Wolgast (1999) found that 7% of supervisees reported negative events in multicultural supervision, and

McRoy, Freeman, Logan, and Blackmon (1986) and Toporek, Ortega-Villalobos, and Pope-Davis (2004) found that 15%–16% of the supervisees in cross-cultural supervision reported experiencing negative events. Such events included cultural insensitivity (i.e., negative stereotyping or dismissing cultural/racial concerns) toward clients or the supervisee (Fukuyama, 1994; Kleintjes & Swartz, 1996; Ladany et al., 1999; McRoy et al., 1986; Toporek et al., 2004), questioning supervisees' clinical abilities and challenging the use of specific interventions with culturally diverse clients (Fukuyama, 1994), or conflictive situations involving negative communication or a lack of intervention by the supervisor (Toporek et al., 2004). Of most interest, however, little is known about the effect of such negative supervision experiences on supervisees, the supervision relationship, or clinical cases.

When multicultural issues are addressed competently in supervision, this tends to have a positive effect on the supervisee and the supervision relationship. For instance, supervisees reported increases in personal awareness of cultural issues (Toporek et al., 2004), in their ability to include multicultural issues in client treatment conceptualization (Ladany, Inman, Constantine, & Hofheinz, 1997), and in overall case conceptualization abilities (Gainor & Constantine, 2002) when multicultural issues were addressed in supervision in comparison to when they were not addressed. Furthermore, supervisees also reported acquiring higher levels of multicultural competence when multicultural issues were addressed as opposed to when they were not addressed (Constantine, 2001). Additionally, Gatmon et al. (2001) found that when supervisees reported that supervisors discussed cultural differences between supervisee and supervisor, supervisees rated the supervision working alliance higher and reported higher levels of satisfaction with supervision than when cultural issues were not discussed. Thus, culturally responsive supervision fosters supervisees' sensitivity and ability to include multicultural issues in their clinical work and the development of positive supervision relationships.

Furthermore, the supervision relationship also appears to be influenced by racial identity development of supervisee and supervisor and not the cross-cultural match of the participants themselves. For instance, cultural or racial matching of supervisor and supervisee were

not found to be related to supervisee ratings of supervision satisfaction or supervision working alliance (Gatmon et al., 2001; Hilton, Russell, & Salmi, 1995). However, Ladany et al. (1997) found that supervisory working alliances were stronger when supervisors were equal to or higher (vs. lower) than their supervisees in racial identity development. They also found that when supervisors were equal to or higher in racial identity development than their supervisees, the supervisors were more able to promote the development of multicultural competence in supervisees than supervisors who were lower in racial identity development than their supervisees. These findings suggest that cultural or racial matching of supervisor and supervisee may not be an effective way to approach cross-cultural supervision.

In summary, these prior investigations provide important information about supervisor and supervisee perceptions of cross-cultural supervision and the effect of cultural responsiveness and unresponsiveness on supervision relationships and supervisee skill development. Of interest, studies of culturally matched supervisors and supervisees have not been found to lead to supervisees' increased satisfaction with supervision or more positive supervisory working alliances. Responsiveness to cultural issues has been associated with positive effects in supervision, and unresponsiveness to cultural issues has been correlated with negative effects. However, prior research has been based on surveys, and thus researchers know little about the actual effect of such experiences in cross-cultural supervision for European American supervisees (EASEs) and supervisees of color (SECs). For instance, little is known about how cultural responsiveness and unresponsiveness during cross-cultural supervision affect the supervisee, the supervision relationship and process of supervision, satisfaction with supervision, or the outcome of clinical cases.

## **Purpose of Study**

Given these limitations in prior studies, we sought to examine qualitatively supervisees' experiences of cross-cultural supervision when supervisors were responsive or unresponsive to cultural issues. Increasingly, qualitative research has become an important force in counseling process research, particularly in cross-cultural counseling



(Ponterotto, 2002). For our investigation, we chose to use consensual qualitative research (CQR; Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997) to explore participants' experiences. First, CQR affords the researcher an opportunity to understand the inner experiences of participants, providing a more complete description of the phenomenon under investigation. Additionally, CQR has been used in numerous studies on the process of psychotherapy (Hill et al., 2005) and is a robust methodology for illuminating interpersonal processes such as cross-cultural supervision.

To explore the phenomenon of cultural responsiveness and unresponsiveness in cross-cultural supervision, we studied EASEs' experiences in supervision with a supervisor of color and SECs' experiences in supervision with a European American supervisor. To provide a context for specific culturally responsive and unresponsive events, we first queried participants about their overall experiences of cultural discussions in supervision. Next, we inquired about respondents' experience of a specific event in which their individual supervisor was culturally responsive during supervision, and we also explored participants' experiences of a different supervision event with a different supervisor in which their supervisor was culturally unresponsive. For both specific events, we asked participants about the quality of the relationship; the event; and the effect of the event on the participant, the supervision relationship, the participant's satisfaction with supervision, and the outcome of the client case. The results of this study may help illuminate supervisees' inner experiences of culturally responsive and unresponsive supervision in the context of cross-cultural supervision. Such information may also prove helpful to supervisors who seek to understand and identify strategies that may be used in cross-cultural supervision.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

*Supervisees.* Twenty-six doctoral students in professional psychology programs (14 clinical psychology and 12 counseling psychology) agreed to participate in this study. These participants were geographically dispersed across the United States. All

participants were women (although men were also recruited), and they ranged in age from 24 to 48 years ( $M = 30.15$ ,  $SD = 5.47$ ). With regard to ethnic and racial background, 13 participants were EASEs, and 13 participants were SECs (i.e., 6 were African American, 6 were Asian American, and 1 was Latina). With regard to their training status, 14 participants were preinternship, 7 were on their predoctoral internship, 4 had completed all program requirements except their dissertation, and 1 was a postdoctorate and working on her licensing hours. During practicum and internship experiences, participants reported seeing from 1 to 20 clients a week ( $M = 8.37$ ,  $SD = 4.90$ ) and indicated that 0%–75% ( $M = 15.36$ ,  $SD = 20.73$ ) of their clients were African American, 0%–50% ( $M = 7.96$ ,  $SD = 13.68$ ) were Asian American, 0%–100% ( $M = 54.43$ ,  $SD = 32.74$ ) were European American, 0%–50% ( $M = 11.49$ ,  $SD = 15.80$ ) were Latina/o, 0%–10% ( $M = 0.77$ ,  $SD = 2.72$ ) were Native American, and 0%–30% ( $M = 2.31$ ,  $SD = 6.52$ ) were of international origin. Our participants indicated that they had had from 3 to 20 ( $M = 9.81$ ,  $SD = 4.33$ ) supervisors across their various practicum, internship, and/or postdoctoral training experiences. SECs reported that from 4 to 16 ( $M = 10.08$ ,  $SD = 3.09$ ) supervisors were culturally/racially different from themselves, whereas EASEs reported that from 1 to 5 ( $M = 2.31$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ) supervisors were culturally/racially different from themselves.

*Interviewers and auditors.* For this investigation, two research teams were used to interview participants and analyze the data. One team exclusively interviewed participants of color (i.e., Team A) and analyzed the subsequent data, and the second team exclusively interviewed European American participants (Team B) and analyzed the data gathered from these participants. The first author, a 47-year-old European American male, served as the leader for both research teams, was involved in interviewing participants in both groups and was involved in all phases of analysis on both teams. Team A also consisted of 2 counseling psychology doctoral students (1 African American woman who was 27 years old, and 1 European American male who was 27 years old) for a total of 3 members. In addition to the team leader, 3 team members served on Team B (3 European Americans; 2 women, 1 man; 30, 31, and 41 years old, respectively) for a total of 4 members. All team members served as interviewers and judges for the coding of interview data and the abstracting of core

ideas for their team. We additionally had two auditors for this study. A 54-year-old European American female counseling psychology faculty member served as the auditor for all phases of the project for Team A, and a 43-year-old European American female counseling psychology faculty member served as the auditor for all phases of Team B's work. Both auditors were experienced CQR researchers, and each has published CQR research that addresses supervision and multicultural counseling. It is typical for CQR research to present the biases of team members, and this information is provided for all team members and auditors in Appendix A, which is available on the Web at <http://0-dx.doi.org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.1037/0022-0167.53.3.288.sup>.

## *Measures*

*Demographic form.* Participants completed a demographic form with open-ended questions that asked for the following information: age, sex, race/ethnicity, area of specialization (i.e., clinical or counseling psychology), training status, total number of supervisors during graduate training, total number of supervisors who were culturally/racially different from participant during training, average number of clients currently seen in therapy per week, and percentage of clients seen who are racially different from therapist. We also asked participants to rate the importance of cultural responsiveness in psychotherapy and supervision on separate 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*very unimportant*) to 7 (*very important*).

*Interview protocol.* We designed a semistructured interview protocol. In the development of the protocol, all interviewers conducted a pilot interview to examine the content and clarity of the questions and to provide interviewers with an opportunity to become comfortable with the protocol. The feedback obtained from these pilot interviews was used to modify the protocol questions. The final protocol contained a standard set of questions, and interviewers used additional probes to clarify information or encourage participants to expand their answers. The protocol contained four sections, and the interview was conducted over the course of two sessions. The opening section of the interview focused on participants' overall experiences with cultural issues in supervision. The second and third sections of the interview explored participants' specific experiences with culturally

responsive and unresponsive supervision with a culturally different supervisor. Here, participants of color were asked to focus on events that occurred with European American supervisors, and European American participants were asked to focus on events that occurred with supervisors of color. For each of these incidents, we asked participants to discuss events that had personal meaning and that had significance to their training experiences as a counselor. Within these sections, we also asked about the quality of the supervision relationship prior to the event, the effect of event on the supervisee, the supervision relationship, satisfaction with supervision, and the outcome of the clinical case(s). A follow-up interview was scheduled for about 2 weeks after the initial interview and before data analysis was begun. This second interview offered the researcher the opportunity to clarify any information from the first interview and to explore additional reactions of the participant that may have arisen as a consequence of the initial interview.

### *Procedures for Data Collection*

*Recruitment of supervisees (i.e., therapists in training).* We used both a snowballing technique and e-mail Listservs to recruit potential participants. For the snowballing technique, colleagues (i.e., therapists in training, training directors of practicum and internship settings) who were known to the primary research team were contacted at the National Multicultural Conference and Summit (January 2003) and asked to identify supervisees, including themselves, for a study on supervisees' experiences in responsive and unresponsive cross-cultural supervision. They were given the following criteria for potential participants: Supervisees had to be enrolled in a doctoral program in clinical or counseling psychology or recently graduated and currently working on licensing hours while under supervision, they were required to have completed at least four semesters of clinical/counseling practicum, and they needed to have critical events (i.e., events that were particularly meaningful to the participant) during supervision with culturally different supervisors (i.e., ethnically or racially different) who the supervisees identified as either culturally responsive or unresponsive. Potential participants ( $N = 5$ ) who were identified from the National Multicultural Conference and Summit were each contacted by mail by a member of the primary

research team and were invited to participate in the study. The mailing indicated how they were identified for the study and also contained the initial research materials (i.e., cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, informed consent form, demographic form, interview protocol, postcard to request results). If the individual did not respond to this initial mailing, then one follow-up mailing was sent to encourage participation. For those supervisees who did not respond or who declined to participate, their involvement with the study ended. Three supervisees did respond to the follow-up mailing and returned the consent and demographic forms. After the researchers' receipt of these forms, each participant was contacted, and the first interview was scheduled.

We also sought and received permission from two of the list owners of the APA Division Listservs (i.e., Division 17 and 45), two Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Center Listservs (i.e., intern and postdoctorate), and the National Latino Psychologist Association Listserv to post an invitation to participate in this study (using the same criteria for participant selection identified above). The list owners were provided with a written description of the study for posting that included researcher contact information for those who were interested in participating. Research packets were sent to 33 individuals who expressed interest in learning more about the study, and 23 of these persons then returned the consent and demographic forms. After the researchers' receipt of these forms, the participants were contacted by a team member to arrange the first interview.

*Interviews.* Participants were randomly assigned to one of six interviewers, with each of the interviewers completing between three and five interviews. Three of the interviewers had extensive experience conducting CQR interviews, whereas the other three interviewers had no prior experience. To ensure that the interview protocols were conducted in a similar manner across team members, the inexperienced interviewers observed a mock interview by the experienced interviewers and then practiced conducting an interview (based on the study's protocol questions) in a role-play with experienced CQR interviewers. After the completion of pilot interviews and resulting modification of the protocol questions, the research team members began conducting telephone interviews for the study, completing both the initial and follow-up interviews with each of their

participants. Each of the first interviews lasted 45–60 min; the follow-up interviews lasted 5–15 min.

*Transcription.* All interviews were transcribed verbatim for each participant, although minimal encouragers and other nonlanguage utterances were excluded. After the transcription was completed, the original interviewer reviewed the transcription and deleted names, locations, or any other personally identifying information of the participant. Each transcript was assigned a code number to protect participant confidentiality.

### *Procedures for Data Analysis*

We used CQR methodology (Hill et al., 1997) to analyze the data. These procedures included coding data to domains, development of core ideas or abstracts from the data in the domains for each individual case, and creation of a cross-analysis to identify categories or themes that emerged across cases. All decisions regarding the data analysis were determined by a consensus of research team members and were subsequently reviewed by auditors who were external to the teams. Finally, we examined the stability of the categories and frequencies by inserting 4 cases (of the original 26 cases) that had been withheld from the initial cross-analysis. We determined that the domains and categories were stable because none of the categories' titles changed after the cases were inserted, and there were only five changes in frequencies of categories. A more complete description of the data analysis procedures is provided in Appendix B (which is available on the Web at <http://0-dx.doi.org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.1037/0022-0167.53.3.288.sup>); here again, we strictly adhered to the original procedures outlined by Hill et al. (1997).

## **Results**

We first present the findings from participants' background experiences with cultural issues during supervision (see Table 1). These findings provide a context within which participants' later specific experiences of culturally responsive and unresponsive supervision events may be understood. Next, we present the findings

related to the specific culturally responsive and unresponsive experiences in cross-cultural supervision (see Table 2). Consistent with the frequency criteria developed by Hill et al. (1997), we labeled a category as *general* if it applied to all cases, *typical* if it applied to at least half but not all cases, and *variant* if it applied to at least two but fewer than half of the cases. Core ideas that emerged in only one case were placed into an "other" category for that domain and are not presented here. For purposes of brevity, we present only those categories that emerged as general and typical and refer readers to the tables for categories of variant frequency. In the following presentation of results, we collapsed the findings for EASEs and SECs when the categories and frequencies were parallel but present separate illustrative examples for each group of participants. When categories and frequencies diverged between these two groups of participants, we present, first, the findings from EASEs and, second, the findings from SECs. In the final section of the results, we provide an illustrative example of our participants' experiences in culturally responsive and unresponsive cross-cultural supervision for both EASEs and SECs.

### *Background Experience with Cultural Issues in Supervision*

EASEs generally and SECs typically reported that cultural issues were addressed in their cross-cultural supervision experiences with supervisors. One subcategory emerged, and both EASEs and SECs typically reported they initiated discussions of cultural issues in supervision. For instance, one EASE indicated that she raised cultural issues to find out whether the supervisor views culture as influential in the therapy process and to explore whether cultural differences between the client and supervisee may be important to address in therapy. Similarly, for example, 1 SEC indicated that culture is one of the first issues she considers during an initial meeting with a client, and as a result, culture is one of the first issues that she raises in supervision.



## *Culturally Responsive Supervision Event*

In this section, we focus on supervisees' specific experiences of culturally responsive supervision. We asked EASEs to discuss an experience with a supervisor of color, and we asked SECs to discuss a supervision experience with a European American supervisor.

## *Quality of Supervision Relationship Prior to Event*

EASEs generally and SECs typically reported that they had a good relationship with their supervisors prior to the culturally responsive event. As an example, one EASE indicated, "I had a great relationship with my supervisor, because she actively created a supportive environment by asking me what I liked and did not like in supervision." Another participant felt that her supervisor helped her to feel comfortable in exchanging ideas without the worry that she may say "something stupid." SECs had similar reports; for instance, one participant stated that her supervisor helped to create an open, receptive, and respectful supervision environment prior to the culturally responsive event. Another SEC indicated that her supervisor effectively helped her to process issues during supervision and helped her to feel comfortable.

## *Culturally Responsive Event*

EASEs typically and SECs generally reported that their culturally different supervisors encouraged them to explore the effect of the client's culture on the presenting concern. For example, one EASE stated that she and her supervisor were reviewing a tape of a client session, and the supervisor of color noticed that the client ignored the supervisee's question about his race. The supervisor helped the supervisee explore what this omission might mean for the client, and they examined together how this omission may be related to the client's reported feelings of alienation on campus. One SEC also indicated that her supervisor openly solicited information about the client's cultural background and helped her to explore the cultural issues relevant to the case. Additionally, the supervisor and supervisee explored the stigma the client may be experiencing by seeking therapy, based on the client's cultural norms about mental health, and



they then discussed how to work with the client on that issue during therapy.

### *Effect on Supervisee*

Generally, EASEs and SECs reported positive effects as a result of the culturally responsive supervision event. Three subcategories emerged in relation to this category. Both EASEs and SECs typically indicated they were sensitized to the importance of cultural issues in therapy. One EASE, for example, stated "I realized that culture may influence or show up in behavior and that if you analyze the client according to the *DSM-IV*, you may come to a different conclusion than if you consider the cultural context." Similarly, an SEC stated that she had missed the importance of the client's race (i.e., African American) in a work-related concern the client had presented, and the European American supervisor helped her think about how the client's racial identity may have affected the client's perception of and behavior during work. In another typical subcategory that emerged only for EASEs, they indicated experiencing reduced fear about discussing racial/cultural issues in therapy and supervision, which increased their confidence. Here, for example, an EASE stated that she could take risks with the supervisor of color and know he would not condemn her. Such feelings helped the supervisee be more candid about cultural issues during supervision and to ask her supervisor for feedback on how she was seeing particular situations. In a final subcategory, specific to SECs, they generally indicated that they felt personally validated and supported. For example, one participant stated, "my jaw sort of hit the floor when my supervisor stopped to process the racial concerns in the client case." This participant indicated feeling a "personal sense of validation" when the European American supervisor explored the racial concerns and also described the experience as "freeing."

In addition to the positive effects of the culturally responsive event, SECs also typically reported experiencing some reactions of discomfort, a finding that did not emerge for EASEs. As an example, one participant was working with an African American client who was having difficulty talking about his presenting concerns, and the European American supervisor suggested that the supervisee was

ignoring the client's cultural beliefs regarding disclosure of mental health issues. As a result, the supervisee felt some discomfort at being challenged by the European American supervisor on cultural issues.

### *Effect on Supervision Relationship*

All participants, both EASEs and SECs reported that the supervision relationship improved after the culturally responsive event. As one specific subcategory, participants also typically indicated that they felt more safe and comfortable with their supervisors, felt able to let their guard down during supervision, and as a result were more able to discuss cultural issues with their culturally different supervisors. One EASE, for example, reported that she felt that her trust and confidence in the supervisor increased after the culturally responsive event and that she "felt very safe" overall. Additionally, this participant reported that her supervisor's responsiveness to cultural issues helped her to know that she and her supervisor were of the "same mindset regarding cultural issues" and that it was "important to bring up cultural issues during supervision." Similar to the EASEs, one SEC acknowledged that the culturally responsive event was "like a test for me, and the supervisor's ability to address my concerns about racial issues at my practicum site helped me to feel more comfortable with my supervisor, and it created a safe space where cultural and racial issues could be discussed." This participant additionally reported, "I was able to drop my defenses with this supervisor."

### *Effect on Supervisee's Satisfaction with Supervision*

Generally, EASEs indicated that their satisfaction with supervision increased after the culturally responsive event. For example, one participant reported that she felt "fully satisfied with my supervision experience" and further stated that "supervision became invigorating." Likewise, SECs also generally reported that their satisfaction with supervision increased after the culturally responsive event. For instance, one participant stated that the culturally responsive event,

greatly influenced my satisfaction with supervision, because I realized this supervisor was comfortable with my cultural expertise, and yet he was willing to discuss cultural issues that

were relevant to the client and [to] share his own experiences with such cases.

### *Effect on Outcome of Clinical Case(s)*

EASEs generally reported that the culturally responsive event had a positive effect on the process and outcome of their clinical case(s), and two subcategories emerged to further clarify the effect. More specifically, EASEs typically reported that they became more responsive to cultural issues in therapy. For instance, one supervisee stated, "I had a light-bulb insight during supervision, and my supervisor helped me to recognize how culture may be shaping the client's description of symptoms." Another participant recognized that her supervisor of color helped her to be "curious about and explore cultural issues with clients during therapy."

Typically, SECs felt that the culturally responsive event had a positive effect on their clinical work. For instance, one participant reported that her clinical interventions were grounded in cultural norms consistent with clients' cultural backgrounds, and, as a result, she used some interventions with clients that she might not have if the supervisor had not been culturally responsive.

### *Specific Experience with Culturally Unresponsive Supervision*

In the following section, we focus on supervisees' specific experiences of culturally unresponsive supervision. Here again we asked EASEs to discuss an experience with a supervisor of color, and we asked SECs to discuss a supervision experience with a European American supervisor. It is important to note that only 8 of 13 EASEs were able to report on a culturally unresponsive supervision experience, and all SECs were able to discuss such an experience.

### *Quality of Supervision Relationship Prior to Event*

EASEs typically described the supervision relationship as good prior to the culturally unresponsive supervision event. For example, one participant indicated that she felt supported and safe enough to

share her therapeutic work with clients and also what she experienced when working with clients.

In contrast to their EASE counterparts, SECs generally described the quality of the supervision relationship as tenuous prior to the culturally unresponsive event. For instance, a participant stated that "the relationship was tense, and I did not particularly like my supervisor, and I believed that she felt the same way toward me." Another participant reported that other supervisees knew from prior experience that you "do not expose yourself to my supervisor, because he would interpret that you did not know what the hell you were doing." In a more specific subcategory, SECs typically indicated that they were concerned about their supervisor's behavior during supervision. For example, a participant stated that her supervisor would present in a positive and supportive manner some days during supervision, and on other days she would be "kinda mean" and "write a really bad evaluation without providing clear feedback." Other participants stated that supervisors did not watch videotapes of client sessions or they were entirely dismissive of supervisees' opinions or ideas about clients.

### *Culturally Unresponsive Supervision Event*

Typically, EASEs reported that supervisors of color avoided discussing the effect of culture on client treatment. One participant, for example, reported that she tried to address racial and cultural concerns regarding a case, but the supervisor would "actively thwart" the discussion, and the supervisee "got the feeling that we just don't go there." Another participant stated,

I would try to address cultural issues in supervision, and the supervisor would acknowledge that I raised these issues, but then he would not help me to explore the meaning of cultural issues or provide any information about relevant cultural concerns.

Typically, SECs reported that European American supervisors verbally dismissed the cultural concerns of client cases. For instance, one participant stated that her supervisor "blew it out of the water, like it (i.e., race) was nothing and said the client's race did not

matter." Another participant indicated that her supervisor stated that the client needed medication because she was "crazy, disturbed, depressed, and was borderline," and the supervisor suggested that the supervisee focus on such issues and ignore cultural identity concerns. SECs also typically indicated that European American supervisors criticized them and their approach to culture in client cases. As one example, a participant reported that her supervisor challenged her belief that racial issues were important to the client case when the supervisor stated, "we don't know if race is a factor, and probably will not know, so why don't you not worry about that and focus on treating the client." The supervisor further commented that the supervisee needed to work on her empathy skills.

### *Effect on Supervisee*

Generally, EASEs reported that they experienced negative reactions as a consequence of the culturally unresponsive event. In a subcategory, participants typically indicated that they experienced negative feelings toward their supervisor of color. For instance, one supervisee stated, "I was frustrated, angry, and disappointed in my supervisor, because he was so rigid and did not recognize that people make mistakes."

Similar to EASEs, SECs also stated they generally experienced negative reactions in response to the culturally unresponsive event. Two subcategories emerged that were related to these negative reactions. Foremost, participants generally experienced negative feelings toward their supervisors. For example, one participant reported, "I got so angry that I cried, and I wanted to hit him." Participants also typically indicated that they felt offended, upset, distressed, uncomfortable, and scared after the culturally unresponsive event. One participant, for example, reported feeling "raked over the coals," and another participant stated feeling distressed and personally offended by the supervisor. Another participant expressed fearing her supervisor, particularly if she did not integrate the supervisor's recommendations into the client's treatment. In a final category, SECs typically sought support from friends or colleagues after the culturally unresponsive event. For example, one participant sought emotional support from other students of color in her program.

## *Effect on Supervision Relationship*

EASEs typically indicated that the culturally unresponsive event had a negative effect on the supervision relationship, with one subcategory emerging. More specifically, EASEs typically reported learning that their supervisors of color were not open to exploring cultural/racial issues during supervision. One participant stated, "I felt that I could not address cultural or racial issues because I was unsure what assumptions my supervisor was making about me."

In general, SECs also indicated that the culturally unresponsive event had a negative effect on the supervision relationship. Relatedly, three typical subcategories emerged. For instance, participants typically stated that they felt uncomfortable and distrustful of the European American supervisor and became guarded during supervision after the culturally unresponsive event. Here, for example, one participant stated, "my defenses were kind of high, and I became hypervigilant to my supervisor being insensitive." She added that supervision became "weird and kind of tense" and expressed feeling less comfortable in supervision. Participants also typically reported they responded minimally to the culturally unresponsive event and subsequently disclosed little during supervision. For instance, one SEC stated, "I began to talk on a superficial level, and I felt terrified to raise any issues, especially cultural concerns, that might cause my supervisor to question my abilities." In the final typical subcategory, participants reported that they hid their negative emotional reactions about the culturally unresponsive event from the supervisor. For example, one participant stated that she felt angry and upset during the culturally unresponsive event but told the supervisor that she was feeling fine. Another SEC stated feeling punished for raising cultural issues during supervision and realized that beginning with the culturally unresponsive event in supervision, she started concealing information from the supervisor.

## *Effect on Supervisee's Satisfaction with Supervision*

Typically, European American supervisees reported that the culturally unresponsive event decreased their level of satisfaction with supervision. One participant indicated that after the culturally

unresponsive event, her supervision experience was mediocre at best and stated, "I was not pleased with supervision and felt that I should have gotten much more out of the experience."

For SECs, they typically felt that they were completely dissatisfied with supervision as a result of the culturally unresponsive event. Here, for instance, one participant stated that she was not satisfied but "I went through the motions because I had to." Another participant stated that she had completely lost trust in her supervisor, felt shutdown in supervision, and, as a result, felt no satisfaction with supervision.

### *Effect on Outcome of Clinical Case(s)*

Although no general or typical categories emerged in this domain for EASEs, SECs typically reported that the culturally unresponsive event negatively affected client treatment. As a more specific typical subcategory, SECs reported that they did not meet the client's needs in therapy. In one instance, a participant stated that the culturally unresponsive event made her hesitant to validate the client and his experiences of racism, and, as a result, this participant felt that she never directly addressed the client's concerns. In a final typical category for this domain, SECs reported that they sought outside consultation on client cases because the European American supervisor ignored the cultural concerns of clients. For example, one participant stated that she "burdened other staff by consulting with them on cases when cultural issues were relevant to the client."

### *Illustrative Examples of the Culturally Responsive and Unresponsive Events*

Below are examples of the culturally responsive and culturally unresponsive events that were reported by EASEs and SECs. We selected different participants to represent each of these events, and the examples have been slightly altered to protect confidentiality. Please note that each of these experiences occurred when supervisees and supervisors were discussing a client case, and the cultural issues of the case were actively being addressed during supervision. EASEs



were working with supervisors of color, and SECs were working with European American supervisors.

### *The EASE Culturally Responsive Event*

The supervisee recalled working with an African American female client who was struggling with generalized anxiety, and the supervisee was trying to create a safe therapeutic environment in which the client could explore her anxiety. The EASE sensed that there was some racial discomfort and tension between herself and the client, and she suggested to her supervisor, an African American male who had practiced for over 15 years, that she was feeling frustrated with the progress of therapy with this client and wondered whether racial differences could be affecting the therapeutic process. The supervisor listened to the supervisee's description of the therapeutic relationship and the processes occurring in therapy. After hearing the description, the supervisor of color gently encouraged the supervisee to consider how being a White female might be affecting her work with this client. The supervisor went on to help the EASE examine the effects of racial differences between the supervisee and the client on the development of the relationship, specifically focusing on issues of cultural mistrust. The supervisee indicated that her supervisor provided several supportive comments during their discussion, and the supervisor of color then helped the EASE decide how to address the racial differences in the therapeutic relationship.

As a result of this discussion, the EASE felt that her self-awareness of and sensitivity to cultural and racial issues in therapy increased, which then empowered her to address cross-cultural therapy experiences directly with her clients. In regard to the supervision relationship, the supervisee felt closer to and more trusting of her supervisor as a result of the culturally responsive event. She also commented that supervision became a safe place where she could talk about anything, especially racial and cultural issues. In addition to feeling more satisfied with supervision as a result of her positive supervision experience, the supervisee did address the cultural differences between herself and her client and how these differences may have affected their relationship. This discussion resulted in the formation of a positive therapeutic relationship and,



subsequently, also with other culturally diverse clients with whom the EASE worked.

### *The EASE Culturally Unresponsive Event*

In this example, the supervisee perceived that cultural issues (i.e., communication style of an African American client) were affecting her perception of diagnostic issues related to the client's concern. This supervisee wanted some feedback from her Asian American male supervisor, who had been in practice for 5 years, but each time the supervisee tried to address cultural issues with the supervisor, the supervisor would acknowledge her concern but would not help the supervisee explore or examine the effect of culture on this case. So, the supervisee grew to believe that she could raise cultural issues in supervision but that her supervisor of color would not help her to understand how culture may be affecting her cases. The EASE stated feeling disappointed in her supervisor and acknowledged that she had less enthusiasm for working with this supervisor. As such, this supervisee's satisfaction with supervision declined because she felt that she could have gotten "so much more out of supervision," and in many ways she believed that she and her supervisor were not effective as a supervision team. In regard to the effect on client cases, the supervisee believed that her treatment was beneficial for the client but that had cultural issues been addressed, she would have been better able to meet the client's needs.

### *The SEC Culturally Responsive Event*

The supervisee discussed a situation in which she, as an African American therapist, had been assigned to work with an African American female client. The European American supervisor, who was male and had practiced for over 30 years, reviewed the client file before the SEC met with the client, and he expressed feeling that the therapy work between this client and the SEC may be a "pivotal" experience for this client. The supervisor acknowledged that this client had worked only with European American therapists and that for the first time, this client would have an opportunity to work with an African American therapist. As the European American supervisor and SEC worked on the case together, the supervisee believed that her

supervisor helped her to understand how her client's racial heritage may have important meaning for the client and how it may be affecting her work and personal life.

Although the SEC reported feeling initially surprised by her European American supervisor's raising and wanting to discuss racial issues inherent in the case, she also acknowledged feeling personally satisfied and validated with this supervisor's interest in such issues. She stated that it felt good that her supervisor was not afraid to use the word *Black* and that he was willing to engage her about what that may mean for a client. The supervisee expressed some surprise that she had not picked up on racial issues in this case, in part because cultural factors in therapy are an important area of research interest for her. As a result of this incident, the SEC stated feeling more comfortable with her European American supervisor and more able to let her guard down and be open to the process of supervision. She reported feeling so strongly about this supervision experience that she planned to continue the relationship once the supervision ended. In addition to the increased satisfaction that this SEC felt with supervision, she also believed that the culturally responsive event benefited her client. She indicated that she approached the client with more empathy and that she was able to explore with the client what race and different racial symbols may have meant to her. On a more objective level, she also reported that the client's depression and anxiety were also reduced.

### *The SEC Culturally Unresponsive Event*

In this final example, an SEC who identified as Latina recalled that she was working with a European American female client from a rural area who had challenged the supervisee's credentials and training, yelled at the supervisee in one session, and asked why the supervisee had been unable to help the client during therapy. The supervisee recognized internally that this situation frustrated her and that she felt some defensiveness in reaction to the client. As a result of these feelings, the supervisee sought supervision on her work with this client and suggested to her supervisor that perhaps the client was reacting to her as a Latina woman. In response, the supervisor challenged her question about racial issues by indicating that there

was no evidence for this conceptualization, and he went on to state, "Well, well, we don't know and probably will not know whether race is a factor, so why don't you not worry about that." The supervisor also stated, "I am a radical and I would notice if racism was going on. She didn't hit you, so I don't think that there is racism going on in the room." The supervisor proceeded to confront the SEC's defensiveness with the client and suggested that the supervisee had not attended closely to what was happening in the therapy room with the client. Finally, the European American supervisor asked that he and the supervisee do a role-play so that the supervisor could show the supervisee how she could have handled the situation more appropriately.

The SEC had several reactions to this event. Initially, she became emotionally upset, cried during supervision, and became so angry that she felt she wanted to hit the supervisor. She also reported feeling judged by the supervisor and ultimately became very defensive. She felt that she became someone who was perceived as having a "chip on my shoulder." The supervisee felt resentment toward this supervisor because she was "raked over the coals." As a result of this incident, this supervisee felt that the supervision relationship completely broke down. She became terrified to talk about this client again. She also felt completely misunderstood, and she intentionally changed her approach to supervision by only discussing superficial client concerns. In the end, this supervisee indicated that she derived no satisfaction from this supervision experience. In addition to her own reactions, the SEC also became very concerned about client treatment. For example, she continued to see the client with whom she had the initial conflict, and though the supervisee stated that the client continued to "push my buttons," the supervisee felt that she never really got a handle on working with this client. She commented that as a result of the culturally unresponsive event, she felt emotionally unavailable to all of her clients. Additionally, she also sought consultation regarding client cases outside the purview of her supervisor.

## Discussion

We examined EASEs' and SECs' experiences of culturally responsive and unresponsive cross-cultural supervision. Below we discuss our findings and focus on the similarities (i.e., EASE and SEC frequencies were the same for the experience) and differences (i.e., frequencies that differed by two levels between EASE and SEC) between EASEs' and SECs' experiences in cross-cultural supervision.

### *Culturally Responsive Event*

Most participants, both EASEs and SECs, indicated that they and their supervisors had a productive and helpful relationship prior to the culturally responsive event. Perhaps this strong connection between supervisee and supervisor created facilitative conditions that contributed to supervisors and supervisees being more responsive to cultural issues. Recall, for example, that both EASEs and SECs talked about the open and receptive atmosphere of supervision, which may have led these supervisees to believe their supervisors would be open to cultural issues as well. It certainly is possible that supervisees had a priori knowledge about their supervisors' beliefs about culture in therapy, knowledge that also may have predisposed supervisees to positive views of the supervisor prior to the culturally responsive event, or which may have even influenced their choice of supervisor. Regardless of the contributions to the positive supervision relationship, the strong supervisory working alliance may have provided supervisees with an atmosphere of safety and trust when cross-cultural issues were discussed in supervision, a finding that is consistent with prior research (Brown & Landrum-Brown, 1995; Constantine, 1997).

With regard to the culturally responsive event itself, EASEs and SECs had quite similar experiences with supervisors encouraging them to examine the effects of culture on the client's presenting concern. These findings may not be surprising given that participants were prompted to discuss culturally responsive supervision events. Nevertheless, the results do highlight important supervision behaviors that may be used by future supervisors to enhance cultural responsiveness: asking questions about cultural issues, encouraging

supervisees to elaborate on conceptualizations that include cultural issues, or challenging supervisees to consider how the client's cultural background may be influencing her or his current situation or problem.

In response to the culturally responsive event, supervisees had quite positive reactions, including feeling sensitized to cultural issues in therapy, a finding echoed in the research (Constantine, 2001; Ladany et al., 1997). Here, however, the similarities between EASEs and SECs end, for SECs specifically spoke of the personal sense of validation and support they experienced when supervisors were culturally responsive, whereas EASEs spoke of the reduced fear they experienced in discussing racial and cultural issues in therapy and supervision. Perhaps these findings reflect the lived experiences of our participants. On the one hand, SECs may well contend with cultural and racial concerns every day of their lives, so having such issues validated in supervision may have been personally satisfying and relieving. EASEs, on the other hand, may contend with cultural and racial issues on a more limited basis than SECs. So, rather than experiencing such discussions as personally validating, EASEs may approach such topics in supervision with fear and trepidation, a position supported by recent research (Utsey, Gernat, & Hammar, 2005). As such, having supervisors of color who provided support and encouragement to EASEs, rather than judgment, regarding exploration of cultural and racial issues may have been particularly affirming.

It is of interest to note that only SECs reported experiencing discomfort with regard to the culturally responsive event. This discomfort appeared to be short-lived and was related to feeling initially surprised by or scared of their European American supervisors addressing cultural issues in supervision. Sadly, SECs often spoke of past experiences when European American supervisors ignored, dismissed, or mishandled cultural concerns during supervision, so having a supervisor validate and show interest in such issues was startling to these participants. Supervisors, then, need to be aware of how powerful their responsiveness, or lack thereof, to cultural issues may be for supervisees and that for some SECs, responsiveness may be a rare experience.

Beyond the immediate personal effects, both EASEs and SECs indicated that supervision relationships improved, resulting in

increases in satisfaction with supervision experiences. Perhaps cultural responsiveness was an indication to these supervisees that supervisors could be trusted, for they indicated feeling more safe and comfortable in supervision. Alternatively, our participants may have been indirectly experiencing some anxiety prior to the culturally responsive event, after which they reported feeling more safe, comfortable, and less guarded. It is not uncommon for people to feel anxiety in cross-cultural situations (Knox, Burkard, Johnson, Suzuki, & Ponterotto, 2003; Utsey et al., 2005). More important, however, supervisor cultural responsiveness reduced these feelings, leaving our participants genuinely more connected and satisfied with supervision, a finding also consistent with earlier research (Gatmon et al., 2001).

Finally, the culturally responsive event yielded positive effects on supervisees' clinical cases as well. Perhaps, then, responsive supervision experiences modeled appropriate ways to explore cultural concerns with clients. An alternate explanation may be that these positive client outcomes were the result of increased multicultural competence in our participants, a finding that would be consistent with prior results (Constantine, 2001). Each of these possibilities offers important avenues for future exploration.

### *Culturally Unresponsive Event*

We note that only 8 of 13 EASEs had a specific culturally unresponsive experience, whereas all SECs had a specific culturally unresponsive event to report. In comparison to the literature (Ladany et al., 1999; Toporek et al., 2004), our findings do support the notion that cultural unresponsiveness may be an infrequent occurrence for EASEs. In contrast, all of the SECs in our study experienced a culturally unresponsive event. Additionally, many SECs reported experiencing multiple culturally unresponsive events. It is possible that SECs are more aware of and sensitive to cultural unresponsiveness than EASEs. For example, perhaps SECs' lived experiences of discrimination and racism sensitized them to supervisors who may also demonstrate such behaviors, whereas EASEs' limited experiences may have allowed them to overlook or more easily dismiss such experiences. These findings present an unsettling picture of SECs'

experiences in cross-cultural supervision, one that may have important implications for practice and future research (see below).

SECs also felt more vulnerable in the supervision relationship prior to the culturally unresponsive event than did EASEs. This feeling may be related to SECs' perceptions of inappropriate supervision practices by European American supervisors prior to the culturally unresponsive event. Given SECs' perceptions of supervision practices by their supervisors, it may also be that SECs worked with supervisors who, overall, had less supervision competence than the supervisors who worked with EASEs. Regardless of the interpretation, the findings suggest differences in the facilitative conditions in the supervision relationship for EASEs and SECs prior to the culturally unresponsive event. Perhaps the quality of such conditions influences how culturally unresponsive events are experienced by supervisees.

The actual culturally unresponsive events were consistent with those identified in prior research (e.g., negative stereotyping, ignoring or dismissing cultural/racial concerns) (Fukuyama, 1994; Kleintjes & Swartz, 1996; Ladany et al., 1999; Toporek et al., 2004), although, again, the experiences of EASEs and SECs diverged. Here, EASEs perceived supervisors of color as avoiding discussions of cultural issues during supervision, suggesting that a more passive dismissal or approach to cultural discussion during supervision may have allowed EASEs also to dismiss the unresponsive supervision experience. Perhaps this passive supervision approach did little to raise EASEs' anxiety or concern about the lack of attention to cultural concerns in supervision. In contrast, SECs perceived their supervisors as actively working to discredit or discount the importance of cultural issues in therapy, effects that included open criticism and denigration of supervisees for showing interest in such issues. This supervision style includes a direct use of power in the relationship and it also suggests a degree of antagonism in supervision that likely did little to decrease SECs' feelings of vulnerability or anxiety in cross-cultural supervision. These experiences also would not have been so easily dismissed by the participants. Such an antagonistic supervision style has not been well documented in past empirical studies of cross-cultural supervision; however, the differences between EASEs' and SECs' unresponsive experiences in the present study are unmistakable and



suggest that our SEC participants were likely to experience at least some of their cross-cultural supervision experiences as racist.

The culturally unresponsive event yielded negative reactions from both EASEs and SECs, including anger, frustration, and disappointment. Remember that supervisees tended to raise cultural issues in supervision because they believed that such awareness would contribute to their therapeutic work. Having a supervisor, whether actively or passively, ignore or discount cultural issues was, thus, disappointing and frustrating for all participants. Of interest, however, SECs also described intense and inward-focused emotional effects (i.e., felt offended, upset, distressed, uncomfortable, scared) of the culturally unresponsive event, whereas EASEs described no such feelings. This finding suggests that such experiences may have been particularly distressing to SECs. If these supervision interactions paralleled SECs' past experiences of oppression and discrimination, both in and outside of supervision, then it may well have retriggered earlier similar painful experiences.

Given our participants' reactions to the culturally unresponsive event, it is not surprising that most EASEs and all SECs perceived their experience to have had a negative effect on the supervision relationship as well. The negative effects that EASEs reported were directed outward and focused more on the supervisor's unavailability to explore cultural issues than EASEs' inward feelings about the supervision relationship. EASEs, then, did not appear to experience the event in a personal way, which may have allowed them to more easily move beyond the experience and perhaps continue to learn from their supervisors. SECs, however, again described more intense and inward-focused negative consequences (e.g., distrusting their European American supervisor, feeling more guarded during supervision, hiding their emotional reactions to the culturally unresponsive event from the European American supervisor, responding minimally to the European American supervisor during the event, choosing to disclose little in supervision after the culturally unresponsive event). As Vasquez and McKinley (1982) have suggested, perhaps SECs considered this experience a direct challenge of their ethnic/racial identity. To cope, then, SECs emotionally withdrew from supervision to protect themselves from further abuse of power in the supervision relationship or their clients from further harm. For SECs, the culturally



unresponsive event had clear negative consequences for the supervision relationship, for supervisor cultural unresponsiveness was likely difficult to dismiss by SECs and may be experienced as oppressive by SECs.

Beyond the negative consequences of cultural unresponsiveness for the supervision relationship, EASEs felt a decreased sense of satisfaction with supervision, whereas SECs experienced no satisfaction with their supervision experiences. Thus, EASEs were still able to derive some benefit from their cross-cultural supervision experiences, which may explain why they often reported that other aspects of supervision (beyond the cultural aspects) were helpful. In contrast, SECs found no redeeming qualities from their culturally unresponsive supervision experience. Alarming, SECs' supervision needs were not met, nor were these supervisees open to further discussion of cultural concerns in supervision. We wonder, then, about the toll such effects may have had on client care and treatment.

Relatedly, SECs expressed more concern about the effect of the culturally unresponsive event on client treatment than did EASEs. These findings suggest that most EASEs felt that they were still able to meet the needs of their clients, regardless of the cultural unresponsiveness of their supervisors. Alternatively, we must acknowledge that EASEs may have overlooked the importance of cultural issues in these cases, for their supervisors failed to address such concerns or consider the cultural context. In contrast, SECs believed that client treatment suffered because of European American supervisors' lack of responsiveness to cultural issues. Perhaps in an attempt to meet such client needs, then, many of our SECs actually sought out additional consultation because their supervisor ignored the clients' cultural concerns. SECs' consultations outside of supervision may suggest that European American supervisors were not fully aware of or included in decisions SECs made regarding the treatment of clients. Additionally, recall that more than 1 SEC withheld information during the culturally unresponsive event from their European American supervisors. As such, these supervisors, then, could not have been fully informed about the treatment that was provided to clients, even though they were fully liable and responsible for such decisions and interventions. Although we cannot draw clear conclusions from these findings, perhaps these results suggest that cultural unresponsiveness

leaves us less informed as supervisors about client care, a result that should be of great concern.

## **Summary**

The findings from this investigation suggest that culturally responsive and unresponsive supervision experiences were quite powerful events. For these participants, the events affected not only the supervisees but also the supervision relationship and client treatment. Most aspects of EASEs' and SECs' experiences of culturally responsive events were quite parallel, but their experiences of culturally unresponsive events were quite divergent. As such, these findings provide some preliminary evidence for the importance of cultural responsiveness and unresponsiveness in cross-cultural supervision and suggest this is an area of investigation worthy of further research.

## *Limitations*

Although the size of the final sample is consistent with CQR methodology guidelines (Hill et al., 2005, 1997), it is possible that those supervisees who chose not to participate in this study would have responded differently. Another limitation is that these results are based on supervisees' recall of such events, and it is possible that our participants' memory was faulty or distorted. Furthermore, we did not have the opportunity to interview supervisors about their experiences of the reported events, and they may perceive and recall the events quite differently. We also note that the interview protocol was included in the initial mailing to potential participants so that they could give fully informed consent and could think about their experiences prior to the first interview should they decide to participate in the study. Although this procedure may have contributed to richer responses from participants, it is also possible that this a priori awareness of the questions allowed participants to respond in a more socially desirable manner (Hill et al., 1997). Additionally, we note that participants reported varied levels of clinical and supervision experience and provided limited information on when the events of interest took place during their training (i.e., early vs. later in training). It is certainly possible that each of the factors could have influenced the results of

this study and, thus, may be of interest in future research. In addition to participant influences, we also note that our research team comprised predominately members of European American descent, which also may have influenced the analysis of the data in unforeseen ways. Finally, we must also acknowledge that the independence with which the two research teams operated may have served both as a strength as well as a limitation of this study. Although the team leader for two projects may have helped the teams maintain some consistency during the data analysis, it is also possible that important data were missed during the analysis. As such, using the same auditor across studies, which would help ensure that important aspects of the interviews are not ignored, may want to be considered in future investigations.

### *Implications of Findings for Research*

The results of this investigation suggest several directions for future research. This study should be replicated with male supervisees and female and male supervisors. Given the significant differences in gender socialization processes, men's and women's experiences of culturally responsive and unresponsive events may be quite different. Furthermore, we explored culturally responsive and unresponsive events only in cross-cultural supervision. It may be equally important to understand what happens with cultural responsiveness and unresponsiveness when supervisee and supervisor are of the same cultural group. We also found it interesting that participants only discussed culturally responsive and unresponsive events in which they were consulting with a supervisor on a client case. What happens when supervisors and supervisees discuss the implications of cultural issues within the context of their own supervision relationship? Much has been made of the importance of such discussions (Brown & Landrum-Brown, 1995; Constantine, 1997), and this process warrants further research. Additionally, during the interviews, several of our participants noted experiences of cultural responsiveness and unresponsiveness during group supervision: How are these experiences similar to or different from individual supervision? We were also struck by the difference in the quality of the supervision relationship between EASEs and SECs prior to the culturally unresponsive event. How may these preexisting conditions have

affected the experience of the culturally unresponsive event? Related to the supervision relationship, we also wonder how or whether supervisees and supervisors were able to address and repair relationship ruptures. Understanding how they negotiate such ruptures in cross-cultural supervision may be helpful to present supervisors. Finally, supervisors' perspectives of such experiences also need to be examined, for their view of such events may be quite different from that of their supervisees.

### *Implications of Findings for Training and Practice*

For the participants in this study, culturally responsive events were important to the development of a positive cross-cultural supervision relationship. Cultural responsiveness, for example, helped supervisees feel more at ease in supervision and often resulted in supervisees feeling more capable of addressing cultural issues with supervisors. Ultimately, participants also believed that these experiences had positive effects on their work with clients. As such, supervisors may want to seek opportunities to explore and examine cultural issues during cross-cultural supervision, for in addition to the positive learning experiences that cultural responsiveness clearly has for supervisees, there also appear to be some important outcomes for positive supervision processes.

In contrast, culturally unresponsive events clearly disrupt cross-cultural supervision relationships and, in the case of SECs, may cause emotional distress for the supervisee and a relationship rupture. Supervisors, then, need to be alert to any cross-cultural supervision situations in which they become culturally unresponsive, for they may well need to address their mistake in order to repair damage to the supervision relationship. With SECs, for example, if the supervisee becomes noticeably withdrawn in supervision, then it may be important that supervisors consider whether they made an error in responding to a cultural issue.

Our SECs also raised some concerns that are important to acknowledge. First, SECs reported that after a culturally unresponsive event, they reduced their disclosure to supervisors and often consulted with others to address their concerns about how to treat their clients. This presents an important ethical dilemma, for supervisors have a

clear responsibility for the treatment and welfare of clients. As such, supervisors need to work toward cultural responsiveness to ensure that they are fully aware of how their supervisees are approaching client treatment. Second, SECs also believed that culturally unresponsive events negatively affected actual client treatment. Thus, we again advocate that supervisors become more inclusive of cultural issues during supervision so that they are fully involved in client treatment.

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## Appendix

**Table 1 Domains, Categories, and Frequencies for Background Experience in Cultural Issues in Supervision**

Domain	Category	Frequency	
		EASE ( <i>n</i> = 13)	SEC ( <i>n</i> = 13)
Experience in cultural issues in supervision	Cultural issues were addressed in cross-cultural supervision.	General	Typical
	SE initiated discussions of cultural issues in cross-cultural supervision	Typical	Typical
	SR initiated discussions of cultural issues in cross-cultural supervision.	Variant	—
	Cultural issues were not or were minimally addressed in cross-cultural supervision.	Variant	Variant

*Note.* European American supervisees (EASEs) reported on cross-cultural supervision experiences with supervisors of color, and supervisees of color (SECs) reported on cross-cultural supervision experiences with European American supervisors. SE = supervisee; SR = supervisor; dash indicates that a category did not apply to this group of supervisees.



**Table 2 Domains, Categories, and Frequencies of Culturally Responsive and Unresponsive Cross-Cultural Supervision**

Domain	Category	Frequency		
		EASE (n = 13) <sup>a</sup>	SEC (n = 13) <sup>b</sup>	
Culturally responsive (CR) event	Quality of supervision relationship prior to event	Good	General	Typical
	CR event	Tenuous	—	Variant
		SR encouraged SE to explore effect of client's culture on presenting concern (i.e., by asking questions, encouraging elaboration of cultural issues)	Typical	General
		SR encouraged SE to examine effect of SE's culture on perception of client	Variant	—
	Effect of CR event on SE	SR self-disclosed cultural experiences to SE	Variant	Variant
		Positive reactions	General	General
		Felt validated and supported	—	General
		Sensitized to the importance of cultural issues in therapy	Typical	Typical
		Reduced SE's fear about discussing racial/cultural issues in therapy and supervision, which increased SE's confidence	Typical	—
	Effect on supervision relationship	Reactions of discomfort	—	Typical
		SE initially felt uncomfortable/scared regarding discussion of culture with SR	—	Variant
		SE surprised that SR brought up cultural issues	—	Variant
		Improved relationship	General	General
		SE felt more/safe comfortable with SR, SE was able to let his/her guard down, and he/she felt more able to discuss cultural issues with SR	Typical	Typical
	Effect on SE's satisfaction with supervision	SE believed that SR's confidence in SE's clinical abilities increased	Variant	—
SE plans to continue relationship with SR after supervision ends		—	Variant	
Increased satisfaction		General	General	
Effect on SE's clinical cases	Positive effect	Typical	—	
	Helped SE become more responsive to cultural issues in therapy	Typical	—	
	Improved diagnostic accuracy	Variant	—	
Culturally unresponsive (CU) event	Quality of supervision relationship prior to event	Good	Typical	—
	CU event	Tenuous	Variant	General
		SE concerned about SR's behavior during supervision	—	Typical
		SR avoided discussing effect of culture on client treatment	Typical	—
	Effect of CU event on SE	SR indicated that SE was culturally insensitive	Variant	—
		SR verbally dismissed cultural concerns of client case	—	Typical
		SR criticized SE and/or SE's approach to culture in a client case	—	Typical
		SR was culturally oppressive toward SE or SE's client	—	Variant
		Negative emotional reactions	General	General
	Effect on supervision relationship	SE experienced negative feelings toward SR	Typical	General
		SE felt offended, upset, distressed, uncomfortable, and scared	—	Typical
		SE sought support from friends/colleagues after event	Variant	Typical
		Negative effect	Typical	General
		SE learned SR was not open to exploring cultural issues during supervision	Typical	—
	Effect on SE's satisfaction with supervision	SE felt uncomfortable with and distrustful of SR, and SE became guard	—	Typical
SE responded minimally to the CU event and/or subsequently disclosed little during supervision		—	Typical	
SE hid immediate negative emotional reaction(s) about CU event from SR during supervision		—	Typical	
Little or no effect		Variant	—	
SE approached SR later to discuss event		Variant	—	
Effect on SE's clinical cases	SE felt completely dissatisfied	—	Typical	
	Decreased satisfaction	Typical	Variant	
	No effect on satisfaction (SE generally satisfied with supervision)	Variant	Variant	
	SE was concerned about the effect of CU event on client treatment	Variant	Typical	
	Client's needs were not met in therapy	—	Typical	
Effect on SE's clinical cases	Client did not receive SE's full attention during therapy	—	Variant	
	Although SE believed the SR's clinical recommendations regarding client treatment were inappropriate, SE complied with SR's directions	—	Variant	
	SE believed SR's recommendations regarding client treatment were inappropriate, so SE ignored SR's directions	—	Variant	
	SE sought outside consultation on client cases because SR ignored cultural concerns of clients	—	Typical	
	No effect	Variant	—	

*Note.* European American supervisees (EASEs) reported on cross-cultural supervision experiences with supervisors of color, and supervisees of color (SEC) reported on cross-cultural supervision experiences with European American supervisors. SR = supervisor; SE = supervisee; dashes indicate that a category did not apply to this group of supervisees.