

## ***Cross-Cultural Supervision: Racial/Ethnic Minority Supervisees' Perspectives***

*The Journal of Counseling Research and Practice (JCRP)*  
Volume 5, No. 2  
(1-19)

**Hansori Jang**

*The University of Toledo*

**Na Mi Bang**

*Indian University-Purdue University Indianapolis*

**Janice A. Byrd**

*Kent State University*

**Carol K. Smith**

*Viterbo University*

### **Abstract**

Examining the clinical supervision experiences of minority supervisees with different backgrounds than their White supervisors is essential. Weak supervisory relationships can adversely affect a supervisee's professional competency, which in turn can negatively influence the client. This study explored the experiences of ten Racial/ethnic minority supervisees in a cross-cultural supervision setting. Using consensual qualitative research (CQR), three domains emerged: (a) cultural sensitivity, (b) cultural competency, and (c) relationship building. The outcome of this study highlights the types of training in counselor education that supervisors should consider when working with supervisees from different cultural backgrounds.

The number of Racial/ethnic minorities such as African Americans, Latinos, and Asians, is rapidly increasing in the United States. From 2000 to 2010, there was a 12.6% increase of African Americans and a 43% increase of Asians and Hispanics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), while the population of Whites increased only 5% during that time. The 2014 National Projections provided by the U.S. Census Bureau (2014) estimate that the number of Racial/ethnic minorities would continue to increase between 2014 and 2060. Similarly, the percentage of Racial/ethnic minority individuals has increased in counseling-related fields (Pedersen, Lonner, Draguns Trimble, & Scharron-del Rio, 2015) with 28% of the members of the American Counseling Association self-identified as a Racial/ethnic minority (ACA, 2013). Other associations in the

counseling profession and mental health profession have also reported that Racial/ethnic minorities comprise more than 20% of their membership (AAMFT, 2012; APA, 2012).

Helping professions like counseling, social work, and psychology, for example, have been diligent in the multicultural movement by embracing changes in the education, training, and supervision of those

---

*Correspondence regarding this article should be addressed to Hansori Jang, School of Wellness and Intervention, 3100C College of Health and Human Services, The University of Toledo, 2801 West Bancroft Street, Toledo, OH 43606. E-mail: [hansori.jang@utoledo.edu](mailto:hansori.jang@utoledo.edu). Tel: 319-512-1105. Fax: 419-530-7879*

who wish to enter the profession (APA, 2017; Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2016; Sue, Rasheed, & Rasheed, 2015). However, although this shift is seen as essential, there is still much to understand and learn. Researchers have shown that these changes have influenced the interactional dynamics in supervision, especially as cross-cultural supervision opportunities increase (Soheilian, Inman, Klinger, Isenberg, & Kulp, 2014). In addition to cultural differences between supervisors and supervisees, the type of cultural topics that supervisees share with their supervisors may influence the interaction between the supervisor and the counselor-in-training (Burkard, Knox, Clarke, Phelps, & Inman, 2014). Research on supervisors working with minority counselors-in-training needs further exploration to include the impact of supervisee acculturation on the supervisory relationship (Akkurt, Ng, & Kolbert, 2018), counselor self-efficacy of international students in training (Suh et al., 2018), and broaching topics of race in the supervisory relationship (White-Davis, Stein, & Karasz, 2016). Thus, supervisors in counselor education need to understand and develop multicultural competency skills to best communicate with their students (Chopra, 2013).

The concern is that when ineffectual clinical supervision has been provided, counselors may not have been adequately trained, potentially resulting in negative effects to clients (Duan & Roehlke, 2001). To increase positive outcomes, counselor educators should explore the relational dynamics that occur in cross-cultural supervision since effective supervision can positively impact the counselor-client relationship. One such relational dynamic is examining how cultural differences may

create communication, learning, and relationship barriers in cross-cultural supervision (Chang, Hays, & Shoffner, 2003). However, studies examining the experiences and needs of Racial/ethnic minority supervisees remain limited and only a few researchers have explicitly examined this relationship between White supervisors and Racial/ethnic minority supervisees (Chang, Hays, & Shoffner, 2003; Chopra, 2013; Hird, Tao, & Gloria, 2004). The current study sought to support past research on cross-cultural supervision and to extend that research by identify ways supervisors can foster a healthy supervisee professional development.

### **Racial/Ethnic Minority Supervisees' View of Cross-Cultural Supervision**

Individuals involved in a diverse working alliance such as supervisor-supervisee should attend to cross-cultural relationship dynamics and be aware of the contextual layers of each individual's life (Chan, Yeh, & Krumboltz, 2015). For the purpose of this study, cross-cultural supervision is defined as involving “. . . a dyad of a supervisee and a supervisor who have different racial and ethnic backgrounds, so that it is a direct encounter between two cultures” (Atkinson, 2004, p. 19).

Within the supervisory relationship, both the supervisor and the supervisee play a role in developing and maintaining the relationship. However, supervisors are oftentimes the facilitators and have more responsibility in ensuring the effectiveness and constructiveness of the interaction (Benard & Goodyear, 2014). For example, counseling psychologists have spent time creating guidelines for clinical supervision due to supervisees in training programs

reporting their supervision is harmful and inadequate (Ellis et al., 2014). So, a supervisor's proficiency in facilitating supervisory duties directly impact the health of the relationship and one such skill that is needed is multicultural proficiency (Crockett & Hays, 2015; Lee, 2017). Researchers have argued that a supervisor's level of multicultural proficiency can affect the quality of functional cross-cultural supervision (Crockett & Hays; Inman, 2006; Sue & Sue, 2008). Supervisors who exhibit a high level of multicultural awareness encourage minority supervisees' self-disclosure (Sue & Sue). Crockett and Hays (2015) also highlighted that the level of multicultural competence supervisors self-perceive is closely related to the development of counseling self-efficacy and supervisee satisfaction of the supervisory experience. In addition, a supervisor's communication style may influence a supervisee's awareness of the supervisor's characteristics/backgrounds (Lee, 2017). Taken together, these studies indicate that the ability of supervisors to demonstrate multicultural competence during supervision plays an important role in supervisees' professional growth.

The cross cultural supervisory relationship is enhanced when supervisors reflect upon themselves as cultural beings and consider their multicultural knowledge and skills (Soheilian et al., 2014). Soheilian and colleagues emphasized that supervisors should facilitate supervisees not only to explore their values, but also initiate the discussion of culture within the supervisory relationship. However, sharing cultural differences in cross-cultural supervision settings can be challenging for minority supervisees (Berkel, Constantine, & Olson, 2007). Given supervisees' minority positions and lower power within the

relationship, many are reluctant to initiate a discussion of cultural differences during supervision (Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki, & Alexander, 2010). Specifically, Western supervisors who use Western European models in supervision settings may experience conflict with culturally diverse supervisees' expectations (Sue & Sue, 2008). As a result, minority supervisees may be passive toward their supervisors. Regarding racial and ethnic issues in supervision, African American supervisees had fewer expectations on the supervisory relationship (Helms & Cook, 1999), while Asian supervisees may expect supervisors to offer direct advices to them (Lau & Ng, 2012). These varied expectations of the supervisory process need open and clear communication to positively influence a healthy and constructive supervisory relationship. Despite these communication challenges, Wong, Wong, and Ishiyama (2013) assert that this exchange helps minority supervisees feel their cultures are appreciated and therefore can directly impact the minority supervisees' development.

Many other communication-related factors can negatively impact the supervisory relationship. For example, racial micro-aggressions, disrespectful expressions or actions (including intended and unintended) to Racial/ethnic minorities are an example of harm that may occur as a result of differences within the supervisory relationship (Constantine & Sue, 2007). Micro-aggressions committed by White supervisors working with Racial/ethnic minority supervisees are more likely to occur in a supervisory climate in which multicultural concerns are not openly addressed or in which supervisee's do not feel safe bringing up their concerns (Constantine & Sue). The interruption on the

supervisory relationship caused racial micro-aggressions ultimately influences counselor development which impacts the counselor-in-training and future clients overtime.

In the counseling and mental health fields, clarification of cross-cultural/multicultural perceptions and incorporating multicultural perspectives in supervision is critical to developing a counselor's expertise (Chopra, 2013). When serving the needs of supervisees from different cultures, counselor educators and supervisors should respond to ethnic and cultural issues that their supervisees experience (Cook, 1994). The purpose of this study was to explore the challenges of Racial/ethnic minority supervisees in cross-cultural supervision settings by addressing the following research question: What are the needs and difficulties that Racial/ethnic minority supervisees experience in a cross-cultural supervisory relationship with White supervisors?

### **Method**

We used consensual qualitative research (CQR; Hill, 2012) to examine minority supervisees' perspectives on working with White supervisors. CQR was chosen as it provides a systematic approach to understand behaviors within a context and explore complex topics with many varying dynamics that can contribute to perceived ineffective or effective supervisory relationships (Hill, Knox, Thompson, Williams, Hess, & Ladany, 2005). We followed the steps of CQR; collecting, coding, and analyzing data, and reporting findings (Hill, 2012). As we went through these steps, we focused on a reliance on words over numbers, the significance of context, an integration of various

viewpoints, and consensus of the research members (Hays & Wood, 2011; Hill, 2012; Hill et al., 2005).

We utilized semi-structured open-ended questions, which allowed for an investigation of an individual's in-depth experiences and provided consistent data across interview participants. For this study, we asked participants demographics information including age, gender, ethnicity, and other information and general questions about their challenging experiences when working with their cross-cultural supervisor. After identifying their challenging experiences in cross-cultural supervision, we asked them to describe a time when they had a problem, examples of difficult situations within those relationships, how they addressed the difficulty, and characteristics of an ideal supervisory relationship. To increase the effectiveness of CQR, obtaining a strong sample of 8-15 participants is crucial when considering the emphasis of words and experiences in CQR methodology (Hill et al., 2005).

### **Participants**

We used purposive sampling to recruit the study participants ( $n=10$ ). The selection criteria included that all potential participants a) self-identified as a racial/ethnic minority and b) participated in a counseling-related internship or practicum in doctoral programs with a university supervisor who was White. Table 1 overviews the demographic information regarding study participants.

The two male and eight female participants ranged in age from 28 to 41 years ( $M = 32.7$ ,  $SD = 4.92$ ). The ethnic backgrounds were self-identified by each participant. Four participants are

Black/African American, three participants are South Korean, one participant is Colombian, one participant is Ethiopian, and one is Turkish. All participants had attended or were attending a CACREP-accredited counselor education program in the United States.

### **Researchers**

The primary research team consisted of two assistant professors at large research institutions in the Midwest and an assistant professor at the large Southern U.S. university: one Asian male, one Asian female, and one African American female. The principal investigator (PI) served as the methodologist, organizer, and primary contact for interested participants. The female Korean researcher interviewed the participants and analyzed the data. The African American female researcher served as the methodologist and performed the duties of external auditor. During this study, we met on a weekly basis to discuss ideas regarding procedures and analysis through face-to-face meetings.

At the beginning of the study and throughout the process, we engaged in several in-depth discussions regarding study expectations and personal biases. To minimize the potential for bias, we met initially to share our own experiences in cross-cultural supervision and discussed issues of personal bias several times throughout the research process before generating questions, analyzing data, and generating results. To minimize the potential for mistrust and dual relationships, we did not interview any participants we knew personally.

### **Procedure**

The university's institutional review board approved this study. Participant recruitment occurred via e-mail; the first author issued a nation-wide search for participants via a listserv with members who identify as counselor educators or counselor educators-in-training, CES-NET. The selection of participants was based on meeting the criteria with the intent to include participants in academic institutions from various regions in the United States to yield diverse perspectives regarding their experiences with cross-culture supervision.

Interested individuals contacted the PI to express interest in being a participant. The PI asked the potential participant a series of questions to determine eligibility. When applicable, the PI emailed the participant the informed consent document. After the principal investigator received the signed informed consent document, another member of the research team scheduled an audio-recorded semi-structured interview. We developed the semi-structured interview questions based upon the empirical literature. Two ethnic minority counselor educators who were recently counselor education doctoral students piloted the interview questions and provided feedback regarding the clarity and sequence of questions. We modified the semi-structured interview questions based upon their feedback.

In order to ensure trustworthiness of the study, we explored our own bias prior to writing the research and interview questions. Trustworthiness in qualitative research inquiry supports the argument that the inquiry's findings are worth considering (Patton, 2002). One of the researcher's primary goals is to design and conduct a

study using consistent methods and steps, which can be replicated. To ensure accurate recording of the steps, we used Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria to increase trustworthiness within the study: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Peer debriefing and triangulation were used in this study to ensure trustworthiness and help reduce bias that researchers may have and cross-examine the integrity of interview responses. The three research members have shared their expectations, thoughts and biases on cross-cultural supervision, and their experiences that relate to cross-cultural supervisory relationship in training. The thoughts and biases and shared among the research team include the lack of understanding of supervisees' minority cultures, minority supervisors' limited resources, expectations on ideal supervisory relationships, and others. The PI maintained all field notes from all researchers on the secure university server. To substantiate the data analysis, we used field notes throughout the coding process.

When recruiting, we created a participant criteria checklist we inserted within the recruitment email. Participants discovered that they would take part in an hour-long individual interview about their experiences in cross-cultural supervision. Because many of the participants were geographically dispersed throughout the United States, some of the interviews were conducted via telephone or using an online video conferencing software's audio feature only. Other interviews were conducted face-to-face and digitally recorded. We were aware that interviews not conducted in person (i.e., telephone) tend to elicit fewer socially desirable responses compared to face-to-face interviews (Hill et al., 2005). This is particularly important when

considering the potential sensitivity of the nature of the content of the questions (e.g., conflict with a professor).

After obtaining informed consent, the PI assigned participants to one of the other researchers who did not share the same racial/ethnic identity in order to avoid the interviewer over-identifying with the participant. The interviewing researcher and participant would then email one another to identify a time to meet face-to-face or virtually. Four interviews took place in the private offices of the researchers and six were via phone or virtually. The interviewers asked interviewees questions in a semi-structured manner with follow-up, probing, and/or clarification questions asked as needed. After the interviews were completed and transcribed, the first and second authors independently identified and analyzed themes with the CQR method and then the third author reviewed the themes identified. With the tentative themes, the three authors have meetings to discuss, compare, contrast, and finalize the themes for this study.

The focus of this study was to understand experiences of minority supervisees in counselor education programs with respect to their relationship with White advisors. For this, semi-structured interview questions were developed and utilized. The semi-structured interview question is neither a free conversation nor a highly structured questionnaire; rather, it allows open question and answers between researchers and participants (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Using semi-structured interview questions help participants answer the questions that researchers have prepared and freely respond as new thoughts and ideas come to their mind.

The interview questions includes two sections: a) the questions on demographic information and b) the questions on cross-cultural supervision experience and supervisory relationship. The demographic questions are about age, gender, ethnicity, home country, city, an area of study, and educational backgrounds. The interview questions involve experience on that a participant has a challenges or problems in the cross-cultural supervision, relationship-related difficulties, ways to deal with difficulties in the supervisory relationship, and thoughts on an ideal supervisory relationship in cross-cultural supervision. Sample interview questions are “How did you deal with difficulties in the supervisory relationship?” and “How would you describe an idealistic supervisory relationship?”

### **Data Analysis**

Prior to analyzing the data, we removed all identifying information and each of the researchers read the transcripts. The data analysis process was recursive between data collection and data analysis. To analyze the data, we followed Hill et al.’s (2005) protocol and guidelines. The first step involved developing domains, or topic areas, which can be created by the literature review or directly from the data (Hill et al., 2005). For the current study, the coders worked directly from the data to create the domain list which evolved, changed, and adjusted over time. To do this effectively, we reviewed the 10 transcriptions independently and they were coded by two of research team members. We then discussed the broad themes and generated a guide in the early stages of data analysis. Then two of us re-read the data and assigned broad themes. The two coders discussed discrepancies, explained decisions, and

reached full consensus before providing the third team member, external auditor, the coded results for an independent review. The external auditor was responsible for reviewing each transcript and assessing the accuracy of the domains, core ideas, and categories to increase the accuracy of the results. The external auditor then provided both verbal and written feedback and met several times with the research team to discuss revisions and considerations. She recommended adjusting terminology used to define domains, categories, and the team then discussed the decision of which would remain.

The second major step in CQR data analysis is the construction of core ideas which summarizes the content of each domain for each case (Hill et al., 1997). We began coding the core ideas by summarizing and reducing the data into categories, without interrupting the meaning of the raw data. During the data analysis process, when we had disagreements on categories, we met to share the rationale and evidence to support ideas and reach to agreements.

The final stage in CQR data analysis is cross analysis which involved the first two researchers searching for patterns to determine how core ideas cluster into categories (Hill et al., 2005). In this stage, the categories within the domains emerged as either “general” (a topic that was represented across all 10 participants), “typical” (a topic that was illustrated across six to nine participants), “variant” (a topic that was noted across three to five participants), and “rare” (a topic that was noted across one to two participants). After the first two researchers identified categories, the external auditor reviewed and then the team met to come to a consensus.

Throughout the entire process, the external auditor was also responsible for reviewing each transcript and assessing the accuracy of the domains, core ideas, and categories to increase the accuracy of the results. The external auditor provided both verbal and written feedback and the team met several times to discuss revisions, considerations, and recommendations for adjustments to terminology used for domains and core ideas. The final consensus of the research team resulted in 7 categories that made up 3 domains.

### Results

After reviewing the data, three domains emerged: (a) cultural sensitivity, (b) cultural competency, and (c) relationship building (see Table 2).

#### Domain 1: Cultural Sensitivity

**Category 1: Cultural communication styles.** The first category was typical and related to considerations about cultural communication styles. Five participants replied that White supervisors' lack of understanding of supervisees' communication styles related to their lack of knowledge of supervisees' cultures, which negatively affected their views toward White supervisors. Britney, a 31-year-old woman, shared her concerns with this issue: "Some of the negative experiences I've encountered with my cross cultural supervisor is a lack of communication... I think the culture barriers between minorities or between African American woman and a Caucasian supervisor, sometimes we have a lack of understanding."

Three participants from an eastern Asian country also stated they experienced different communication styles that

negatively affected communication in supervision. Michael stated,

"In my home country, I was the person who always received feedbacks, advice... I didn't know what to do when supervisors here asked me about my opinion in terms of cases or my clients... When they asked me, I was not ready to answer, because I was just ready for receiving feedbacks and advice. That was, I think, the biggest problem that I had."

**Category 2: Microaggression.** Out of the ten participants, eight expressed that they experienced micro-aggressions, producing a typical response (i.e., being discrimination and stereotyping). Jennifer replied that her negative experiences consisted of discrimination from her White supervisor. Jennifer stated,

"When it came to feeling am I being treated differently or is it because I'm black, it's like I didn't have anyone to go reference to and say, 'Well, how did you deal with this or has this happened to you?'" Then if I did mention that I felt discriminated or I felt like I was treated differently, they wouldn't respond to it. They would say, 'Well, I think you're just thinking a little bit much into it' or be little the fact that I actually felt different and that I shouldn't."

Two participants noted that they felt stereotyped. The participants described that their supervisors' perceptions of supervisees' minority status may influence supervisors' stereotypes toward minority supervisees. Cindy replied,

"I think it's related with my minority status because I experienced her as a person having some kind of stereotypes. She doesn't tell me because you know



you don't tell stereotypes—the person who you have stereotypes about. Then if other supervisor I have, “Oh, this supervisee has very limited skills,”.... or if I think that this supervisee doesn't understand that US culture or if I say, “This supervisee doesn't have much to offer,” I will just bring the expectations down and down to the basic minimum.”

## **Domain 2: Cultural Competency**

**Category 1: Cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills.** All participants were asked what they experienced with their White supervisors in supervision. Five of the participants responded that their White supervisors had limited understanding of participants' culture. For example, Daniel indicated his White supervisor's lack of cultural awareness on his collectivistic culture, which resulted in supervisory dissatisfaction. Daniel described that the issues related to LGBT populations were unfamiliar. He also worried if his cultural backgrounds would negatively affect the counseling relationship with a sexual minority client, and that it requires additional time and effort to understand and build competency in dealing with such issues in counseling. However, his White supervisor did not make an effort to understand his challenges which related to cultural backgrounds but focus on treating the client.

“The problem is that my supervisor, my Caucasian supervisor, expected that I can work with [sexual minority] clients right away. They didn't give me enough time to develop confidence. They want you to be able to work from the beginning of the supervision, but they don't understand that coming from a collectivist culture, coming from a different culture, maybe I need more

time. My supervisor wanted me to not only accept, but she wanted me to be celebrating them. I think that's too much.”

### **Category 2: Counseling backgrounds.**

Out of the ten participants, two members produced a rare response in expressing different counseling and theoretical orientations that lead participants to feel dissatisfied when working with their White supervisors. All participants in this category expressed that their supervisors showed less sensitivity to cultural differences, which may lead to minimal effort to understand supervisees' counseling theoretical backgrounds. Taylor noted that minority supervisees might encounter difficulties when they have different counseling approaches related to culture.

“My theory for counseling is solution-focused therapy. I do solution-focus, you know. He was mostly cognitive behavioral, so every time we would present a case.... He was always trying to explain it from CBT. Then it's like, “Well, that's not how I function.” That becomes a problem in communicating, because he thinks differently than I think. It's not only that different theories, but it's also different perception of the world as a whole.”

## **Domain 3: Relationship Building**

**Category 1: Connections between supervisors and supervisees.** Five participants indicated their supervisors made less effort to be connected. Daniel said that due to the cultural differences, he felt less connected to his supervisors.

“For example, because I am from different culture, I think differently, right? I have different opinions. When I

say that, they usually like the American way. They like the American way of thinking. If you present something that's different than the American way of thinking, then they say, 'Let's not do that, let's do this.' They're not too flexible.”

### **Category 2: Trust toward**

**supervisees.** The participants who are international students ( $n = 5$ ) completed their master's degree in their home countries. They expressed their difficulties in understanding the curriculum of school systems in the U.S. during their doctoral internship or practicum supervision. As a result, the participants thought their supervisor had minimum expectations that stemmed from supervisees' limited exposure to American school curriculum. These participants worried that supervisors' low expectations would bring about a lack of trust in their counseling ability. Whitney reported,

“I felt like her expectations were kind of compromised a little bit because I'm international and I'm not—I don't know well about American school system or what kind of curriculum they have for elementary school students or middle school students ....”

White supervisors' low expectations were not only limited to the international participants' concerns, but also in other Racial/ethnic minority participants. The participants addressed their supervisors were superficial in supervisory engagement. For instance, Britney felt that she was definitely dissatisfied to work with her supervisor because:

“It looked like she just wanted me not to make mistakes. Just the basic minimum. Not a lot of expectations, not—she didn't help clarify my goals in

that internship semester, like what I want to get.”

The participants also wanted their supervisors to wait until they developed confidence in counseling; however, they felt that supervisors were less patient. Britney stated,

“I kind of felt like I—she discredited me. What I mean by discredit, since I'm not—I don't, I'm not licensed I lack experience. This is an assumption she made about me. I've been having to prove myself, work harder and show her that I'm efficient or proficient in different areas and that I have knowledge and experience in different domains in relation to working with students and creating interventions based off of my specific theoretical background.”

### **Category 3: Discussion of**

**supervisees' concerns.** Nine participants wanted their supervisors to recognize their needs; however, they felt their supervisors did not fully address any issues with them and did not care about their concerns. Regarding the needs, the participants addressed that they had limited opportunities to discuss their challenges even though they wanted. Moreover, the participants wanted their supervisors to recognize their strengths and indicate areas to improve; however, supervisors were less attentive in providing constructive feedback.

For example, Joshua also reported,

“We didn't even discuss about the challenges or how my counselor, my counselees at the school would experience me. We didn't discuss about what my needs are as a minority student, as a person, but as a student at the same time as a minority student.”

With respect to supervisors' understanding of supervisee's strengths, Cindy reported,

"She was not aware of specific weaknesses or even clear strengths that I have. Yeah, I don't think she was attending to me closely."

In addition, the participants felt that their supervisors were less attentive in listening to the supervisees' thoughts and opinions. Joshua stated,

"I don't notice her letting me express myself adequately and even when I attempt to express a bit, I regularly perceived her not giving me attention, not listening to me."

### **Discussion**

The findings of our study support previous research on the needs and difficulties of Racial/ethnic minority supervisees in supervision settings. Previous studies have acknowledged the significance of comprehending the cross-cultural supervisory process that Racial/ethnic minority supervisees experience, as well as the necessity to focus on the cultural issues that affect the distinctive experiences of Racial/ethnic minority supervisees (Berkel et al., 2007; Burkard et al., 2014). Overall, previous literature identified several considerations for supervisors engaged in cross-cultural supervision which include cultural sensitivity (Estrada, Frame, & Williams, 2004; Mittal & Wieling, 2006), cultural competency (Toporek, Ortega-Villalobos, & Pope-Davis, 2004), and relationship building (Gatmon et al., 2001). In line with the previous studies mentioned, participants' experiences provided similar considerations for cross-cultural supervision relationships.

### **Cultural Sensitivity**

The level of cultural sensitivity expressed by White supervisors in cross-cultural supervision is a significant theme in this study. As with prior studies (Estrada et al., 2004; Mittal & Wieling, 2006; Wong et al., 2013), supervisors' cultural sensitivity facilitated participants' perceived level of satisfaction about the cross-cultural supervision experience. These results were critical in light of Mittal and Wieling's study, which suggested that supervisors who are more willing to initiate cultural discussions might help supervisees to sense a greater amount of cultural sensitivity from their supervisor.

The results of the current study also found that understanding the communication styles of supervisees from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds is necessary for supervisors. Our study results described that supervisors' communication styles relevant to supervisees' cultures appeared to impact Racial/ethnic minority supervisees' feelings toward their supervisors. As a result, developing multiculturally sensitive communication styles is crucial to establishing an effective cross-cultural supervisory relationship.

The development of an effective cross-cultural supervisory relationship is essential part of clinical supervisors' responsibilities. Comprehending the cultural differences of Racial/ethnic minority supervisees is critical. Furthermore, in this study, White supervisors' were perceived as having judgmental, discriminative, stereotyped, and objectified attitudes which was understood as a type of micro-aggression to minority supervisees, which may lead supervisees to view that their White supervisors' cultural sensitivity

is limited. This finding is noteworthy in light of Raheem, Myers, and Wickman's (2014) study, which suggested that supervisors from the Racial/ethnically dominant group need to share multicultural considerations with supervisees, including how micro-aggressions may impact supervisory relationships with ethnic minority supervisees.

### **Cultural Competency**

The results of this study suggest that White supervisors' cultural competency plays a pivotal role in affecting Racial/ethnic minority supervisees' perceptions of their cross-cultural supervision (Toporek et al., 2004). It is crucial that Racial/ethnic minority supervisees' perceptions of supervisors' cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills promote supervisees' satisfaction with the supervisory relationship and perceived self-efficacy. Most participants emphasized that White supervisors need to gain knowledge regarding cross-cultural supervision, such as Racial/ethnic minority supervisees' cultural values. Supervisors' in-depth knowledge of cross-cultural supervision and professional training in this area would support to enhance their cultural competency and eventually facilitate supervisory relationship with their students.

### **Relationship Building**

Our findings highlight the quality of the relationship between supervisors and supervisees. Supervisors who work with Racial/ethnic minority supervisees are encouraged to consider cultural differences carefully, as this will foster productive working relationships in the supervision setting. Supervisors are required to be attentive and responsive when differences regarding culture-related issues occur, and

that they should initiate discussions on different cultural backgrounds (Gatmon et al., 2001; Soheilian et al., 2014). Our research supports the significance of supervisors' efforts to engage; thus, it encourages supervisees to recognize positive connections with their supervisors. Additionally, participants in our study reported that they experienced dissatisfaction while trained by White supervisors because they had minimal expectations toward ethnic/racial minority supervisees. These low expectations may negatively affect supervisees' motivation and counseling self-efficacy (i.e., confidence in their capability to counsel).

### **Different Perceptions of Cross-Cultural Supervisory Relationship between International and African American Supervisees**

**Differences in Communication Styles.** Unlike previous studies that explored Racial/ethnic minority supervisees' (including both international and African American supervisees) cross-cultural supervision experiences (Burkard et al., 2006; Wong et al., 2013), we found that international supervisees and African American supervisees had significantly different experiences and perspectives toward White supervisors in supervision settings. For instance, both international and African American participants discussed cultural sensitivity (i.e., cultural communication styles and micro-aggression) and incorporated expectations informed by their individual culture into their supervisory relationships. Specifically, all participants in the study reported experiencing difficulty communicating with their White supervisors. However, the nature of the challenges was different between international and African American

participants. African American participants perceived White supervisors' attitudes as being less concerned with taking the effort to understand their unique cultural identity and concerns (i.e., barriers) which disrupts the effectiveness of the supervisory relationship. Also, African American participants felt discrimination from White supervisors during the supervision process. Such collapses in communication can negatively influence the supervisory satisfaction for both supervisors and international supervisees and may express a message of White supervisors' cross-cultural insensitivity, especially regarding diversity issues (Mori, Inman, & Caskie, 2009).

In contrast to African American participants' views on cultural communication styles which strongly links to White supervisors' unresponsive attitudes, international participants perceived that cultural communication styles related to different culture orientation (i.e., collectivism vs. individualism) rather than White supervisors' attitudes. In supervision settings, international supervisees from collectivistic cultures, in particular, may expect to receive directive suggestions and advice from supervisors and be less active in sharing their ideas with supervisors (Lau & Ng, 2012). This expectation would conflict with White supervisors' supervision approaches that were established from Western European models, which emphasize interactive communications in supervision.

**Different Perceptions on Micro-aggressions.** Concerning micro-aggressions, international supervisees reported feeling stereotyped by White supervisors. Whereas, African American supervisees reported feelings of discrimination. Specifically, international participants worried that the limited

opportunity to understand the U.S. school systems or the required role of school counselors in the U.S contributed to their supervisors' lack of trust in their counseling ability. On the other hand, African American participants shared that their White supervisors were culturally insensitive and felt they were treated differently from their White peers and broadly discriminated against. When faced with feelings of discrimination, one participant shared she confronted her supervisor, but her concerns were dismissed and told she was overthinking. Sue asserts that individuals on the receiving of a microaggression are left pondering if they are "over-reacting" and impacts the individual's stress levels, self-confidence, and trust levels in any form of relationship (e.g., supervision or counseling; Constantine & Sue, 2007; Smith, Chang, & Orr, 2017). These findings address the need for increased self-awareness for White supervisors working within an ever-increasing diverse nation. A supervisor's recognition and management of privilege is especially important considering the innate power differential that exists within supervisory relationships which increases their power and control over their students. Providing an environment in which it is safe to discuss expectations is essential for the growth and development of both Racial/ethnic supervisees and White supervisors.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Although the findings of the present study are informative with respect to understanding the unique experiences of ethnic minorities in training, several limitations are acknowledged. One, the modest sample size of this project could have been larger to include more participants who trained in various regions

in the nation as well as more robustly examine the differences between racial/ethnic and international minority supervisees. This would have allowed for additional perspectives on the differences between the two groups. Two, not all interviews were conducted in person (i.e., telephone, Skype, or Google Hangout). This tends to elicit fewer socially desirable responses compared to face-to-face interviews (Hill et al., 2005). This is particularly important when considering the potential sensitivity of the nature of the content of the questions (e.g., conflict with a professor).

Additionally, despite efforts to minimize individual bias, we were vulnerable to the researcher's subjective experiences, specifically when considering that minority supervisees themselves are ethnic minorities trained as counselors and supervised by White supervisors. This is especially important to consider because the participants' ethnic identities were similar to the researchers. It would be meaningful if research members consisted of more racially diverse members, since discussion among research members from diverse backgrounds would bring new and additional perspectives when interpreting and analyzing the data. Lastly, we did not clarify the level of training the White supervisors possessed with participants.

The results of our study provide many recommendations for future research. Because cultural sensitivity, cultural competency, relationship building, and supervisees' professional development were found to be important components of the cross-cultural supervisory relationship between White supervisors and Racial/ethnic minority supervisees, future research is recommended to determine what

experiences facilitate the development of these skills. Additionally, the results show a difference in the type of experiences between international and domestic ethnic minorities. The study would have benefited from targeting one group or the other or increasing the number of participants to explore more precisely the differences in their needs.

## Conclusion

Results of this study confirm the continued need to create safe supervisory environments that allow for a constructive flow of communication between the supervisor and supervisee, supervisee development, and eventually counselor competency. When considering the communication between the supervisor and supervisee, the way in which feedback is given and interpreted is embedded within cultural backgrounds of both individuals within the supervisory dyad. Highlighted within this process is the need for supervisors to continue to explore their own multicultural awareness and biases that may exist. Additionally, supervisors can confidently prompt supervisees to openly reflect upon their experience in this relationship to positively contribute to a positive learning environment. This also impacts the supervisee or student's development as a healthy learning environment, communication, and relationship with the supervisor will help the supervisee feel more confident as they begin to function as counselors. If the supervisee and supervisor foster a relationship where communication openly explores how the supervisee can become a more proficient counselor, then their future effectiveness as a practicing counselor will be positively impacted.

## References

- Akkurt, M. N., Ng, K-M., & Kolbert, J. (2018). Multicultural Discussion as a Moderator of Counseling Supervision-Related Constructs. *International Journal of Advancement of Counselling, 40*, 60-71.
- American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT). (2012, September/October). Membership report. *Family Therapy Magazine*, p. 13.
- American Counseling Association (ACA) (2013). ACA membership report on 1/3/2013. Retrieved from ACA membership and association service in ACA phone directory.
- American Psychological Association (APA). (2012). Current major field of APA members by membership status. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/ads/about/addemographics>.
- American Psychological Association (APA). (2017). *Multicultural Guidelines: An Ecological Approach to Context, Identity, and Intersectionality*. Retrieved from: <http://www.apa.org/about/policy/multicultural-guidelines.pdf>
- Atkinson, D. R. (2004). *Counseling American Minorities* (6th ed.). New York, NY: McCraw-Hill.
- Berkel, L. A., Constantine, M. G., & Olson, E. A. (2007). Supervisor multicultural competence: Addressing religious and spiritual issues with counseling students in supervision. *The Clinical Supervisor, 26*(1-2), 3-15.
- Bernard, J. M., & Goodyear, R. K. (2014). *Fundamentals of clinical supervision* (5th ed.). Columbus, OH: Pearson.
- Burkard, A. W., Knox, S., Clarke, R. D., Phelps, D. L., & Inman, A. G. (2014). Supervisors' experiences of providing difficult feedback in cross-ethnic/racial supervision. *The Counseling Psychologist, 42*(3), 314-344.
- Chan, A. W., Yeh, C. J., & Krumboltz, J. D. (2015). Mentoring ethnic minority counseling and clinical psychology students: A multicultural, ecological, and relational model. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 62*(4), 592.
- Chang, C. Y., Hays, D. G., & Shoffner, M. F. (2003). Cross-racial supervision: A developmental approach for White supervisors working with supervisees of color. *The Clinical Supervisor, 22*(2), 121-138.
- Chopra, T. (2013). All supervision is multicultural: A review of literature on the need for multicultural supervision in counseling. *Psychological Studies, 58*(3), 335-338.
- Constantine, M. G., & Sue, D. W. (2007). Perceptions of racial microaggressions among Black supervisees in cross-racial dyads. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 54*(2), 142-153.

- Cook, D. A. (1994). Racial identity in supervision. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 34*, 132–141.
- Crockett, S., & Hays, D. G. (2015). The influence of supervisor multicultural competence on the supervisory working alliance, supervisee counseling self-efficacy, and supervisee satisfaction with supervision: A mediation model. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 54*(4), 258-273.
- Duan, C., & Roehlke, H. (2001). A descriptive “snapshot” of cross-racial supervision in university counseling center internships. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 29*(2), 131-146.
- Ellis, M. V., Berger, L., Hanus, A. E., Ayala, E. E., Swords, B. A., & Siembor, M. (2014). Inadequate and harmful clinical supervision: Testing a revised framework and assessing occurrence. *The Counseling Psychologist, 42*(4), 434-472.
- Estrada, D., Frame, M. W., & Williams, C. B. (2004). Cross-cultural supervision: Guiding the conversation toward race and ethnicity. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 32*, 307-319.
- Gatmon, D., Jackson, D., Koshkarian, L., Martos-Perry, N., Molina, A., Patel, N., & Rodolfa, E. (2001). Exploring ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation variables in supervision: Do they really matter? *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 29*(2), 102-113.
- Hays, D., & Wood, C. (2011). Infusing qualitative traditions in counseling research design. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 89*, 288–295.
- Helms, J. E., & Cook, D. A. (1999). *Using race and culture in counseling and psychotherapy: Theory and process*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Hill, C. E. (Ed.). (2012). *Consensual qualitative research: A practical resource for investigating social science phenomena*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Hill, C. E., Knox, S., Thompson, B. J., Williams, E. N., Hess, S. A., & Ladany, N. (2005). Consensual qualitative research: An update [Special Issue]. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*(2), 196-205.
- Hird, J. S., Tao, K. W., & Gloria, A. M. (2004). Examining supervisors' multicultural competence in racially similar and different supervision dyads. *The Clinical Supervisor, 23*(2), 107-122.
- Inman, A. G. (2006). Supervisor multicultural competence and its relation to supervisory process and outcome. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 32*(1), 73-85.
- Lau, J., & Ng, K. (2012). Effectiveness and relevance of training for international counseling graduates: A qualitative inquiry. *International Journal for the*



- Advancement of Counseling*, 34(1), 87-105.
- Lee, A. (2017). Clinical supervision of international supervisee: Suggestions for multicultural supervision. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counseling*, 40(1), 60-71.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry* (Vol. 75): Sage.
- Mittal, M., & Wieling, E. (2006). Training experiences of international doctoral students in marriage and family therapy. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 32(3), 369-383.
- Mori, Y., Inman, A. G., & Caskie, G. I. L. (2009). Supervising international students: Relationship between acculturation, supervisor multicultural competence, cultural discussions, and supervision satisfaction. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*, 3(1), 10-18.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). Two decades of developments in qualitative inquiry: A personal, experiential perspective. *Qualitative Social Work: Research and Practice*, 1(3), 261-283.
- Pedersen, P. B., Lonner, W. J., Draguns, J. G., Trimble, J. E., & Scharron-del Rio, M. R. (2015). *Counseling across cultures*. Sage Publications.
- Pietkiewicz, I., & Smith, J. A. (2014). A practical guide to using interpretative phenomenological analysis in qualitative research psychology. *Psychological Journal*, 20(1), 7-14.
- Ponterotto, J. G., Casas, J. M., Suzuki, L. A., & Alexander, C. M. (Eds.) (2010). *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Raheem, M. A., Myers, C. E., & Wickman, S. (2014). An investigation of ethnic identity development and counselor educators in their ability to recognizing racial microaggressions. *CLEARvoz Journal*, 1(2), 15-26.
- Ratts, M. J., Singh, A. A., Nassar-McMillan, S., Butler, S. K., & McCullough, J. R. (2016). Multicultural and social justice counseling competencies: Guidelines for the counseling profession. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 44(1), 28-48.
- Smith, J. A., Chang, C. Y., & Orr, J. J. (2017). A phenomenological investigation: Microaggressions and counselors-in-training. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 12(2), 213-229.
- Soheilian, S. S., Inman, A. G., Klinger, R. S., Isenberg, D. S., & Kulp, L. E. (2014). Multicultural supervision: Supervisees' reflections on culturally competent supervision. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 27(4), 379-392.
- Sue, D. W., Rasheed, M. N., & Rasheed, J. M. (2015). *Multicultural social work practice: A competency-based approach to diversity and social justice*. John Wiley & Sons.

- Sue, D. W., & Sue, D. (2008). *Counseling the culturally diverse: Theory and practice*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Suh, S., Crawford, C. V., Hansing, K. K., Fox, S., Cho, M., Chang, E., ... Lee, S. M. (2018). A cross-cultural study of the self-confidence of counselors-in-training. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 1-12.
- Toporek, R. L., Ortega-Villalobos, L., & Pope-Davis, D. B. (2004). Critical incidents in multicultural supervision: Exploring supervisees' and supervisors' experiences. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 32(2), 66-83.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). *Statistical abstract of the United States: 2010*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/compendia/satab/2010/2010edition.html>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2014). *2014 National Population Projections Datasets*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/2014/demo/popproj/2014-popproj.html>
- White-Davis, T., Stein, E., & Karasz, A. (2016). The elephant in the room: Dialogues about race within cross-cultural supervisory relationships. *International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine*, 51, 347-356.
- Wong, L. C., Wong, P. T., & Ishiyama, F. I. (2013). What helps and what hinders in cross-cultural clinical supervision: A critical incident study. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 41(1), 66-85.

Table 1  
Participant Demographic Information (N = 10)

Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	Gender
Joshua	41	Black/ African American	Female
Rachel	41	Latino American	Female
Cindy	36	Native African	Female
Britney	31	Black/African American	Female
Daniel	31	Turkish	Male
Michael	31	South Korean	Male
Christina	31	South Korean	Female
Taylor	29	Black/ African American	Female
Jennifer	28	Black/ African American	Female
Whitney	28	South Korean	Female

Table 2  
Racial/Ethnic Minority Supervisees' Perceptions of Challenges in Cross-Cultural Supervision

Domain	Category	Frequency
Cultural sensitivity	Cultural communication styles	Typical
	Micro-agression	Typical
Cultural competency	Cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills	Variant
	Counseling backgrounds	Rare
Relationship building	Connections between supervisors and supervisees	Variant
	Trust toward supervisees	General
	Discussion on supervisees' concerns	Typical

Note. N = 10. General = all 10 cases represented; typical = 6-9 cases represented; variant = 3-5 cases represented; rare = 1-2 cases represented.