Cross-Racial Supervision: Critical Issues in the Supervisory Relationship

Meadow Schroeder
Jac J. W. Andrews
Yvonne L. Hindes
University of Calgary

ABSTRACT

This article reviews issues and findings from 13 research studies relative to cross-racial supervision. The research in this area indicates that a strong working alliance between the supervisor and student is more likely to happen when supervisors are culturally responsive and competent. However, in order to better appreciate the nature and scope of cross-racial supervision, future research needs to increase sample sizes and include the perspective of supervisors and students within the studies. Moreover, researchers should give greater attention to the development of instruments they utilize in their studies to ensure reliability and validity of these measures.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article étudie les problèmes et les conclusions de 13 recherches relatives à la supervision inter-raciale. Les recherches dans ce domaine indiquent qu'il est plus probable qu'une forte alliance au travail s'établisse entre l'étudiant et le superviseur quand celui-ci connaît la culture et y réagit. Toutefois, afin de mieux saisir la nature et l'étendue de la supervision inter-raciale, les recherches futures doivent augmenter la taille des échantillons et inclure le point de vue des superviseurs et des étudiants. En outre, les chercheurs devraient prêter une plus grande attention à l'élaboration des instruments qu'ils utilisent dans leurs études afin d'assurer la fiabilité et la validité de telles mesures.

In recent years, human service professionals have become increasingly aware of the importance of racial and cultural dimensions in professional supervision (Chang, Hayes, & Shoffner, 2003). In this regard, Pedersen (1990) referred to multiculturalism as the "fourth force" in counselling and psychology. Clearly, the changing demographics of North America's population have been a key factor in the acknowledgement from many human service professionals (e.g., counselling psychologists, family therapists, social workers) that cultural factors influence their practice. In light of rapid cultural diversification, not only can human service professionals expect to see more racially and ethnically diverse clients, they will also see altered trends in the composition of the graduate student body within the fields of psychology and social work.

In Canada, graduate student enrolment of racial/ethnic minorities continues to increase in number (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2002; National Science Foundation, 2001) as do racially/ethnically diverse faculty (Pate, 2001). Hence, supervisors in areas such as counselling psychology will need to increase their knowledge and develop their skills in cross-cultural relationship dynamics

to provide effective leadership and instruction in supervision and to enhance the competencies of supervisees (Fong & Lease, 1997). An understanding of the issues that can arise in the cross-cultural supervisory relationship might help facilitate racial and cultural sensitivity and awareness within supervisors and lead to more positive and effective supervisory relationships.

Generally, supervision can be defined as

> an intervention provided by a more senior member of a profession to a more junior member of a profession or members of that profession. The relationship is evaluative, extends over time, and has the simultaneous purposes of enhancing the professional functioning of the more junior person(s), monitoring the quality of professional services offered to clients, and serving as a gatekeeper for those who are to enter the particular profession. (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004, p. 8)

The terms *multicultural supervision*, *cross-cultural supervision,* and *cross-racial supervision* are often used interchangeably in the literature (Constantine, 2003; D'Andrea & Daniels, 1997; Fukuyama, 1994; Leong & Wagner, 1994). Multicultural supervision refers to supervisory relationships in which supervisors, students, or clients differ on one or more cultural variables such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, language, disability, and spirituality (Constantine, 1997; Estrada, Frame, & Williams, 2004; Toporek, Ortega-Villalobos, & Pope-Davis, 2004).

Cross-cultural and cross-racial supervision, in contrast, refer specifically to supervisory relationships in which the supervisor or student come from different *racial* or *ethnic* backgrounds (Daniels, D'Andrea, & Kyung Kim, 1999). Although historically race was defined with respect to individuals having distinguishing physical characteristics, such as skin colour or hair texture (Weiling & Marshal, 1999), contemporary perspectives regarding race define it as a socially constructed construct (Arthur & Collins, 2005). Ethnicity refers to a shared social identity that has existed for generations among a group of individuals. The term cross-racial is preferred for the purposes of this review because it refers to individuals who come from culturally different groups (e.g., White supervisor–Black student, Black supervisor–Hispanic student), and not individuals who differ in terms of other variables such as gender, class, or sexual orientation.

The purpose of this review is to highlight the critical issues and findings from the research in cross-racial supervision. In a previous review of the literature on cross-cultural counselling, Leong and Wagner (1994) found only three articles on cross-racial supervision; however, recent attention to multicultural challenges within psychology as well as social work has led to increased publications in this area. This review is primarily focused on cross-racial supervision relative to human service fields, namely, counselling psychology, clinical psychology, family therapy, and social work. It is organized into two main sections. The first section is a summary of the cross-racial supervision literature published since 1997, and the second section presents some of the implications from the research findings as well as some of the limitations of this research.

This review of cross-racial supervision utilized three online databases to identify pertinent studies: PsychInfo, MEDLINE, and SocIndex. The references cited in each of the studies were also examined. Searches were directed by using key lexical qualifiers including "supervision," "supervisee," "cross-racial," "cross-cultural," and "multicultural." To be included in the review, the research studies needed to involve supervision dyads in which one of the individuals was a member of an ethnic or racial minority group. Thirteen articles, largely based on American samples, met this criterion.

Although racial-ethnic issues arise from different histories in the United States and Canada, the research findings have reasonable implications for consideration within the Canadian context, due to generally similar training programs in which students in Canada are supervised. Furthermore, the number of ethnically diverse faculty and graduate students in psychology and related programs are increasing in both countries (National Science Foundation, 2001). Hence, cross-racial supervision will be a growing issue in North America in general.

For this review, the studies were grouped according to three critical issues of racial and ethnic diversity that arise in cross-racial supervision: (a) perceptions of supervisors' multicultural competence, (b) the effect of racial identity on working alliance and multicultural competence, and (c) the level of acculturation within the supervisory relationship. For many articles, the supervisors in the dyads were White; therefore, a large part of the review addresses issues in which this is the supervisory dynamic.

In this article, *White* refers to an individual who is Caucasian and implies someone of European origin. It should be noted that cross-racial supervision can be any combination of two persons who differ in racial or ethnic identity and does not automatically assume White people are less culturally sensitive than other groups or that cross-racial supervision is a White supervisor issue. Furthermore, the aim of this review is not to define individuals by their race or ethnicity, nor does it assume that all people of one race or ethnic background are identical. Rather, it focuses on the potential issues and dynamics that can arise between individuals of different races and acknowledges the power of race in relationships. It examines the available literature on the relationship between supervisory racial interactions and supervision process and outcome from the perspective of students and their supervisors.

Perception of Supervisor Multicultural Competence

Supervisor multicultural competence refers to the ability of supervisors to work with clients or trainees from other cultures and races. In this regard, they are able to address multicultural issues within the supervisory relationship as well as those affecting the students' relationships with their clients (Constantine, 1997; Leong, 1994). Supervisors with a high degree of multicultural competence create a safe environment in which to discuss multicultural issues.

When supervisors with a high degree of multicultural competence work with students from different ethnic or racial groups, they demonstrate an awareness of

cultural and ethnic differences and promote an ethnic identity in those students (Dressel, Consoli, Kim, & Atkinson, 2007). Pope-Davis, Toporek, and Ortega-Villalobos (2003) measured students' perceptions of their own and their supervisor's multicultural competence. The students surveyed rated ethnically different supervisors as more competent than White supervisors. Similar findings were reported by Ladany, Brittan-Powell, and Pannu (1997), who found that racial/ethnic-minority supervisors were rated by students as more influential in the development of their multicultural competence than White supervisors regardless of the race of the student.

Hird, Tao, and Gloria (2004) surveyed supervisors about their perceived levels of multicultural competence when engaged in cross-racial supervision. White supervisors reported less multicultural competence than racial/ethnic-minority supervisors. Racial/ethnic-minority supervisors spent more time than White supervisors discussing cultural issues with their students regardless of student race and ethnicity. In racially similar dyads, racial/ethnic-minority supervisors spent more time addressing cultural issues than White supervisors who were paired with White students. White supervisors discussed cultural issues more with racial/ethnic-minority students than with White students.

Supervisors also differed in terms of the cultural issues they discussed and considered relevant to supervision. White supervisors placed more importance on language, race, identity, religion/spirituality, and sexual orientation with their racial/ethnic-minority students than with their White students. In contrast, racial/ethnic-minority supervisors did not consider any one cultural difference more important to discuss than any other.

When both the supervisors' and students' views of the supervisors' multicultural competence were compared (Duan & Roehlke, 2001), they were similar in their perceptions of some aspects of the supervisory relationship such as agreement about goals, experiences of conflict, and appropriate attention to conflict in the relationship. Moreover, it was important to students that supervisors expressed interest in their cultural background. However, they differed in their perceptions of supervisors' multicultural competence. Students perceived themselves to be more sensitive to racial/cultural issues than their supervisors. Supervisors reported making more efforts to address cultural issues than students perceived them to make. Student satisfaction with the working alliance was related to the degree of self-disclosure in the supervisory relationship and the perceived positive attitudes toward each other.

In a retrospective study, Weiling and Marshal (1999) examined 50 family therapists' perspectives of their cross-racial supervisory relationships. These former students rated their cross-racial supervision experiences higher when supervised by someone from the same background and viewed these supervisors as having more multicultural competence. Seventy-nine percent of this group thought that being supervised by someone from a different background would be advantageous because it would lead to a greater sense of awareness and sensitivity to diversity issues.

In these studies, racial/ethnic-minority supervisors were perceived by their students to have more multicultural competence than White supervisors. Supervisors of colour may be perceived by students to have a greater awareness of racial and ethnic issues and may be able to offer ways to facilitate the student's development. White supervisors report that they perceive themselves to be less culturally competent and that they discuss cultural issues less with their students than racial/ethnic-minority supervisors. White supervisors may be less likely to bring up racial and ethnic issues due to a lack of training or their own perceptions of incompetence. The findings suggest that cross-racial supervisory relationships could serve as avenues to foster students' perceptions of supervisor competence.

Burkard et al. (2006) investigated the effect on the supervisory relationship when students perceived supervisors as either responsive or unresponsive to cultural issues. When supervisors were willing to acknowledge the existence of, show interest in, and be sensitive to cultural differences that existed for the students and the clients, all students reported a positive relationship with their supervisor prior to the event and increased satisfaction after the event.

Racial/ethnic-minority students reported more of a personal sense of validation whereas White students experienced less fear about discussing racial/cultural issues in supervision and therapy. Both groups reported improved effects for clients. According to Burkard et al. (2006), when supervisors reacted in a culturally unresponsive way to an event, such as deliberately dismissing the significance of culture or ignoring cultural issues, it negatively affected the students and the working alliance. Prior to the unresponsive event, the racial/ethnic-minority students reported having a weaker working alliance with their supervisor than White students because they perceived their supervisors as less trustworthy. The unresponsive events yielded negative reactions from both groups, but more so from the racial/ethnic-minority students who had less trust in their supervisors, disclosed less during supervision, and hid negative emotions about the event from the supervisor. After the culturally unresponsive event, White students were left with a feeling that their experience was mediocre and that they could have gotten more out of it, whereas racial/ethnic-minority students expressed complete dissatisfaction and had more concerns about the effect it had on clients.

In a cross-ethnic study, Arkin (1999) examined the dynamics between Israeli supervisors and Ethiopian students. The supervisors found that students' growth and skill development were hampered by cultural differences including the need to provide concrete assistance to students, the lack of ability of students to navigate technology, and the students' unconditional acceptance of authority. When cultural differences in the dyadic relationship were minimized by the supervisor, cultural conflict arose. Ethiopian culture does not condone disclosure of emotions, so the students had difficulty openly discussing and analyzing clients' problems. Students also got caught between meeting the needs of the culture of their clients and following the authority of the supervisor. An emphasis on cultural differences led to patronizing and overprotective behaviour by the supervisors, who overlooked students' incomplete assignments and downplayed negative feedback.

These supervisors attributed all differences in the relationship to students' cultural background and tended to perceive the students as "experts" on their cultures. Thus, an under- or overemphasis on cultural differences impeded the ability of the supervisor and student to function effectively in the relationship.

In another cross-racial study based in Israel, Haj-Yahia and Roer-Strier (1999) investigated the experiences of Arab students in social work teamed with Jewish supervisors. Overall, the students were more aware of cultural differences than their supervisors. Only 15% of the supervisors felt that difficulties encountered in their relationships with diverse students were due to their own limitations in cultural competence. In comparison, all the Arab students could recall at least one cultural misunderstanding that had caused a problem for them or a fellow Arab student. Difficulties included different expectations about the supervision process (e.g., students expecting direct, explicit guidance), supervisor's lack of familiarity with the Arab students' cultural norms and values, differences in perception regarding clients' problems, and different styles of communication (e.g., students reluctant to state their opinions to supervisors). The most frequent issues raised by students revolved around cultural differences. In contrast, supervisors placed little importance on cultural differences and expressed little interest in learning more about Arab culture.

The above studies examined relationship dynamics that occur when there are varying degrees of multicultural competence displayed by the supervisor. When cultural differences are focused on too much or too little, the supervisory relationship can suffer. The finding that racial/ethnic-minority students reported more culturally unresponsive events and more emotional distress as a result of the events than White students suggests that they may be more sensitive to cultural issues. Hence, supervisors who notice their students becoming noticeably withdrawn in supervision may need to consider whether they made an error in responding to a cultural issue.

In order for supervisors to be culturally competent, they must be aware of their own values, prejudices, and biases, as well as differences between them and their students. Differences can include values, styles of communication, cognitive orientation, and emotional reaction. They must be willing and open to learning about their students' culture and how differences in cultural variables such as expectations, criticism, passivity, and initiative affect the supervisory relationship. When students perceived supervisors to be more culturally competent, they reported greater satisfaction with the supervisory relationship, more trust and willingness to self-disclose, and greater cultural sensitivity to the needs of the client.

Effect of Racial Identity on Working Alliance and Multicultural Competence

Ladany et al. (1997) investigated how students' perceptions of racial identity related to their supervisory working alliance and their multicultural competence. Within the supervision literature, a strong working alliance is associated with

greater satisfaction with supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004; Ladany, Ellis, & Friedlander, 1999), and consists of three components: (a) a bond or relationship, (b) agreement on goals, and (c) agreement on tasks (Bordin, 1994).

Racial identity refers to how people think and feel about their race and people of other races (Ladany et al., 1997). It distinguishes between their racial category (e.g., White, Black) and how they think and feel about their race. Racial identity models (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1989; Helms, 1990) identify a number of stages related to how one feels about one's own race and people of other races. For example, a person of colour can be in various stages of racial identity, one of which is a stage of conformity (e.g., idealization and identification with White people and White culture) or another of which is dissonance (e.g., some awareness of racism but conflicted in identification with White people and White culture).

Ladany et al. (1997) had graduate students rate themselves and their supervisors as possessing either a high or low racial identity according to Helms' (1990) model. Low racial identity represents a person at a stage of conformity or dissonance. A White person with low racial identity could be insensitive about culture, be apathetic about racism, or hold stereotypical views toward people of colour. In contrast, people of colour with a high racial identity reported identification with other people of colour and an awareness and acceptance of their racial self. White people with high racial identity, in turn, had a higher awareness of racism and racial differences and held a positive acceptance of people of colour and what it means to be White without being defensive.

The students' perception of similarity of racial identity between themselves and their supervisor was significantly related to a positive supervisory working alliance and their feelings of multicultural competence. When supervisors were rated as having a high racial identity, students reported greater agreement with supervision goals and tasks and felt a greater emotional bond with their supervisor. This held true regardless of the students' level of racial identity. The weakest working alliance occurred when students perceived their supervisors as having low racial identity. A weakness of this study is that it was based exclusively on supervisee perceptions.

In a similar study, Bhat and Davis (2007) examined the impact of racial identity on working alliances from the perspective of counselling supervisors. The working alliance was strongest when the supervisor had a high racial identity. Again, this remained consistent regardless of the racial identity of the student. Furthermore, there was no difference in the perceived quality of the working alliance between racially different and racially similar dyads.

In both of these studies, when the supervisor and student have a high racial identity, the common belief systems may lead to a stronger working alliance. When the supervisor is rated high on racial awareness and the student is rated low, it may be that the supervisor overlooks the level of racial awareness of the student in order to facilitate a working alliance. If the supervisor has a low racial identity, a power differential may come into play, as the supervisor would have more control over what is discussed in supervision. For example, a student may want to bring up racial issues in supervision, only to have the supervisor dismiss or downplay

the issue. As a result, the student may develop distrust in the competence of the supervisor and the alliance is weakened. It would seem, then, that the racial and ethnic combination of the supervisory dyad did not significantly predict the supervisory alliance; rather, it was the racial identity of the supervisors, regardless of race or ethnicity, that improved the supervisory relationship and increased student perceptions of multicultural competence.

level of acculturation within the supervisory relationship

Many students who are part of a racial/ethnic minority are also international students who bring additional life experience into the supervisory relationships. One potential barrier to an effective and satisfying supervisory relationship is the degree of student acculturation. International students' degree of acculturation is determined by the degree to which they accept the host culture, use English, and feel accepted by the host culture (Sodowsky & Plake, 1992).

Recently, the dynamic of acculturation in cross-racial supervision has been primarily investigated by Nilsson and colleagues in the U.S. (Nilsson & Anderson, 2004; Nilsson & Dodds, 2006; Nilsson & Duan, 2007). Nilsson and Anderson examined the relationship between acculturation of international students, counselling self-efficacy, role ambiguity, and working alliance. The lower the level of acculturation reported by students, the poorer their perceptions of the supervisory working alliance and their counselling self-efficacy. Lower acculturation was also associated with more role ambiguity and frequent discussions of cultural issues in supervision.

A positive working alliance, however, was more important than the discussion of cultural issues in supervision in reducing role ambiguity for students. Less acceptance by the host culture was also associated with more role ambiguity. Furthermore, there tended to be more discussion of cultural issues in supervision with students who used less English and were further along in their training.

The findings suggest that supervisors typically focus on basic skills at the beginning of supervision and consider diversity issues later on. A strong working alliance may be important for supervisors to establish with their students in order for the students to have a strong foundation from which to develop self-efficacy in their counselling, understand the supervision process, examine culture-related concerns, and bring up issues. Cultural barriers may cause students to experience confusion regarding their role as students and lead to weaker working alliances.

Nilsson and Dodds (2006) investigated acculturation relative to the degree to which cultural issues were discussed in supervision and the supervisor's race or ethnicity. The level of acculturation, not time spent in the U.S., predicted more discussion of cultural issues in supervision. Students who were less acculturated and came from more dissimilar cultures spent more time discussing cultural issues in supervision, felt more culturally competent than their supervisors, and reported less satisfaction with supervision. The finding that less acculturated students reported more multicultural discussion and more perceived cultural competence

than their supervisors may be due to their desire to engage in more cultural discussion and a tendency to see their supervisors as less competent when this does not occur. When supervisors have students who have a low level of acculturation or come from regions that are more dissimilar to the host culture, they may be more apt to discuss cultural issues because cultural and language differences are more apparent.

In a related study, Nilsson and Duan (2007) explored how assimilation into the host culture impacted racial/ethnic-minority students' supervisory relationships with White supervisors. Although the students were American citizens, the more students experienced role ambiguity in supervision, the more they perceived prejudice to occur. Experiences of prejudice increased students' uncertainty in how to relate to their White supervisors. When students felt more certain about supervisor expectations, they experienced higher counselling self-efficacy with clients. However, feeling more competent with clients did not necessarily give racial/ethnic-minority students the ability to better navigate their roles as student and colleague with White supervisors.

Killian (2001) also found that students from a non-Western cultural background expressed discomfort in challenging their supervisors' authority. All the students reported that helping professionals in their culture were viewed as authority figures and treated with deference. In particular, students from Asian countries felt awkward approaching supervisors to voice their needs or concerns, question authority, and get more structure. Students reported instances when supervisors made faulty generalizations about their culture. Moreover, due to cultural differences, they did not feel accepted by their peers or supervisors. Students felt that the relationship was stronger when supervisors expressed interest in their culture, fostered a safe atmosphere, or emphasized commonalities.

Daniels et al. (1999) recognized communication as a central issue when there are differences in students' level of acculturation. In a case study of an Asian American school counsellor trainee and a European American supervisor, interactions of the dyad were observed during supervision meetings. The student placed more emphasis on establishing trust and building rapport with clients, whereas the supervisor thought it was taking too long. The supervisor expected the student to be more assertive in supervision meetings. The student also placed a large amount of emphasis on the supervisor as an authority figure. Due to the student's low level of acculturation, the players in the relationship had differences in interpersonal style, counselling goals, and perceptions of the roles of supervisor and student. Daniels et al. highlighted the need to assess the role of the supervisors' and students' cultural background when differences of personality lead to conflict in the working relationship. This case study provides an in-depth look at the cultural differences that can emerge between the supervisor and student.

International students are a heterogeneous group in terms of their national and cultural backgrounds (Arthur, 2008). In the above studies, the level of discomfort experienced by international students tends to be linked to the degree of dissimilarity between the students' native culture and the host culture and how well they

bridge the differences. For example, students from English-speaking countries had an easier time adjusting to the U.S. culture compared to students from continents such as Asia, Africa, and South America (Nilsson & Dodds, 2006). Nevertheless, all international students experienced some degree of cultural difference between their native culture and the U.S. culture.

In all, acculturation was found to be a significant factor in how students felt about their counselling abilities and the supervisory relationship. Students who had a higher degree of acculturation were more certain of their counselling self-efficacy and of their role as student. Moreover, they reported a stronger working alliance with their supervisor. Students who were less acculturated, especially those who used less English, reported more discussion of cultural issues with their supervisors. They had difficulties challenging supervisors or expressing their opinions. Viewing the supervisor as an authority figure seems to be common in less Westernized cultures, but there appear to be unique cultural variables that affect supervision. However, a positive working alliance between supervisor and student may be more important to the supervisory relationship than acculturation.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Within the reviewed research, some limitations and implications warrant discussion. First, a large amount of the research on cross-racial supervision utilized mailed surveys. Surveys are an inexpensive and convenient way to collect a large amount of data in a short amount of time. However, many of the research findings were limited because of low response rates (Hird et al., 2004; Nilsson, 2007; Nilsson & Anderson, 2004; Nilsson & Dodds, 2006; Nilsson & Duan, 2007; Pope-Davis et al., 2003; Weiling & Marshal, 1999).

Low response rates bring into question the motivation and views of the participants. Students or supervisors who declined to respond to the surveys may have provided much different views than those who chose to participate. In turn, the respondents may have been more likely to participate because they were interested in multicultural research or were more open to reflecting on the supervision process. Hence, it would be important to include within studies the reasons participants have for engaging or not engaging in this type of research in order to better account for the findings.

Another problem with the use of surveys is the possibility that participants will respond in a socially desirable manner. The desire to present oneself in a positive light, for example, may have led supervisors to overreport their multicultural competence. Hird et al. (2004), for example, found a mismatch in supervisor and student perceptions of the supervisors' competence. Of all the studies reviewed, only Pope-Davis et al. (2003) included a social-desirability measure in their method; however, they did not report any significant findings of overreporting of supervisors' self ratings of multicultural supervision competence.

In addition, many studies only collected the perspectives of either the supervisor or the student (Bhat & Davis, 2007; Burkard et al., 2006; Ladany et al., 1997;

Nilsson, 2007; Nilsson & Anderson, 2004; Nilsson & Duan, 2007). Perspectives from both supervisor and student would have allowed for the investigation of interaction effects and would have made the findings more valid.

Sample size was another limitation of some of the reviewed studies. A low number of racial/ethnic-minority supervisors and students restricted data analysis and limited the ability of the researchers to generalize their findings (Bhat & Davis, 2007; Duan & Roehlke, 2001; Hird et al., 2004; Nilsson, 2007; Nilsson & Anderson, 2004; Nilsson & Duan, 2007; Pope-Davis et al., 2003). Although there were some findings that suggested within-group differences, racial/ethnic-minority participants were collapsed into one category in these studies (Arkin, 1999; Daniels et al., 1999; Haj-Yahia & Roer-Strier, 1999). Without analysis of within-group differences, it was not possible for the researchers to investigate possible differences with respect to ethnic or racial backgrounds.

In many studies, the assessment tools that were used to measure the dependent variables relevant to cross-racial supervision were often developed ad hoc without any knowledge of their psychometric properties. A lack of test development calls into question the reliability and validity of the measures (e.g., Pope-Davis et al., 2003; Weiling & Marshal, 1999). Hence, future researchers should more carefully construct and field test their surveys in order to eliminate ambiguous or biased items and to improve the format and ease of understanding. Moreover, utilizing surveys in a pilot study in advance of the research investigation can allow the researcher to examine the reliability and validity of the items.

The information provided by surveys, although useful and important, is general in nature. They identify cultural issues, but they do not provide specific and concrete examples of the supervisory dynamics involved in competent cross-racial supervision. Interviews are more time-consuming and expensive, but because of their flexibility and adaptability as well as their ability to facilitate more free and in-depth responses, they may provide more qualitative information about the issues that arise in cross-racial supervision dyads. In particular, it would be useful to know the ways in which supervisors can achieve successful outcomes in cross-racial supervision and avoid problems cited in the literature.

One dimension not discussed was the impact that individual personalities have on the supervisory relationship. This may lead to the conceptualization of race and ethnicity as multidimensional where not all individuals from one racial group are considered the same. The interaction between personality and racial identity may be a more powerful dynamic than race alone.

CONCLUSION

When supervisors react to cultural issues in a responsive manner, a more positive working alliance develops and the supervisory relationship can be strengthened. In particular, racial/ethnic-minority students, who may be initially hesitant to discuss cultural issues, may feel validated when the supervisor is open and supportive. When supervisors are unresponsive, the working alliance and satisfaction

with supervision can be negatively impacted, especially for racial/ethnic-minority students who see the supervisors' actions as a challenge to their racial identity.

Although racial/ethnic-minority supervisors are generally perceived as more competent, multicultural competence also fosters a strong working alliance. In addition, high racial identity in supervisors appears to be associated with a strong working alliance in both racially similar and dissimilar supervisory dyads. Supervisors who are open and understanding of other cultures seem to be able to positively affect their students' satisfaction with the supervision experience and be viewed by students as more culturally competent.

According to the reviewed research, racial/ethnic-minority supervisors are typically seen as more competent than White supervisors by both racial/ethnic-minority students and White students (e.g., Bhat & Davis, 2007; Ladany et al., 1997). Supervisors of colour may serve as multicultural models for their students; therefore, students believe they are getting more benefit out of their supervision experience. Indeed, racial/ethnic supervisors do report discussing multicultural issues more with their supervisees than do White supervisors. If they are more understanding of the importance of racial and cultural issues in both supervision and counselling, they may facilitate the supervisee's development in subtle ways. Working across cultures can be challenging for everyone regardless of race. It may be the case that some supervisors are less likely to bring up racial issues due to their own biases or perhaps due to a lack of training and insight. It may be interesting to examine the effect that multicultural training has on the racial identity of supervisors as well as the impact it has on their students.

The findings within the literature suggest that the greater the acculturation of students, the greater their satisfaction with cross-racial supervision. This does not imply that students who are more acculturated have a lower racial identity. A student of a different race can have a high racial identity but still become more accepting of another culture. Adapting to U.S. (and Canadian) culture is by and large easier for students from more Westernized countries and for those who speak better English. The less Westernized international students are (i.e., those from Asia, Africa, and South/Central America), the more cultural barriers they face.

Since less Westernized students have the most difficulty attaining a positive supervisory relationship, supervisors are challenged to gain more cultural knowledge to consider how these students can be supported. As a general rule, the greater the cultural gap between home and host countries, the greater the adjustment issues faced by international students (Pedersen, 1991).

Examining international students' perceptions of cultural differences using qualitative methods (e.g., the construction and discussion of cultural genograms), for example, may elicit an understanding of what they see as important differences during interactions with their supervisors. Supervisors would then have a basis to begin a conversation.

The key to creating a strong supervisory relationship is an acknowledgement of cultural differences. Even if supervisors are limited in their cultural understanding, it seems that an attempt to increase understanding is more important than the

degree of competence they already possess. It may be of benefit to supervisors to enhance their racial awareness as well as assess their own and their students' racial identity to understand the racial identity interaction. Understanding the type of supervisory relationship would help supervisors anticipate areas of conflict and strengthen the supervisory working alliance. One way to accomplish this is for supervisors to receive supervision or consult with a colleague identified as more competent in racial/ethnic diversity. It is important that all supervisors be aware of and intentional about their own racial identity and how their actions are perceived by students they supervise. Furthermore, it is important that supervisors continue to increase their multicultural competence with racially/ethnically-diverse individuals for both counselling and supervisory purposes.

Cultural discussions were more frequent if students perceived their supervisors in a more positive light. Thus, although there is little empirical research in this area, preliminary findings would suggest that the working alliance has an impact on how safe students feel about bringing up cultural topics for discussion in supervision. It may be that when students feel more certain about supervisory expectations, they feel more positive about the dyadic relationship and their self-efficacy about working with clients.

International students, in particular, may need more assistance in clarifying role ambiguity and role conflict. They may feel more vulnerable to issues of perceived prejudice due to issues of power or uncertainty regarding the supervisors' expectations. The role that power plays in the supervisory relationship was something indirectly discussed in some of the articles reviewed and may be more of an issue than previously recognized. This may hold especially true for international students and students who are both female and racially/ethnically diverse.

Not only should supervisors work at developing their multicultural competence, they should also support students, especially those from less Westernized countries, to better understand their level of acculturation and how to address racial and ethnic differences within a Westernized context. Supervisors can help by explicitly informing students about expectations and discussing the roles that students play in the supervisory relationship. By providing clear guidelines, the supervisor may help to reduce the possible role ambiguity for racially or ethnically diverse students. In turn, supervisors should be aware and willing to acknowledge their students' perceptions.

Although research on cross-racial supervision has increased in recent years, the available research is still relatively small. In the last 10 years, only 13 studies were found that investigated racial and ethnic issues in cross-racial supervision. Albeit sparse, the literature suggests that although racial diversity plays a role in supervision, other supervisor attributes are also of importance to the relationship. An openness to discussing cultural or ethnic differences may be the topmost quality a student desires in their supervisor, despite the general indication that supervisors fall behind their students in multicultural awareness and knowledge. In cross-racial dyads, racial identity may be more important than ethnicity or race. Furthermore, power and privilege is an important factor in multiculturalism.

Students with low levels of acculturation may give the supervisor more power in the relationship due to the students' perception of the role the supervisor should play. In turn, students who have more cultural competence than their supervisor may be frustrated by the supervisor's behaviour. Despite efforts to identify and understand the salient issues involved in cross-racial supervision, there are still many unanswered questions about the role that racial and ethnic variables have on the supervisory relationship.

References

Arkin, N. (1999). Culturally sensitive student supervision: Difficulties and challenges. *Clinical Supervisor, 18*(2)*,* 1–16.

Arthur, N. (2008). Counseling international students. In P. Pedersen, J. G. Draguns, W. J. Lonner, & J. E. Trimble (Eds.), *Counseling across cultures* (6th ed., pp. 275–290). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Arthur, N., & Collins, S. (2005). Introduction to culture-infused counselling. In N. Arthur & S. Collins (Eds.), *Culture-infused counselling: Celebrating the Canadian mosaic* (pp. 3–40). Calgary, AB: Counselling Concepts.

Atkinson, D. R., Morten, G., & Sue, D. W. (1989). A minority identity development model. In D. R. Atkinson, G. Morten, & D. W. Sue (Eds.), *Counseling American minorities* (3rd ed., pp. 35–52). Dubuque, IA: Brown.

Bernard, J. M., & Goodyear, G. K. (2004). *Fundamentals of clinical supervision* (3rd ed.). New York: Pearson Education.

Bhat, C. S., & Davis, T. E. (2007). Counseling supervisors' assessment of race, racial identity, and working alliance in supervisory dyads. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 35,* 80–91.

Bordin, E. S. (1994). Theory and research in the therapeutic working alliance: New direction. In A. O. Horvath & L. S. Greenberg (Eds.), *The working alliance: Theory, research and practice* (pp. 13–37). New York: Wiley.

Burkard, A. W., Johnson, A. J., Madson, M. B., Pruitt, N. T., Contreras-Tadych, C. A., Kozlowski, J. M., et al. (2006). Supervisor cultural responsiveness and unresponsiveness in cross-cultural supervision. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 53,* 288–301.

Canadian Bureau for International Education. (2002). *The national report of international students in Canada, 2000/01*. Ottawa, ON: Author.

Chang, C. Y., Hayes, D. G., & Shoffner, M. F. (2003). Cross-racial supervision: A developmental approach for White supervisors working with students of color. *Clinical Supervisor, 22*(2)*,* 121–138.

Constantine, M. G. (1997). Facilitating multicultural competency in counseling supervision. In D. B. Pope-Davis & H. L. K. Coleman (Eds.), *Multicultural counseling competencies: Assessment, education and training, and supervision* (pp. 310–324). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Constantine, M. G. (2003). Multicultural competence in supervision: Issues, processes, and outcomes. In D. B. Pope-Davis, H. L. K. Coleman, W. M. Lui, & R. L. Toporek (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural competencies in counseling and psychology* (pp. 383–391). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

D'Andrea, M., & Daniels, J. (1997). Multicultural counseling supervision: Central issues, theoretical considerations, and practical strategies. In D. B. Pope-Davis & H. L. K. Coleman (Eds.), *Multicultural counseling competencies: Assessment, education and training, and supervision* (pp. 290–309). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Daniels, J., D'Andrea, M., & Kyung Kim, B. S. (1999). Assessing the barriers and challenges of cross-cultural supervision: A case study. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 38,* 191–204.

Duan, C., & Roehlke, H. (2001). A descriptive "snapshot" of cross-racial supervision in university counseling center internship. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 29,* 131–146.

Dressel, J. L., Consoli, A. J., Kim, B. S. K., & Atkinson, D. R. (2007). Successful and unsuccessful multicultural supervisory behaviors: A Delphi poll. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 35,* 51–64.

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.

Fong, M. L., & Lease, S. H. (1997). Cross-cultural supervision: Issues for the White supervisor. In D. B. Pope-Davis & H. L. K. Coleman (Eds.), *Multicultural counseling competencies: Assessment, education and training, and supervision* (pp. 387–405). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Fukuyama, M. A. (1994). Critical incidents in multicultural counseling supervision: A phenomenological approach to supervision research. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 34,* 142–151.

Haj-Yahia, M. M., & Roer-Strier, D. (1999). On the encounter between Jewish supervisors and Arab supervisees in Israel. *Clinical Supervisor, 18*(2), 17–37.

Helms, J. E. (1990). *Black and White racial identity: Theory, research, and practice.* Westport, CT: Greenwood.

Hird, J. S., Tao, K. W., & Gloria, A. M. (2004). Examining supervisors' multicultural competence in racially similar and different supervision dyads. *Clinical Supervisor, 23*(2), 107–122.

Killian, K. D. (2001). Differences making a difference: Cross-cultural interactions in supervisory relationships. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy, 12,* 61–103.

Ladany, N., Brittan-Powell, C. S., & Pannu, R. K. (1997). The influence of supervisory racial identity interaction and racial matching on the supervisory working alliance and student multicultural competence. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 36*, 284–305.

Ladany, N., Ellis, M. V., & Friedlander, M. L. (1999). The supervisory working alliance, trainee self-efficacy, and satisfaction. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 77,* 447–455.

Leong, F. T. L. (1994). Emergence of the cultural dimension: The roles and impact of culture on counseling supervision. *Counseling Education and Supervision, 34,* 114–116.

Leong, F. T. L., & Wagner, N. S. (1994). Cross-cultural counseling supervision: What do we know? What do we need to know? *Counselor Education and Supervision, 34,* 117–131.

National Science Foundation. (2001). *Graduate students and postdoctorates in science and engineering: Fall 1999* (NSF 01-315). Arlington, VA: Author.

Nilsson, J. E. (2007). International students in supervision: Course self-efficacy, stress, and cultural discussion in supervision. *Clinical Supervisor, 26*(1/2), 35–47.

Nilsson, J. E., & Anderson, M. Z. (2004). Supervising international students: The role of acculturation, role ambiguity, and multicultural discussions. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 35,* 306–312.

Nilsson, J. E., & Dodds, A. K. (2006). A pilot phase in the development of the International Student Supervision scale. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 34,* 50–62.

Nilsson, J. E., & Duan, C. (2007). Experiences of prejudice, role difficulties, and counseling self-efficacy among U.S. racial and ethnic minority students working with White supervisors. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 35,* 219–229.

Pate, W. E. (2001, April). *Analyses of data from graduate study in psychology: 1999–2000*. Retrieved April 16, 2009, from <http://research.apa.org/grad00contents.html#demfac>.

Pedersen, P. B. (1990). The multicultural perspective as a fourth force in counseling. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 12,* 93–95.

Pedersen, P. B. (1991). Counseling international students. *The Counseling Psychologist, 19,* 10-58.

Pope-Davis, D. B., Toporek, R. L., & Ortega-Villalobos, L. (2003). Assessing supervisors' and students' perceptions of multicultural competence in supervision using the Multicultural Supervision Inventory. In D. B. Pope-Davis, H. L. K. Coleman, W. M. Lui, & R. L. Toporek (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural competencies in counseling and psychology* (pp. 211–224). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sodowsky, G. R., & Plake, B. S. (1992). A study of acculturation differences among international people and suggestions for sensitivity to within-group differences. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 71,* 53–59.

Toporek, R. L., Ortega-Villalobos, L., & Pope-Davis, D. B. (2004). Critical incidents in multicultural supervision: Exploring students' and supervisors' experiences. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 32,* 66–83.

Weiling, E., & Marshal, J. P. (1999). Cross-cultural supervision in marriage and family therapy. *Contemporary Family Therapy, 2,* 317–329.

About the Authors

Meadow Schroeder is a doctoral candidate in School & Applied Child Psychology at the University of Calgary.

Jac J. W. Andrews is a professor in the Division of Applied Psychology at the University of Calgary. He is also a Registered Psychologist in the Province of Alberta. His interest areas include school psychology, special education, childhood psychopathology, psycho-educational assessment, and approaches to teaching and learning.

Yvonne L. Hindes is a doctoral candidate in School & Applied Child Psychology at the University of Calgary and a provisional psychologist.

Address correspondence to Jac J. W. Andrews, Division of Applied Psychology, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive N.W., Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2N 1N4, e-mail <jandrews@ucalgary.ca>.