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Cross-Cultural Supervision in Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy: A Case Study

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This article provides a thorough description of a representative case of online cross-cultural supervision by interviewing all parties involved in the supervision (the supervisor, the supervisee, and the translator). This study provides evidence about the benefits and challenges of online cross-cultural supervision and the feasibility of such a training modality. A cross-cultural supervision competence model and culturally adapted treatment stage model are proposed, and the article provides suggestions for future supervisors, supervisees, and translators.

SUPERVISION is a principal foundation of clinical practice (Starr, Ciclitira, Marzano, Brunswick, & Costa, 2013). Although supervision has been historically a face-to-face interpersonal process, modern communication technologies mean that supervision is no longer restricted by geography, but can be provided to a variety of therapists in rural, remote, or underserved areas (Rousmaniere, Abbass, Frederickson, Henning, & Taubner, 2014). Long-distance online supervision also enables cross-cultural supervision, wherein the supervisor and the supervisee live in different countries, are of different cultural backgrounds, and may even speak different languages. During the past two decades, there has been a growing emphasis on cultural and international contexts for supervision (Forrest, 2010; Panos, 2005), as the practice of cross-cultural supervision may generate significant and unique considerations, as opposed to traditional non-cross-cultural supervision. In the sections that follow we present some of the major considerations that have been discussed in the literature.

Major Concerns Associated With Cross-cultural Training Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity

Previous work has focused on both the content and format of cross-cultural supervision. Content considerations

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include the awareness of cultural differences in the clients who are seen, the discussion of culture-related topics, and the potential influence of cultural differences on the process and outcome of supervision itself (Falender, Burnes, & Ellis, 2013; Falender, Shafranske, & Falicov, 2014). Some studies have reported outcome differences between culturally sensitive and culturally nonsensitive supervision, including enhanced supervisory working alliance when supervision included explicit discussion of culture variables (Gatmon, Jackson, Koshkarian, & Martos-Perry, 2001). Culturally responsive supervision has also been associated with supervisees who feel supported to explore cultural issues, which positively affected the supervisee, the supervision relationship, and client outcomes (Burkard et al., 2006). In contrast, without cultural sensitivity, cultural and language differences may contribute to supervisees' increased self-doubt, stress, and less healing involvement (Taubner, Henning, Schwierting, & Kächele, 2013). Some studies suggest that culture awareness is sometimes not as strong as it should be. There has been a reported low rate of actual discussion of cultural variables in supervision, and a lack of initiation of these topics by supervisors (Gatmon et al., 2001). Moreover, supervisors sometimes did not view discussion of cultural differences as influential in supervision, in contrast to their supervisees (Toporek, Ortega-Villalobos, & Pope-Davis, 2004).

The Use of Technology in Cross-Cultural Training

Much of the discussion of cross-cultural supervision has focused on the use of computer-based techniques (e.g., e-mails, teleconferencing, chat rooms), and whether and how those online communication methods affect the

quality of interactions. These technologies diminished the capacity for subtle nonverbal communication, as even in the best case, the supervisor can only see the supervisees' faces. This limitation may pose challenges to understand the issues being discussed, which may in turn negatively impact the supervisory working alliance (Olson, Russell, & White, 2002; Vaccaro & Lambie, 2007). Researchers have also pointed out that the limitations of online chatting may even exacerbate cultural misunderstandings between supervisors and supervisees (Panos, Panos, Cox, Roby, & Matheson, 2002; Powell & Migdole, 2012), especially when it is text-based and conducted in an asynchronous (i.e., not live) format. Others have also suggested that there might be a reduced effectiveness in the online supervision format as opposed to the traditional face-to-face format. For example, Gainor and Constantine (2002) found out that although trainees' multicultural case conceptualization ability increased with both in-person and Web-based peer group supervision formats, those who participated in in-person peer group multicultural supervision demonstrated greater multicultural case conceptualization ability than did trainees who participated in Web-based peer group multicultural supervision. Studies have shown that trainees generally preferred in-person supervision to videoconference supervision (e.g., Coker, Jones, Staples, & Harbach, 2002).

Other Considerations in Cross-Cultural Training

Distance supervision has been associated with other concerns. For example, technical issues can lead to dropped calls or poor Internet connectivity, which are outside the control of users and may result in a reduced amount and quality of communication (Rousmaniere et al., 2014). There may also be ethical considerations associated with online cross-cultural supervision. For instance, videoconference supervision usually involves the transmission of patient-protected health information through a central server, which may not be "secure" (Rousmaniere et al., 2014). Moreover, there may be issues related to informed consent, especially when the clients, supervisees, or supervisors do not fully understand the technologies being employed. Cross-cultural supervision may also limit the supervisors' control over emergencies or crises. Supervisors may be unable to provide sufficient help to trainees because of timely access to information, or unfamiliarity with local laws and regulations in the location where the client is being seen (Abbass et al., 2011; Panos et al., 2002). Liability concerns associated with distance supervision are largely unknown at present.

Yet another issue that may either facilitate or inhibit cross-cultural training is related to funding. In the current case, the supervisor worked in a salaried position, and had an inherent interest in cross-cultural training. Thus, while

the trainee insisted on providing an honorarium in the third year of the training program, this was the only funding, and the vast majority of the supervision was provided pro bono. Further, the face-to-face meetings that did take place all occurred while the supervisor was in China for another purpose, and so the trainee was not required to fund these interactions. Supervisors who work in settings where funding is required (e.g., private practice settings) would be less able to provide such intensive and protracted training. We do note that the translator was provided with an honoraria of approximately \$20 USD for each translation session, in recognition of her important contributions to the training process.

Given the many uncertainties about online cross-cultural supervision, it is crucial to continue to examine its benefits and challenges, and to further explore ways to make the best out of it. To our knowledge, there is yet no formally published case study that has discussed the objective process and outcome of an online cross-cultural supervision, or explored and compared the evaluations of such supervision from the perspectives of all parties included (the supervisor, the supervisee, and the translator). Furthermore, most of the extant literature about online cross-cultural supervision has emphasized short-term supervision (e.g., within 20 sessions) rather than long-term supervision. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the unique features of long-term supervision to gain a deeper understanding of the implications of such distance cross-cultural supervision. To fill the gap in the current literature, this article describes a specific long-term and distance cross-cultural supervision process, in the context of cognitive-behavioral therapy. Within this discussion we describe the nature of such long-term online cross-cultural supervision, the process of culturally sensitive case conceptualization and discussion, and the factors that were identified as beneficial and problematic by the supervisor, the supervisee, and the translator. We provide suggestions to support future supervisors, supervisees, as well as translators to work more effectively in such type of supervision.

The Supervision Process

Prior to the current supervision, the first author (Mr. Y) was a psychiatrist with 13 years of experience working in a psychiatric hospital in Chong Qing, in the People's Republic of China. At a cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) supervision training held by Columbia University and Academy of Cognitive Therapy in Beijing, China, where the third author (Dr. D) was presenting, Mr. Y spoke with Dr. D and voiced his interest in learning the CBT model under Dr. D's supervision. Dr. D felt him to be "forthright" and eager to learn the skills of CBT. Dr. D himself was interested at the time in encouraging the

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