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### The Experience of Microaggressions within Cross-Racial Videoconferencing Supervision: A Case Study

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The Experience of Microaggressions within Cross-Racial Videoconferencing

Supervision: A Case Study

By

Jamie Hedin

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctorate of Education

In

Counselor Education and Supervision

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

(February 2018)

# CROSS-RACIAL VIDEOCONFERENCING SUPERVISION

The Experience of Microaggressions within Cross-Racial Videoconferencing

Supervision: A Case Study

Jamie Hedin

Date 2/20/18

This dissertation has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's committee.

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Rick Auger, PhD

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# CROSS-RACIAL VIDEOCONFERENCING SUPERVISION

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# CROSS-RACIAL VIDEOCONFERENCING SUPERVISION

## Abstract

Technology has contributed to a smaller, more connected world. The United States has also become increasingly diverse, necessitating a more well-versed counseling profession to serve the needs of diverse clients and communities. One way of augmenting clinical supervision for counselors-in-training is through the use of videoconferencing. Cross-racial dynamics between supervisor and supervisee can present due to the power differential and evaluative capacity of the supervisor. The misuse of this power can result in unintended racial insults from the supervisor, directed at the supervisee. This case study examined the experience of three participants who experienced a racial microaggression in a cross-racial, videoconferencing supervision relationship. Participants were mental health practitioners who self-identified as a racial minority, received videoconferencing with a White supervisor, and experienced a racial microaggression while participating in videoconferencing supervision. Results revealed individual and collective case themes that impacted supervisees emotionally, physically, and behaviorally. In addition, themes indicated the experience of a racial microaggression also impacted the supervisor-supervisee and counselor-client relationship. Specific areas of future research and practice implications are identified, and recommendations for best practice guidelines for cross-racial, videoconferencing supervision are made.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.” (Archbishop Desmond Tutu)

The world has become increasingly smaller as the speed of the technology becomes faster. How people work, connect, live, and play has shifted vastly from previous decades. Technology contributes to the interconnected, always plugged-in reality and is constantly evolving to meet the needs of working faster and smarter. For example, the advent of smart phones brought the ability to send and receive messages any time of day or night, expanding our definition of the traditional workday. As technology evolves, it impacts social structures and the less privileged members of society have less access to technology. This contributes to an increased gap between the privileged and less-privileged members of society. In clinical supervision, there is a hierarchy between supervisor and supervisee, in which the supervisor inherently has more power than the supervisee. The power differential in clinical supervision could be accentuated when technology becomes involved.

The world has also become increasingly globalized and demographics of the population continue to shift. A heterogeneous mix of individuals and families comprise the United States, and the country is rapidly becoming more ethnically and racially diverse. By the year 2020, the United States Census Bureau projects that no single racial or ethnic group will comprise a majority in children under the age of 18 (Colby & Ortman, 2015). Moreover, by 2050 there will be no single racial or ethnic group that constitutes a majority in the United States as a whole. Additional predictions indicate the

Two or More Races population will triple in size by 2060 and the Asian population will increase by 128% by 2060 (Colby & Ortman, 2015).

The demographic shift will lead to an increased need for racially and ethnically diverse counselors entering the counseling field. As the need to serve racially and ethnically diverse clients and the proportion of racially and ethnically diverse counselors increases, multicultural competency in counselor training and supervision becomes an increasingly important ethical imperative. Moreover, it is increasingly vital for counselor training programs to provide effective multiculturally competent supervision and training. One key development that addressed the increasingly diverse needs of clients and counselors was the seminal work of Sue and collaborators, in developing the first framework for Multicultural Counseling Competencies (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). The Multicultural Counseling Competencies (Sue et al., 1992) provide a set of standards meant to be a part of counselor training programs and define aspects of a culturally competent counselor. Since the original work of Sue and colleagues (1992), the Multicultural Counseling Competencies have been expanded to a new iteration titled the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2016). The 2016 Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies have expanded on the original work by adding an emphasis on social justice and advocacy that was not highlighted in the original work. As demographics shift within counseling and supervision, technological advances have also shaped the evolving landscape of counseling and supervision.

### **Technology-Assisted Supervision**

In the past decade, technological innovations for use in clinical supervision have exploded (Renfro-Michael, Rousmaniere, & Spinella, 2016). An array of new technology is being used to enhance the delivery of supervision in all domains of supervision. Also, technology to augment supervision can apply to counselors in all stages of development and in multiple formats of supervision (Renfro-Michel et al., 2016). Technology, such as videoconferencing, is being used for school and rehabilitation counseling and with beginning trainees and seasoned professionals. Additionally, technology is being used in clinical supervision in individual and group formats (Renfro-Michel et al., 2016). Not only is the technological boom impacting counselor training and supervision, but also the research exploring the empirical base of these modalities is rapidly accelerating. One recent review of the literature found 63 publications on Internet-based supervision, 31 of which were original research studies (Renfro-Michael et al., 2016).

As technology evolves and clinical supervision becomes more multidimensional, the computer is being seen as another tool to use in multifaceted counselor training and supervision programs. The use of technology in counseling and supervision has been described with a variety of terminology that specifies the modality and function of the technology. *Cybersupervision* (Coker, Jones, Staples, & Harbach, 2002; Coursol, 2004) and *Telesupervision* (Wood, Miller, & Hargrove, 2005) are examples of varying terminology used to describe the use of technology in counseling and supervision. More recently, as research and publications have specifically focused on the use of technology as a tool for supervision, the term *technology-assisted supervision and training* (TAST)

has been used as an all-encompassing term, and will be used in this study to describe the use of technological tools in the provision of clinical supervision (Rousmaniere, 2014).

The term *videoconferencing supervision* will be used in this study to describe the real-time supervision that occurs through video chat technology, such as Skype. Further, the term *technology-assisted supervision* will be used when describing the literature specific to this practice, as it is the most commonly used term describing this practice.

*Videoconferencing supervision* will be the term used to clearly describe the specific practice within technology-assisted supervision that will be the focus of the current study.

### **Multicultural and Cross-Racial Supervision**

The premise of multicultural counseling stems from the belief that all people are cultural beings who live within social and political systems that contribute to and shape their opportunities, life experience, and well-being (Ratts, 2009). Multiculturalism, as it pertains to clinical supervision, is attentive to power dynamics, empowerment of supervisees, clients, and communities, and entails an intentional, responsive, and effective application of supervision (Baltrinic, O'Hara, & Jencius, 2016).

Multicultural competencies have become integrated within research, theory, and practice in counseling training programs in the past 25 years. The Multicultural Counseling Competencies were developed to provide a framework for integrating multicultural discussions and competencies into counseling theory, practice, and research (Sue et al., 1992). Although the Multicultural Counseling Competencies provide guidelines for work within cross-racial counseling relationships, they have yet to be translated into a framework specific to clinical supervision. Despite the lack of formalized competencies for multicultural supervision, there has been an increasing focus

on multicultural supervision. Research has grown in the past 20 years and provided a broader understanding of training and supervision (Falender, Burns, & Ellis, 2013). Throughout the existing literature many terms have been used to describe the relationship between counselor and supervisor in supervision with racial or cultural mismatch. For the purposes of this study, the term *cross-racial supervision* will be used to describe supervision in which there are racial differences between the supervisee and the supervisor.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Much of the extant literature has explored TAST and cross-racial supervision as separate constructs, therefore providing some guidance for ethical supervision within each of these areas. Research combining the constructs of technology-assisted supervision and cultural competencies is still in its infancy and provides a gap for the current study to explore (Baltrinic et al., 2016). The intersection of TAST and its impact on cross-racial supervision has yet to be studied.

Within the existing literature on technology-assisted and cross-racial supervision, the issue of power is often discussed. Power dynamics between the supervisor and supervisee manifest in supervision, oftentimes because of the evaluative role of the supervisor. The added element of technology, and potentially different levels of comfort with use of technology, as well as the cross-racial dynamics related to cultural identities, could amplify the power differential between supervisee and supervisor (Baltrinic et al., 2016). Supervisors are challenged with providing culturally competent and ethically sound clinical supervision, and the research within this subset of clinical supervision is in its infancy (Baltrinic et al., 2016). Existing models of supervision and multicultural

counseling competencies have been applied to cross-racial, videoconferencing supervision while often lacking an empirical base to support its effectiveness with this subset of clinical supervision. Moreover, much of the research in technology-assisted supervision has failed to address the amplified potential misuse of power when using technological tools for providing and receiving clinical supervision. Guidelines and best practices have yet to be developed for use within cross-racial, videoconferencing supervision. It is hoped the current research will fill a gap in existing literature by (a) informing guidelines and best practices in cross-racial, videoconferencing supervision, and (b) providing direction for future research.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this case study was to examine the role of power and the potential misuse of power, specifically the experience of microaggressions, which manifest within cross-racial videoconferencing supervision. In particular, this study explored the presence of microaggressions and its three forms of microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations (Sue et al., 2007) from the perspective of the supervisee receiving videoconferencing supervision in a cross-racial supervisory relationship. This exploration provided insight into the supervisees' perception and experience of microaggressions and provide additional areas of study for supervisors who provide videoconferencing supervision in a cross-racial supervisory relationship.

### **Research Question**

One broad research question was generated based on a gap identified in a review of the literature on cross-racial, videoconferencing supervision. The grand research question was used to guide the case study research and tailor interview questions with the

participants in this study. The grand research question was: “How do supervisees experience racial microaggressions within cross-racial videoconferencing supervision when the supervisee identifies as a racial minority and the supervisor is a racial majority?”

### **Rationale for Qualitative Research and Case Study Design**

This study used a qualitative research method because of its focus on representing lived experiences of participants through writing and interpretation (Heppner, Wampold, & Kivlighan, 2008). Further, qualitative research uses an emergent design, whereby meaning of the data emerges from interviews with participants and is co-created through interaction between the researcher and participants (Creswell, 2013). Because the research in cross-racial supervision is in its infancy, specific areas in need of quantitative examination are yet to be identified. The significance of using qualitative research methods for this study is to describe supervisees’ experience of microaggression in the supervision relationship with the hope of improving counselor development, client services, and supervision training, as well as providing direction for future research.

Qualitative research also acknowledges multiple realities and emphasizes processes that are generative, constructive, and subjective (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). In other words, there is no ultimate reality that exists, rather reality is co-created as dependent on the lens and worldview of individuals and groups of people actively contribute to the creation of truth. As such, the participants and researcher co-created meaning of the experience of microaggressions within cross-racial, videoconferencing supervision. Further, qualitative research was an appropriate research design for this study because the experience of microaggressions exists from the perspective of the



supervisee who perceives or does not perceive the experience as microaggressive in nature, which could have made it difficult to measure with quantitative methods.

To be more specific about the type of research, a case study design was used in this study. Case study was chosen to explore the real-life experience of microaggressions among supervisees in cross-racial, videoconferencing supervision (Yin, 2013). Yin (2013) recommends that a case study approach be used when *how* or *why* questions are being posed. This inquiry sought to answer the *how* and *why* of the experience of microaggressions within cross-racial, videoconferencing supervision. The grand research question was similarly aligned with *how* and *why* microaggressions occur in this type of clinical supervision. Additionally, case study was used because multiple sources of information are collected, and detailed case description and case themes are reported (Creswell, 2013). This was helpful because it cross-confirmed data gathered and aided in validity of the conclusions drawn from the study.

Although many qualitative approaches could have been selected for this research and fit with the inquiry, case study was selected. Other qualitative approaches considered but not selected for the current research were narrative research and phenomenology. Narrative research was not selected because of the chronological approach to storytelling within the narrative approach (Creswell, 2013). The stories from participants are often circuitous and not linear, and thus an approach that utilized a chronological sequence to telling participants' stories did not fit. Phenomenology could have been a research approach used for this study based on describing the lived experience of microaggressions among supervisees in cross-racial, videoconferencing supervision (Creswell, 2013). A phenomenological approach was not chosen due to the infancy of

research in the topic area and difficulty choosing one specific concept or idea to study as the phenomenon.

### **Researcher Perspective**

Prior to beginning the data collection phase of the study, I will note my background, experiences, worldview, and biases that could impact the study (see Chapter 3). I am a doctoral student as well as program director of a graduate clinical mental health counseling program in the Midwest region of the United States. I identify as a middle class, White, heterosexual, cisgender woman. I was born and raised in a Midwestern state in the United States, and have lived in both California and North Carolina for short periods of time. My professional identity within the counseling discipline is as an alcohol and drug counselor and counselor educator. Through my direct service experience, counseling individuals and families who identified as racial and ethnic minorities, I have continued to pursue personal and professional development and education in multicultural counseling and diversity issues. As I gained awareness of the ways power and privilege manifested within counseling and supervision, I purposefully integrated advocacy and social justice into my personal and professional ethics and pedagogy.

Through experience providing and receiving supervision with the use of technology, I have developed a fair level of comfort using multiple platforms (i.e. Skype, Zoom, GoToMeeting) to provide and receive supervision. Occasionally, I experienced technological and connectivity problems, however, most of the time I was able to problem solve difficulties that arose. Through these experiences, I wanted to know how supervisees would experience technological difficulties, as they would arise.

These experiences implementing videoconferencing supervision led me to question how the power differential between the supervisee and supervisor couple manifest in cross-racial videoconferencing supervision.

With regard to biases, I approached this study with the expectation that supervisees would report experiences of microaggressions and unintentional racism that impacted the relationship with their supervisor. If the experience of microaggression was sufficiently addressed in supervision, it could have contributed to a strengthened relationship in supervision; conversely, if the experience was not addressed, it could have a negative impact on the relationship. Further, I expected that there was going to be a range of emotions expressed by the supervisee in response to the incidents with their supervisors. Some emotions that could have arisen in response to the experience of microaggressions could be anger, frustration, irritation, disappointment, and discouragement. I expected that supervisees were likely to describe some of these feelings associated with the experience of microaggression in supervision. Finally, I expected that the added layer of videoconferencing could have presented an additional barrier for the supervisee to bring up concerns with their experience of microaggression with their supervisor.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

Two complementary theories served as the theoretical framework for this study. This study was informed by critical theory and its previous application to multicultural counseling as well as its vast application in sociology, anthropology, and cultural theory. Because of the complex nature of technology in cross-racial supervision relationships,

critical theory combined with constructivism provided complementing theoretical paradigms for this research.

At the core of critical theory is the belief that thought is situated historically and socially and mediated by power, whereby interconnections of classism, racism, and gender bias contribute to privilege and marginalization within society (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008). Within the scope of this research, critical theory was used as a way of confronting injustice and seeking transformation for cross-racial, technology-mediated supervision by raising consciousness through investigation, examination, and criticism of the status quo. By critically exploring the presence of microaggressions and how they manifested within videoconferencing supervision, my hope was to improve counselor development, supervision training, and client services.

Constructivism as a complementary paradigm helped to frame the data that emerged within the current study. The assertion within constructivism is that the formation of truth resides within relationships and interactions of which human beings are a part (Gergen, 2015). In essence, reality is co-constructed through social interaction and communication with others who are simultaneously constructing their own reality through these social interactions. In contrast to a positivist perspective of absolute truth existing and its ability to be discovered, the constructivist paradigm proposes that reality is co-constructed through interaction between participant and other sources of data, including the researcher (Charmaz, 2006). Constructivist researchers study *how* and *why* participants construct meaning and act in certain ways (Charmaz, 2006) and this study sought to explore the reality created through an interaction between participants, existing research, and the researcher.

### **Summary of Introduction**

In this chapter, technological advances that contribute to connection with others and the shifting racial and ethnic composition of the United States were described. Additionally clinical supervision, which aids in the development of counseling supervisees, was described in relation to providing multiculturally competent supervision. Multiculturally competent supervision is necessary to effectively train and serve a diverse range of students and clients in counseling. Technology and the use of computers to aid in effective clinical supervision was discussed and proposed as another multifaceted tool in the process of supervision. Further, TAST was defined as an all-encompassing term for technology utilization in supervision. Multicultural counseling and its attention to power dynamics within the relationship, and empowerment of clients, supervisees, and the community was described. Cross-racial supervision will be the term used to designate supervisory relationships where there are racial differences between the supervisor and supervisee.

Through a critical theory and constructivist perspective, the gap that emerged in the literature was in the intersection of technology-assisted supervision, and the role of power, race and culture within these supervisory relationships. Specifically, the experience of microaggressions within cross-racial videoconferencing supervision was discovered as a gap to be more fully explored in this study. Videoconferencing supervision and cross-racial supervision have been studied separately in the literature; however, they have yet to be combined to explore certain experiences, namely that of microaggressions, within the clinical supervision relationship.

The purpose of this case study was described as the examination of the experience of microaggressions that manifest within cross-racial, videoconferencing supervision. Specifically, this study will explore the presence of microaggressions and their three forms of microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations (Sue et al., 2007) from the perspective of the supervisee who receives videoconferencing supervision in a cross-racial supervisory relationship. The grand research question was defined as, “How do supervisees experience racial microaggressions within cross-racial videoconferencing supervision when the supervisee identifies as a racial minority and the supervisor is a racial majority?”

Aligned with the purpose of exploring specific forms of microaggressions that exist within cross-racial supervision, a case study research design is appropriate for gaining an in-depth conceptualization of the experience of microaggressions for the supervisee. Case study design is a qualitative approach that will provide a framework for which to study the real-life supervisory experiences of the participants over time (Yin, 2013). Based on these experiences, this research intends to inform guidelines and best practices in cross-racial, videoconference supervision, and provide direction for future research.

The constructivist epistemological position taken for this study involved the notion that knowledge is co-created in relationship with other people. Within constructivism, there is no objective truth, rather subjective truth exists and is dependent upon social relationships (Gergen, 2015). Through the co-creation of knowledge and a qualitative inquiry base, the role of the researcher is to play an integral role in the research process. I brought my previous experience, values, and biases to the research

process, which undoubtedly impacted decisions I made in the research process. I used my understanding of the world to make decisions about what I would research, how I designed the research question, and the way I analyzed the data gathered from participants. Thus, in the previous section, I described my worldview and biases as the researcher in this study.

### **Overview of Remaining Chapters**

The following chapters will provide additional background for this study. Chapter two will more explicitly describe critical theory as a framework and foundation of this research. Moreover, chapter two will provide a review of the literature across clinical supervision, technology-assisted supervision and training, multicultural counseling, cross-racial supervision, and identify the gap that this study seeks to address. Chapter three will consist of a detailed description of the research methods and provide comprehensive definitions of qualitative research, case study design, and constructivist epistemology. Additionally, chapter three will include data collection and analysis procedures, address issues of trustworthiness and credibility, and provide a statement of researcher worldview and biases.

The remaining chapters will provide detailed descriptions of what was learned through data collection and analysis. Categories and themes will be identified and supported by statements from participants. The study will conclude with limitations as well as direction for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The current study was designed to be a descriptive, qualitative inquiry using a critical theory paradigm to explore the experience of racial microaggressions within cross-racial videoconferencing supervision when the supervisee identifies as a racial minority and the supervisor is a racial majority. Critical theory was used as a foundation for this qualitative inquiry and will be described, followed by a critical review of the existing literature. In order to explore the identified area of focus for this study, the research literature in the areas of supervision, models of supervision, technology and clinical supervision, and cross-racial and multicultural supervision will be examined

### **Critical Theory as a Foundation for Research**

"Knowledge emerges only through invention and reinvention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (Freire, 1972).

Critical theory is a philosophical approach to understanding culture that is interested in raising consciousness through dialogue and self-reflection, with the hope of creating action in the interest of emancipation and transformation (Rediger, 1996). More simply, critical research can contribute to liberation through the process of engaging in research that questions the status quo and is unapologetic about non-neutrality in the quest for improving the human condition. Moreover, critical research can contribute to transformation through shedding light on systems of injustice, with the hope of the research being one step toward bringing changes to inequitable systems. Critical theory can also be described as developing, as definitions have evolved since the original



association back to the Frankfurt School Institute for Social Research (Frankfurt School) in Frankfurt, Germany during the early 1920s (Kellner, 1990). First coined in 1937, the original conception of critical theory offered a social theory that combined perspectives drawn from political economy, sociology, cultural theory, philosophy, anthropology, and history (Kellner, 1990). Critical theory is difficult to describe because the definition of critical theory is continually evolving and changing (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008). Further, when theorists describe critical theory, they often avoid specificity in defining critical theory because theorists have slightly different conceptions of what critical theory is (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008). The foundation of critical theory is built upon the idea of critiquing and questioning the social world around us (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Further, critical theory emphasizes empowering human beings to transcend the limitations placed on them by race, class, and gender (Fay, 1987).

There are a number of basic assumptions of critical theory that helped provide a foundation for this study. One assumption is the notion that thought is historically and socially established and fundamentally mediated by power (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008). In essence, ideas and notions that exist are situated in time and place and are impacted and influenced by existing social structures and power. Another basic assumption of critical theory is that within all societies certain groups of people are privileged and some are oppressed (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008). Many forms of oppression exist and it is important to examine the interconnection of racism, classism, gender bias, and other forms of oppression (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008). This study examined oppression as it relates to the experience of unintentional racism and microaggressions, as well as manifestations of other forms of oppression within the experience of supervisees.

Based on the foundation of these basic assumptions, critical research is therefore concerned with confronting injustices within society or spheres of society and can be seen as a transformative endeavor (Kinchloe & McLaren, 2008). Throughout the process, researchers join the process of investigation, examination, criticism, and all involved are mutually influenced and learn to think more critically. As explored in chapter three, constructivist epistemology aligned well with this approach to inquiry.

Paulo Freire (1978), an educator, philosopher, and leader in critical pedagogy describes the mutual impact as the experience of “authentic help:”

Authentic help means that all who are involved help each other mutually, growing together in the common effort to understand the reality which they seek to transform. Only through such praxis- in which those who help and those who are being helped help each other simultaneously-can the act of helping become free from the distortion in which the helper dominates the helped. (p. 113)

Therefore, within active, critical research, *authentic help* can aid in describing the role of the researcher in the process of investigation. My role as a researcher in the current study was to strive toward *authentic help*. Through my active engagement with seeking understanding from the participants, I hoped our mutual engagement in the process would be a catalyst for future research that would lead to improving the provision of supervision in supervisees who receive supervision in a cross-racial, videoconferencing relationship. Through participants teaching me how they created meaning of their experiences, I hoped to not only understand their experience, but also be simultaneously impacted to work in collaboration for continued research in this area.

In addition to critical research having an impact on the role of the researcher in the research process, critical research also impacts the approach to reviewing the existing literature. With a critical theory lens, the role of power and oppression was critically represented in all aspects of the research process including the literature review, research question, research design, data collection, data analysis, and interpreting the data. Specifically, the examination of existing research within this study focused on supervision, models of supervision, technology and clinical supervision, and cross-racial and multicultural supervision. Using a critical theory lens, I examined traditional research methods through a critical lens in order to investigate the role of power, dominance, and oppression within the scope of videoconferencing supervision and cross-racial supervision.

### **Supervision**

Clinical supervision is an essential aspect of counselor training and has evolved into formalized theory and practice (Todd & Storm, 2014). Many guiding principles exist that direct supervisors and those they supervise (Todd & Storm, 2014). It is a complex professional relationship with many facets (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004), in which supervisors play an integral role in the professional, growth-promoting relationship of counselors (Frey, 2013).

Within clinical supervision, power is an ever-present element in the inherently hierarchical relationship, in large part due to the evaluative capacity of the supervisor over the supervisee (Behan, 2003; Todd & Storm, 2014). The inherent power differential in supervision can manifest in several ways, and it is possible that aspects of oppression, bias, and prejudice may be amplified when using technology as a mediator of supervision.

Clinical supervision grew out of an apprentice model, in which the assumption was that those who practiced could adequately prepare those who were going to become counselors. That is, students with negligible knowledge and skill (i.e., supervisee) would learn from observing, assisting, and receiving feedback from those experienced in the field (i.e. supervisor; Smith, 2009). At its origin, clinical supervision was inherently hierarchical, with the more skilled professional occupying a higher position than the apprentice. Some argue that the evaluative role of the supervisor creates the power differential within clinical supervision, however, others argue that the power difference is many times skillfully navigated and level across many domains in clinical supervision (Behan, 2003; Todd & Storm, 2014).

Clinical supervision has evolved immensely since the apprenticeship model and now integrates aspects of a relationship that promotes professional growth, advances clinical competency, advances professional identity development, ensures quality care to clients, and teaches and demonstrates counseling techniques (Todd & Storm, 2014). For this study, the definition of clinical supervision by Storm and Todd (2014) will be used and is described as “one professional hoping for guidance entering into a learning relationship with another with a mutual goal of advancing the supervisee’s clinical and professional competencies while ensuring quality services to clients” (pp. 1-2). Key components of this definition include a learning relationship, advancing clinical and professional competencies, and ensuring quality care to clients.

### **Models of Supervision**

Numerous models of supervision exist in the literature and two major categories differentiate the focus and scope of existing supervision models. One category is

clinically-based models of supervision, developed from marriage and family therapy models and involves the application of existing therapy models to clinical supervision (Morgan & Sprenkle, 2007). The limitation with these models is that supervision and therapy are unequal and involve a different relationship, emphasis, and clinical skill set (Russell, Crimmings, & Lent, 1984). The other major category of supervision models is conceptual models that focus directly on the supervisor-supervisee relationship (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). Within the category of conceptual models are the discrimination model, developmental models, and common factors models. Each will be briefly outlined in the subsequent sections.

An evolution in models of clinical supervision was the development of Bernard's discrimination model (1979, 1997). Originally developed as a way to better understand supervisor focus in teaching doctoral students how to deliver supervision to masters level students (Bernard, 1979), the discrimination model has become the most well known supervision model and has considerable empirical support (Ellis & Dell, 1986). The discrimination model attends to three focal areas of supervision: intervention, conceptualization, and personalization. The model also attends to three possible supervisor roles: teacher, counselor, and consultant (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). A three by three matrix is formed with the supervisory focus and role, in which the supervisor can act from at any given time in the supervisory relationship. Supervision focus and role are determined in response to supervisees' needs and can change across and within sessions. Borders and Brown (2005) have noted an important lesson that is highlighted by the discrimination model – that a supervisor must be intentional and flexible. Supervisors need to be ready to employ any of the three focus areas or roles at

any given time during supervision, depending on supervisees' needs and goals of the session.

One challenge to the discrimination model is that the decisional capacity rests in the supervisor to make ultimate decisions of what the supervisee needs and which focus and role to address concerns from. Intrinsically the possession of power is not problematic; however, the exertion of power in any of the teaching, counseling, or consulting roles could negatively impact the supervisory relationship, and therefore counselor development. The underlying assumption of the discrimination model of supervision is that the supervisor is the possessor of knowledge (*knowledge power*) and lacks an emphasis on collaboration with and value of the experience of the supervisee. Further, without intentional emphasis on the influence of power, privilege, and oppression within supervision, the onus rests on the training and experience of the supervisor to integrate these dialogues within supervision.

Other conceptual models of supervision commonly referred to in the literature are developmental supervision models. Developmental models suggest that supervisee learning and growth is sequential and hierarchical and that progress is made toward greater complexity and integration (Borders & Brown, 2005). Although no uniform schema exists for developmental models, one common characteristic is that counselor development continues across the lifespan and the rate of progress occurs at variable rates through predictable stages, with a progression towards higher levels of functioning. Counselors early in their development tend toward black-and-white, dichotomous thinking as well as high levels of anxiety during supervision. Middle stages of counselor development are characterized by confusion (Loganbill, Hardy, & Delworth, 1982) and

supervisees have more differentiated perceptions of clients (Borders & Brown, 2005). In this stage, the attitudes, emotions, and behaviors of the supervisee are no longer part of a rigid belief system, rather there is confusion between previously held beliefs and newly learned information. Later stages in supervisee development are characterized by integration (Loganbill et al., 1982) and depict an increased professional competence and comprehensive treatment of clients. Interventions in this stage are based on clinical wisdom and integrate theory and experience-based knowledge and skills gained by the counselor (Borders & Brown, 2005). In essence, according to developmental models, later stages of counselor development characterize an increase in *knowledge power* as earlier described.

Recent developments in the supervision literature have focused on common characteristics within existing supervision models. The common factors conceptualization of supervision is an extension of common factors of successful therapy outcomes. The common factors identify common elements within theoretical models of supervision and are based on collective key features and common factors that exist beyond the scope of technique and skill used within theoretical models (Morgan & Sprenkle, 2007). In an extensive analysis of supervisory models, research suggests common factors of supervision can be distilled down into content dimensions of supervision, including the emphasis of supervision, specificity of supervision, and the relationship in supervision (Morgan & Sprenkle, 2007). Of relevance to the current study is the relationship domain, in which supervision can vary along a continuum from collaborative to directive supervision. Power can play a role within this domain, as it

may be more exerted in the supervisory relationship that is directive and less exerted in a collaborative supervisory relationship.

Existing models of supervision include the discrimination model, developmental models, and common factors models. An integral aspect common to all models is the role of the relationships in supervision as an integral component of counselor development and growth. The following section will explore supervision in the area of technology. Here, technology-assisted supervision will be defined, as well as its many facets explored.

### **Technology and Clinical Supervision: An Evolving Format**

During the past two decades, the number of technologies used to provide and augment online varieties of clinical supervision has increased dramatically. Examples of this evolution include web-based videoconferencing, webcams, cloud computing, clinical virtual reality software, web-based assessment tools, and coding software for therapy sessions (Rousmaniere, 2014). Prior to the technological boom in the early 2000s, earlier methods of computer-augmented supervision were being utilized, such as Web 1.0 tools including email, text, chat rooms, and instant messaging. These methods of mediated communication evolved and have developed into the Web 2.0 tools such as Skype, blogs, social networking, Wikis, and podcasts (Conn, Roberts, & Powell, 2009). Continued evolution eventually led to the beginning of using computer-based applications to provide supervision (Watson, 2003). Further, the computer is another tool for supervisors to utilize in providing an increasingly multidimensional approach to supervision sessions.

Prior to the use of computer-based applications to deliver clinical supervision, *cybercounseling* was facilitated through the Internet for providing services such as



etherapy, self-help, and web site based therapy (Barak, Hen, Boniel-Nisseem, & Shapira, 2008). The delivery of Internet therapy varied depending the intervention being conducted in real time, *synchronously*, or in delayed communication, which was designated *asynchronous communication* (Barak et al., 2008). Since the initiation of using the Internet for providing individual therapy services, many parallels can be drawn between the challenges faced in Internet therapy with those that are faced in providing online supervision.

The following sections will define terminology used in the technology and supervision research, discuss advancements in technology and its impact on providing technologically mediated clinical supervision, present research examining the effectiveness of technology-assisted supervision, and address risks and regulatory concerns with using technology in the provision of clinical supervision. Finally, this section will conclude with a discussion of the additional concerns of the role of power and further marginalization in using technology in supervision.

### **Definition of Terms**

A wide range of terminology has been used to describe various types of technology used to provide clinical supervision and training (Rousmaniere, 2014).

*Telehealth* is the broadest term used to describe the use of electronic information and telecommunication technologies to provide long distance healthcare by offering a partial solution for providing healthcare, patient education, and client services, specifically in remote areas (Miller, Miller, Kraus, Kaak, Sprang, & Veltkamp, 2003; Office for the Advancement of Telehealth, n.d.).

*Cybersupervision* specifies the use of Internet videoconferencing to enhance supervision of student counseling trainees (Coker et al., 2002; Coursol, 2004). Moreover, cybersupervision can be used for a variety of purposes such as individual supervision, group supervision, case management, case consultation, and case conferencing.

*Synchronous and asynchronous* communications describe various types of communication that can occur over long distances. Synchronous communication allows supervisors and supervisees to interact at the same time and include telephone and videoconferences. Conversely, asynchronous communication includes communication that does not occur at the same time through means such as email, discussion groups, and cloud-based storage systems (Renfro-Michel et al., 2016). Supervision that is technologically mediated can include a variation of asynchronous (e.g., email, facsimile, online information, digital video clips) and synchronous (e.g., videoconferencing) communication that is used to augment the supervisory experience (Darkins & Carey, 2000; Stamm, 2003; Striefel, 2000).

For the purposes of this research, the term *technology-assisted supervision and training* (TAST) will be used to encompass the range of technology used to assist in clinical supervision and training and *videoconferencing* will be used to describe the use of synchronous tools (i.e. Skype, Zoom, GoToMeeting) to augment supervision. Leading researchers have utilized TAST in current research as an all-encompassing term to describe the use of technology to assist in clinical supervision and training (Rousmaniere, 2014). Next, research support for the use of TAST will be presented.

**Research support for TAST**

Since the early 2000s, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of empirical studies examining technology assisted supervision and training. This growing body of research revealed 63 publications on Internet-based supervision, 31 of which were original research studies, between 2000 and 2015 (Renfro-Michael et al., 2016). Although there is still progress to be made, there appears to be a base of literature supporting potential benefits for supervisors and supervisees. The potential benefits offered in the literature derive from research conducted in Australia, Canada, England, Norway, and the United States (Rousmaniere, 2014) and include the following:

- reduced cost for travel and improved flexibility of scheduling (Abbass et al., 2011; Jerome et al., 2000; Miller et al., 2003; Olson, Russell, & White, 2001; Powell, 2012; Watson, 2003);
- potentially enhanced diversity in trainees, due to improved accessibility of training (Fishkin, Fishkin, Leli, Katz, & Snyder, 2011);
- increased in accessibility to supervisee training in remote or rural areas and access to consultation with experts who possess expertise in a particular area (Barnett, 2011);
- increased access to peer consultation (in small groups via teleconference, or large groups via electronic mailing lists and Web forums);

Although these findings are promising, questions about the empirical base that arise from critical theory are related to who is being researched and who is conducting the research. Additionally, questions about whose point of view is being represented, and whose point of view is not being overlooked; how is access to technology discussed or

not discussed in these studies; and how does a pervasive lack of opportunity to access technology impact the level of comfort with using technology for clinical supervision.

**Professional development benefits.** Many studies and literature reviews have revealed an array of professional development benefits of TAST. Some of the findings include the manner in which the supervisee is impacted in the area of professional development. Empirical studies have demonstrated the following professional development benefits of TAST: (a) the ability for the supervisory working alliance to be established and maintained (Abbass et al., 2011; Reese et al., 2009), (b) increased counselor preparation (Perry, 2012; Sørli, Gammon, Bergvik, & Sexton, 1999); (c) high levels of satisfaction with technologically mediated supervision (Conn, Roberts, & Powell, 2009; Reese et al., 2009); and (d) increased self-disclosure (Cummings, 2002; Sørli et al., 1999).

**Working alliance.** Concern for whether the supervisory working alliance can be maintained using TAST is one of the common risks cited in the literature (Rousmaniere, 2014). The working alliance in supervision is defined as the overall relationship between the supervisor and supervisee that is used to facilitate learning of the supervisee (Efstation, Patton, & Kardash, 1990). Results from one study indicated that the supervisory relationship, as measured by the Supervisory Working Alliance Inventory-Trainee (SWAI-T) was not impacted by the videoconferencing format (Reese et al., 2009). In this particular study, initial supervision sessions began with an in-person format, to support the early development of the supervisory alliance. In contrast, another study examined the supervisory working alliance in distance supervision and findings indicated a lower rating of a supervisory working alliance in older student participants

(Coker & Schooley, 2009). The older student group among the practicum student sample, participants aged 51 – 60, tended to score satisfaction of supervision lower than their younger counterparts, and those in the lowest age range, ages 20 – 30, tended to score supervision satisfaction higher than all age groups (Coker & Schooley, 2009). This finding suggests that participants' experience with technology could impact the ability to form and maintain the working alliance in supervision. Baltrinic et al. (2016) suggest the importance of considering supervisee knowledge, comfort and ability to engage using technology for supervision, which could be related to age or generational status of the supervisee.

***Preparation for supervision.*** One study illustrated that both trainees and supervisors who participated in videoconferencing supervision reported better preparation for supervision sessions compared with in-person supervision sessions (Sørli et al., 1999). Both supervisors and trainees reported better preparation and increased self-discipline in the videoconference condition. Further, it may provide new opportunities to understand the role of communication in the relationship building process (Sørli et al., 1999). Another study examined the process by which master's students were able to construct a professional identity in an online environment and found that online students experienced themselves just as well prepared as other students they knew (Perry, 2012). Numerous students also reported their clinical supervision as being superior to what other students experienced at more traditional programs. Referring to an intern, one supervisor stated, “. . . I think there are certainly no demerits in what [my intern] has done going through [online] training. In many ways she's certainly a more ambitious, more conscientious, more mindful. . . .” (Perry, 2012, p. 64). These examples suggest that

there may be an increase in the level of preparation by some students who receive online supervision. Moreover, it suggests a high level of training and student engagement can be maintained using technology as an augment to supervision.

***Satisfaction.*** High levels of trainee satisfaction have been reported in research on TAST (Xavier, Shepherd, & Goldstein, 2007). One common concern cited in the literature is that satisfaction with technologically mediated supervision will not be as high as in-person supervision. This concern has not been demonstrated in the literature. In an examination of school counseling interns, those who experienced the hybrid model of supervision did not significantly differ from students in the face-to-face condition in terms of their satisfaction with the supervisory experience (Conn et al., 2009). Moreover, another study examining videoconference supervision compared with face-to-face supervision found no difference between the two conditions in level of satisfaction with the quality of supervision and the supervisory relationship (Reese et al., 2009).

***Self-disclosure.*** Research suggests that videoconference supervision plays a role in increasing self-disclosure and reducing inhibition (Cummings, 2002; Sørli et al., 1999). The authors of one study found that an absence of face-to-face contact contributed to a freer expression and the style of communication using a group chat, synchronous, peer supervision format supported a crisp, fast, clear, and focused form of relating to one another (Cummings, 2002). Moreover, some supervisees using an interactive audiovisual videoconferencing format reported an increase in self-disclosure, which was attributed to an increased distance from their supervisor and a feeling of safety (Sørli et al., 1999).

**International and cross-cultural considerations.** Another area of exploration in relation to technology and supervision is in its international and cross-cultural benefits. Research has demonstrated that technology-based supervision is effective for cross-cultural and international supervision (Panos, 2005). With the exception of this study, however, there is a dearth of existing literature exploring the manifestation of cultural issues within distance supervision, as well as developing multicultural competencies in those participating in distance supervision (Baltrinic et al., 2016). Next will be a discussion of the risks associated with technology-assisted supervision.

### **Risks of TAST**

Despite benefits in various dimensions of clinical supervision, the rapid integration of technology into the supervisory process may pose significant challenges and risks (Rousmaniere, 2014). Hastily adopting TAST can pose substantial challenges in the face of ever changing technological advancements and changes. For example, supervisors and trainees who did not grow up in the era of Internet technology may find the ever-evolving technology disorienting. Also, critical aspects of legal risks and confidentiality, informed consent, and technological expertise may be overlooked. Further, haphazardly integrating technology to provide supervision may amplify the power differential between supervisee and supervisor. If the supervisee is unfamiliar and uncomfortable with technology, there is an additional layer of knowledge power the supervisor has over the supervisee and potential abuse of that power. Therefore it is critical to be aware of the challenges and risks of implementing technology-assisted supervision. Some of the critical areas of awareness and attention that will be discussed

in this section include: (a) ethical, legal, and crisis concerns; (b) regulatory risks; and (c) technology-related risks (Rousmaniere, 2014).

**Ethical and legal concerns.** Throughout the literature, legal and ethical considerations for both supervisor and supervisee are identified as essential to address prior to engaging in technology-assisted supervision. Concerns regarding ethical issues that could arise in supervision as well as legal and regulatory issues are important to address prior to engaging in technology-assisted supervision (Glosoff, Renfro-Michel, & Nagarajan, 2016; Rousmaniere, Renfro-Michel, & Huggins, 2016). Most commonly cited in the literature are ethical issues of the supervisory working relationship, client welfare and safety, confidentiality, issues of culture and accessibility, and technological competence in the supervisor and supervisee (Glosoff et al., 2016).

To ensure supervisors and supervisees are competent in participating in TAST, it is essential to have training and competency standards for this practice. The American Counseling Association (ACA) details ethical considerations for the practice of counseling and related activities, including supervision. The most relevant codes in the 2014 *ACA Code of Ethics* (ACA, 2014) address supervision, training, and teaching (Section F) and distance counseling, technology, and social media (Section H). Important considerations within these sections related to technology-assisted supervision are maintaining a professional relationship, respectful boundaries, and ensuring client welfare and supervisee development (Glosoff et al., 2016). In addition, ethical use of technology in supervision is also addressed in ACES' Best Practices in Clinical Supervision (2011).



In addition to the ACA Code of Ethics (2014) and the ACES Best Practices in Clinical Supervision (2011), the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC) has also published ethical guidelines for technology-assisted distance counseling practices. Moreover, in 2007 the American Distance Counseling Association (ADCA) was formed as an independent organization “to promote safety and confidence in counseling treatment services on the Internet and through phone services” (ADCA, n. d., para. 1).

Another category of concern with TAST is legal concerns. One specific concern is ensuring informed consent by clients receiving services is obtained, and informing them that their information will be transmitted over the Internet (Vaccaro & Lambie, 2007). It is essential that the informed consent form explicitly describe the technology used and security measures utilized. In addition, some states have laws pertaining to the limit of TAST supervision hours able to be applied toward licensure. Further, issues of jurisdiction may arise when the supervisor and supervisee are in different states or countries and these issues must be addressed (McAdams & Wyatt, 2010). Further, attention to obtaining liability insurance appropriate for TAST is needed and consultation is recommended to ensure coverage of these services. For example, liability and licensure issues may be present if supervision is provided across state lines, and result in a supervisor practicing outside of her or his coverage area or jurisdiction (Barnett, 2011).

#### **Regulatory Concerns (State, National, International Licensing Boards).**

While the development and experimentation in TAST has grown quickly, the regulations surrounding these practices are evolving much more slowly (Rousmaniere, 2014). Currently, there are no nation-wide regulations in any country that specifically address TAST. The United States, however, regulates the transmission of electronic confidential

healthcare records and information. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH) set minimum standards to require protection for the confidentiality of electronic health information (Rousmaniere, 2014). Despite a large-scale, national regulation of healthcare records by HIPAA and HITECH, these regulations do not address the nuances of social sciences and, specifically, supervision and training for counselors in training.

At the state level, some states are developing regulations for counseling specific to Internet-based supervision. In an examination of state regulations of technology-assisted distance practice, one study examined counseling regulatory boards and identified states where technology-assisted distance practice was being formally regulated, the specific aspects that were being regulated, and the degree to which existing regulations were distinct from traditional counseling practices (McAdams & Wyatt, 2010). They interviewed representatives from 46 state counseling boards and found that only 14 states had regulations in place, five had regulations under development, 15 had regulations under discussion, 10 prohibited technology-assisted counseling and supervision as illegitimate practices, and in two states the discussion had not arisen. Sixty percent of boards limited the total number of hours that could be applied toward licensure, from 10% to 50% (McAdams & Wyatt, 2010). The researchers' findings also indicated general agreement among state boards of the most pressing legal and ethical challenges of technology assisted distance practices; however, addressing the challenges may be difficult. An aspect of the challenge regulatory boards face involves the philosophical differences between traditional supervision and the reliance on physical

proximity to another person as an essential component of the supervision paradigm. Next, common challenges involved in the regulation of Internet-based supervision and training will be discussed.

Common issues involved in the regulation of Internet-based supervision and training include: (a) limits on the number of hours applied toward licensure or continuing education; (b) legal jurisdiction and accountability of supervision and training that extends across state and international borders; (c) specialized training prior to the initiation of services; (d) informed consent to supervision and training; (e) movement to integrating ACA and NBCC ethical standards into practice; (f) reimbursement for services comparable to traditional services; (g) and level of encryption standards (Kanz, 2001; McAdams & Wyatt, 2010; Rousmaniere, Abbass, & Frederickson, 2014).

**Technology issues.** The final broad category of risks of TAST is within the area of technology issues. These issues include security related to data storage, back up, and deletion; rules for privacy and confidentiality of client and supervisee information; antivirus software; and mobile devices, cloud computing, and social software.

Technology does not always work and many supervisors feel hesitant in engaging technological means to provide supervision because they feel unable to troubleshoot if and when issues arise. Supervisors and supervisees face technology issues in hardware and software compatibility, maintenance, upgrades, and repair, which can be a limiting factor of this method (Webber & Deroche, 2016). Supervisors and supervisees also need to be aware of using mobile devices, social software, and cloud computing, as these pose greater security risk (Rousmaniere, 2014). Recommendations include supervisors developing clear procedures around technology, such as where and how data will be

stored, backed up, and deleted (Kanz, 2001). Furthermore, Renfro-Michel et al. (2016) recommend focusing on the supervision process, making thoughtful decisions about which technology to use, choosing a technology that best suits supervision, learning a new technology, and preparing a backup plan.

As described in the preceding section, technology as an evolving format for providing clinical supervision can be a complex task to initiate when supervising students. Despite many benefits that have been supported in the research, concerns related to ethical, legal, and regulatory issues exist. An additional layer of technology-assisted supervision that will be discussed next is cross-racial and multicultural supervision.

### **Multicultural and Cross-racial Supervision**

Definitions of multicultural and cross-racial supervision have evolved over the past 20 years and oftentimes have been used interchangeably within the literature (Constantine, 2003). A distinction has been drawn between multicultural and cross-cultural supervision (Brown & Landrum-Brown, 1995). Multicultural supervision involves the study of cultural patterns or patterns of supervision (Brown & Landrum-Brown, 1995), for example, the study of the process of supervision from a Native American perspective would be in the scope of multicultural supervision. Instead, cross-cultural supervision is defined as supervision “in which racial, ethnic, and/or cultural differences exist between at least two members of the client-counselor-supervisor triad” (Estrada, Frame, & Williams, 2004, p. 310). To begin the review of literature around multicultural and cross-racial supervision, multicultural counseling competencies will be reviewed.

**Multicultural Competencies and Cross-Cultural Supervision**

Considerable attention has been given to multicultural competence in counseling, as evidenced by the creation of the Multicultural Counseling Competencies (Sue et al., 1992) and the recent update of the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (Ratts et al., 2016). Much of counselor supervision has additionally focused on the training of counseling students to develop multicultural competencies and for supervisors to facilitate these cultural discussions. Further, these competencies were developed to provide structure and a framework for integrating multicultural competencies into counselor training areas of counseling theories, practice, and research. The multicultural counseling competencies have served as a guideline for many counselor training programs, however, such a document does not exist for supervisors. Although there is a growing body of literature addressing developing multicultural competent supervision (Dressel, Consoli, Kim, & Atkinson, 2007), much of this literature is based on survey research.

Research has grown exponentially in the past 20 years in cross-cultural supervision, which has provided a broader understanding of training and supervision, as well as its limitations (Falender et al., 2013). Much of the early research focused on examining cultural variables and clinical supervision between supervisor and supervisee dyads that differed racially (Inman et al., 2014). Although cross-racial supervision research has been increasing recently, the research base is relatively small. In the past 10 years, Schroeder, Andrews, and Hinds (2009) noted only 13 studies investigated racial or ethnic issues in cross-racial supervision. In one study, supervisees reported positive supervision experiences based on the variables of the supervisor being willing to discuss

cultural issues, conveying openness and support, and providing clinical guidance and support (Fukuyama, 1994). Additional studies have confirmed supervisors' willingness to discuss cultural issues in supervision as an indicator of positive outcomes in clinical supervision. When cultural issues were discussed within supervision, results of one study indicated a higher working alliance between supervisor and supervisee and an increase in satisfaction ratings in supervision (Gatmon et al., 2001). In another study with international graduate students, the importance of cultural discussions in supervision was highlighted as central in developing a strong supervisory working alliance (Nilsson & Anderson, 2004).

Differences in training indicate another factor in multicultural competencies that is represented in the research of supervision and training. In one study, 70% of supervisees had received training in multicultural counseling in graduate school, whereas only 30% of supervisors had received such training in their academic programs (Constantine, 2003). In particular, some researchers have highlighted generational training gaps (Burkard et al., 2006) in which those currently serving in a supervisory capacity were trained prior to the advent of culturally infused curricula, and therefore may lack the resources necessary to provide culturally competent, cross-cultural supervision (Inman et al., 2014). Another study found that 93% of supervisors had no experience supervising trainees who were racially or culturally different from themselves (Duan & Roehlke, 2001). This lack of training may lead to a lack of sensitivity in cross-cultural issues within supervision as well as an avoidance of addressing sensitive culture, and race related issues. An unfortunate finding among many studies is that conversations of cultural difference may be more difficult for White supervisors who struggle with their

own personal awareness of their membership in the dominant racial group and the social power that exists beyond their supervisory role (Inman et al., 2014). Further, this lack of awareness could contribute to the lack of conversations around race, culture, and ethnicity within the process of supervision.

### **Supervisory Working Alliance and Racial Identity**

Although much of the current research points to the limitations in the ability of supervisors to provide effective cross-cultural supervision, other research points to mediating variables that increase supervisory working alliance within cross-cultural supervision. A strong working alliance has been shown to be associated with greater satisfaction with supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004), with the bond or relationship between the supervisor and supervisee being a critical component (Bordin, 1983). Moreover, a stronger working alliance allows safety within supervision to have difficult conversations around race, racial identity, and culture.

An aspect of cross-cultural supervision that has been investigated is the racial identity of both the supervisor and the supervisee. *Racial identity* refers to how people think about their race and others' race and distinguishes between their racial category and how they think and feel about their race (Schroeder, Andrews, & Hindes, 2009). Several studies have examined the impact of racial identity on the supervisory working alliance (Bhat & Davis, 2007; Ladany, Brittan-Powell, & Pannu, 1997) and have found that supervisors with more advanced statuses of racial identity development contributed to a stronger working alliance in the supervisory relationship. Additionally, cultural or racial mismatch between supervisor and supervisee were not found to be related to supervisee ratings of satisfaction or the supervisory working alliance (Gatmon et al., 2001). Thus,

racial identity may act as a mediating variable for the supervisory working alliance when the supervisory dyad differs racially, culturally, or ethnically. Further, these studies have indicated that the racial composition of the supervisory dyads may not be the predictor of supervisory alliance; rather it is the level of racial identity of the supervisors that improves the supervisor working alliance.

### **Multicultural Issues within Technology-Assisted Supervision**

Although cross-cultural supervision and technology-assisted supervision are separately receiving attention in the research, research on technology-assisted supervision and cross-cultural supervision is still in its infancy (Baltrinic et al., 2016). Aspects of how multicultural issues manifest during supervision have been explored in the broader categories of the supervisor and supervision sessions. Specific examples of multicultural issues noted in the category of the supervisor include the need for the supervisor to initiate discussions on diversity and culture, create a welcoming environment to explore multicultural issues, and demonstrate a willingness to explore bias (ACES, 2011; Baltrinic et al., 2016). Within the category of the supervision process, the issue of the power dynamic has been identified as a potential issue within supervision. Supervisors need to be attentive to the power manifest in the evaluative role of supervision as well as from cross-racial dynamics of the supervisory relationship (Baltrinic et al., 2016). Specifically, if the supervisor is not attentive to the power dynamic between the supervisor and supervisee, supervisors run the risk of not providing inadequate supervision or even harming the supervisee (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014; Constantine & Sue, 2007; & Hays & Chang, 2003).



**Racial Microaggressions.** Within the literature, one concept that addresses how power dynamics, culture, and privilege manifest in interpersonal relationships is that of microaggressions. *Racial microaggressions* are “brief everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273). Oftentimes, microaggressions are unconscious and communicated in the form of dismissive looks, subtle snubs, gestures, or tones (Sue et al., 2007). Moreover, microaggressions are part of concealed and extensive systemic, institutional, and culturally bound oppressive systems (Sue et al., 2007). Three forms of microaggressions that have been identified are microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations (Sue et al., 2007). *Microassaults* are the most deliberate form of microaggressions and are characterized by a racially derogatory attack meant to hurt the victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or deliberate discrimination (Sue et al., 2007). Examples of microassaults are deliberately serving a White patron before someone of color, referring to a person as “Oriental” or “colored,” and discouraging interracial interactions. *Microinsults* are more subtle in communication that is characterized by rudeness and insensitivity that demean a person’s identity or racial heritage, and are often unknown to the perpetrator (Sue et al., 2007). An example of this is an employee questioning how a co-worker obtained her job, implying that she may have landed the position through affirmative action or quota system. Context is very important in microinsults, as the statements themselves may not be aggressive, however, continuing to hear that a position was gained through affirmative action is likely to be experienced as aggressive. Finally, *microinvalidations* are characterized as communication that negates the experiential reality, feelings, or psychological thoughts of a person of color (Sue et al.,

2007). An example of a microinvalidation occurring is when Asian Americans are complimented for speaking “good English” despite being born and raised in the United States. Comments such as these deny the American heritage and communicate to the person that they are a perpetual foreigner (Sue et al., 2007).

In their research, Sue et al. (2007) observed a presence of microaggressions within all types of cross-racial interaction, including supervision. Therefore, within supervisory relationships, there is potential for microaggressions to manifest as an exertion of power within the supervisor-supervisee, supervisee-supervisee, supervisee-client, client-world, and site supervisor-university supervisor relationships (Baltrinic et al., 2016). Specifically for this study, the focus was on the supervisor-supervisee relationship and the manifestation of microaggressions.

A number of guidelines exist for supervisors to remain culturally responsive in technology-assisted supervision; however, the suggestions offered are based on a limited amount of empirical data. Current suggested guidelines include: (a) supervisor willingness to share worldview with their supervisee; (b) creating open, supportive supervisory relationship that allows time to develop cultural understanding of supervisee; (c) ongoing training and expansion of education to broaden cultural competence; (d) introduce and continue cultural conversations throughout supervision; and (e) seek out continuing education on cultural competence and technology assisted supervision (Baltrinic et al., 2016).

### **Chapter Summary**

It is clear from the literature that the supervisory relationship is multifaceted and complex. Technology-assisted supervision is a promising approach to broadening access

to clinical supervision; however, current literature fails to acknowledge the potential for power and privilege to be amplified within this format of cross-racial supervision. Furthermore, research in cross-cultural supervision has grown in recent years, including studies emphasizing the willingness to address cultural issues as an indicator of positive outcomes in cross-cultural supervision. Additionally, the multicultural training gap between the supervisor and supervisee has been identified as a potential barrier to successful outcomes in supervision. While technology mediated and cross-racial supervision are separately receiving attention in the research, studies combining these two facets is in its infancy (Baltrinic et al., 2016). Based on the gap in existing research in technology-assisted, cross-racial supervision, the purpose of this case study was to examine the experience of microaggressions that manifest within cross-racial videoconferencing supervision. In particular, this study explored the presence of microaggressions and their three forms of microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations (Sue et al., 2007) from the perspective of the supervisee receiving videoconferencing supervision in a cross-racial supervisory relationship.

The following chapter will outline the methods used to research the case of supervisors and supervisees engaged in cross-racial videoconferencing supervision. Moreover, the philosophical framework used to guide this process will be described, followed by a description of qualitative research and case study design. A statement of purpose and the research question will be described, as well as propositions and a definition of the case. The chapter will address data collection and analysis, as well as measures to establish credibility and trustworthiness. Since the researcher was a primary instrument in data collection and analysis in this case study design, a researcher

worldview statement will be offered to contextualize and situate the researcher in the study.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

### **Method of Study**

In reviewing the literature on cross-racial aspects of technology-assisted supervision, several gaps in the research literature emerged. First, research on technology-assisted, cross-racial supervision is in its infancy (Baltrinic et al., 2016). Additionally, best practices have not been established for cross-racial videoconferencing supervision. There have been no studies found to date that have explored the manifestation of power, specifically that of the experience of microaggressions among supervisees in the cross-racial videoconferencing supervisory relationship. Understanding the experience of the role of power, specifically that of microaggressions experienced by supervisees, is essential in informing guidelines and best practices in cross-racial videoconferencing supervision, and provide direction for future research.

In this chapter I will describe qualitative research methodology and provide rationale for choosing qualitative methods for this study. In addition, I will explain the constructivist epistemological position I approached this inquiry from, as well as delineate the case study design used for this study. Next, a statement of purpose of the research will be discussed, followed by the grand research question. To help focus the study, I will then describe propositions that support the “how” and “why” of the research question. After, I will define the case by defining the unit of analysis, as well as describing the theory driving this case study. Next, I will move to describing data collection, participants, and data collection sources. Within the data analysis section, analytic strategies and technique will be defined for the current study. Finally, I will

describe the procedures used to establish credibility and trustworthiness for the study and provide a statement of my worldview as the researcher.

### **Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research is an inductive approach whereby the researcher attempts to make sense of a phenomenon without imposing preexisting expectations onto the object of study. Thus, the researcher begins with observations and allows categories and themes to emerge from the data (Mertens, 2009). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) have offered a definition of qualitative research consisting of:

... a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible... This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them...(p. 3-4).

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in that rather than validating or falsifying a priori hypotheses through experimental design and analyses, qualitative researchers value rich descriptions of the phenomena being researched (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The emphasis is on processes that are inductive, generative, constructive, and subjective (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Qualitative research acknowledges multiple realities, which coincides with constructivist theory, and ways of understanding based on personal perceptions and interpretations. In relation to methodology, qualitative researchers describe the experience and perspective of others, while acknowledging themselves as a key instrument in data collection and interpretation. They recognize that their own bias, assumptions, and judgments have an impact on the entire process of research and data analysis. In positioning themselves within research, qualitative

researchers convey how their background informs the interpretation of information gathered in a study (Creswell, 2013).

Another characteristic of qualitative research is the use of both inductive and deductive logic. From the bottom-up logic, patterns, categories, and themes are built through organizing data to create increasingly abstract units of information (Creswell, 2013). This exemplifies an inductive characteristic of qualitative research. Moreover, qualitative researchers work back and forth between emergent themes and the data to develop a comprehensive set of themes. The deductive logic in qualitative research occurs when emergent themes are continuously compared and checked against the data. Researchers aim to maintain focus on the meaning participants hold in regard to the problem or issue being explored. Qualitative research has become an increasingly important force in counseling research, particularly in cross-cultural counseling (Ponterotto, 2002).

The utility of qualitative research emerges when exploration of a problem or issue is needed and the identified variables are not easily measured. In addition, qualitative research is the most appropriate method when a population or group needs to be studied, or silenced voices need to be heard (Creswell, 2013). Through sharing stories and hearing voices of participants, qualitative researchers attempt to empower participants by minimizing the power differential often present between researcher and participant. In essence, qualitative researchers try to honor participants' stories and give voice to their experiences.

In summary, the abovementioned characteristics of qualitative research serve as a support for choosing qualitative research methodology for the topic at hand. The

rationale for choosing qualitative research for the present study was that there is gap in the literature addressing cross-racial and technology-assisted supervision. Moreover, the body of research examining cross-racial supervision within the larger context of technology-assisted supervision is in its infancy. Oftentimes the voices of supervisees and supervisors are not directly heard, besides through survey research. For the present study, qualitative was chosen so that the experiences with microaggressions of the supervisees are not constrained by quantitative variables assigned to them. Rather than restricting their experience to the information gleaned from a quantitative survey, using qualitative methodology provided contextual factors and variables potentially missed in a quantitative inquiry.

### **Constructivist Epistemological Position**

One essential aspect of the qualitative paradigm is that researchers outline their philosophical assumptions prior to engaging in the research process. Epistemology is the question of knowledge, what constitutes knowledge, and what the relationship between the researcher and that being researched is (Creswell, 2013). The epistemological position taken for this research was constructivism. Constructivism grew out of a tradition of hermeneutics, which is the study of interpretive understanding or meaning (Mertens, 2009). Hermeneutics itself was explained as, “all meaning, including meanings in research findings, is fundamentally interpretive. All knowledge is developed within a preexisting social milieu, ever interpreting and reinterpreting itself” (Heidegger, 1962). Constructivism is a way of interpreting the world and the formation of *truth*. Rather than an absolute truth existing, reality within constructivism is created from an



interaction between the participant and other sources of data, which include the researcher (Charmaz, 2006).

Critical theory also stresses that meaning and knowledge are socially constructed, however powerful and dynamic forces of oppression and social structures exist and impact behavior and potentially constrain human actions. Another overlap in the epistemological position of constructivism within the paradigm of critical theory is that both view social change as possible. Within critical theory, emancipation from the consequences of oppression is a motivational force that both drives the research process and becomes more apparent through research.

Next, a conceptualization of constructivism for the purposes of the current study will be described below. Some researchers argue that this conception of constructivism is more reminiscent of constructionism, which posits that knowledge and behavior are a social process rather than it being mentally constructed in the head of the individual (Gergen, 2015). An emerging term from what used to be known as constructivism, which posits the origin of knowledge is constructed within the self, is the term social constructivism (Gergen, 2015). Social constructivism as described by Gergen (2015) is similar to constructionism and is defined as understanding and knowledge coming through mental categories acquired through social relationships. For the purposes of describing the epistemological position taken for this research, constructivism will be used and describe the notion of understanding the world through mental categories, acquired through social relationships.

Aligned with qualitative research, constructivism places emphasis on the meaning of the phenomena created through the interaction between the participant and the

researcher. Constructivist researchers study *how* and *why* participants construct meaning and act in certain ways (Charmaz, 2006). One assumption of the constructivist perspective is that people, including researchers, construct realities in which they participate. Further, constructivism goes a step beyond looking at how individuals view their situation; it acknowledges the resulting theory as an interpretation that cannot and does not lie outside of the researcher's view (Charmaz, 2006).

Several assumptions are made when making the decision to adopt the constructivist paradigm in research. In the present study, assumptions that were made included that the data, interpretations, and outcomes were rooted in the context of supervisees, apart from literature reviews and empirical studies. The supervisees were empowered to provide evidence describing their experience of racial microaggressions within supervision. I was able to track the data to their sources and use logic to create interpretive frameworks, which helped to make the narrative explicit.

Moreover, the methodology of this study was influenced by the constructivist paradigm. First, I will describe how the data gathered from participants was filtered through my worldview as the researcher, and the way meaning was created through the reciprocal interaction between the participants and myself. Second, the research questions were not stagnant, rather they were revisited throughout the research process as a result of information gathered through the data collection phase (Yin, 2013). A final methodological consideration was that I provided information regarding the background of participants and the context in which they were studied. This information was integral for the constructivist researcher, as it contributed to the interpretation of the data.

The previous section outlined the constructivist paradigm, as well as assumptions and methodological considerations for the current study. The following section will specifically address the case study research design employed in this study.

### **Case Study Design**

Case study research is an empirical inquiry in which the researcher investigates a contemporary phenomenon in a real-world context, whereby the relationship between the phenomenon and context are not clear (Yin, 2013). This type of inquiry is recommended when there is a desire to understand a real-world case and there is an assumption that contextual conditions are pertinent to the case. Through detailed, in-depth data collection, case studies involve multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, and documents and reports), and report a case description and case themes (Creswell, 2013). A within-site study describes the unit of analysis of a single case within case study design (Creswell, 2013). Case study research has a long, distinguished history and therefore a case study researcher has a large array of texts and approaches from which to choose.

As such, several procedures are available for conducting case study research; however, I followed the approach set forth by Yin (2013). Yin (2013), in his fifth edition of the *Case Study Research* text, offered the most comprehensive approach to case study as well as the most extensive direction on preparation and collection of case study evidence. Yin (2013) has suggested the following components to follow in research design for a case study: 1) the research question(s); 2) its propositions; 3) its unit of analysis; 4) the logic linking the data to the propositions; and 5) criteria for interpreting the data. Because research conducted from a critical theory perspective is a transformative endeavor that is concerned with emancipation of consciousness, each step

of this case study design was defined through the lens of transformation. Ultimately, critical theory researchers enter into each step of case study design with their assumptions on the table, so no one is confused with the epistemological and sociopolitical baggage they bring to case study research (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008).

Yin suggested the five components of case study research design to assist with operationally defining the unit of analysis and to aid in replication of the study. Additionally, the five components help to further define what the present study was and what it was not. Fitting within a constructivist framework, consideration was made to include the context in which phenomenon are situated. Further, in constructivism, what humans take to be the truth about a phenomenon depends on the social relationships of which they are a part (Gergen, 2015). In essence, the “truth” is created through the interaction between the research and the participant. Additionally, part of case study design was co-creating meaning through interaction between the participant and researcher. Case study techniques such as prolonged engagement support the researcher and participant in creating meaning and describing the experience of the participant, which was socially constructed through the relationship.

The present study was a descriptive case study that examined the experience of microaggressions that manifested within cross-racial videoconferencing supervision. The perspective of the supervisee receiving videoconferencing supervision in a cross-racial supervisory relationship was sought to examine the presence of microaggressions and their three forms of microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations (Sue et al., 2007).

**Statement of Purpose and Research Question**

The grand research question for this case study was, “How do supervisees experience racial microaggressions within cross-racial videoconferencing supervision when the supervisee identifies as a racial minority and the supervisor is a racial majority?” The purpose of this case study was to examine the experience of microaggressions that manifested within cross-racial videoconferencing supervision. In particular, this study explored the presence of microaggressions and their three forms of microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations (Sue et al., 2007) from the perspective of the supervisee receiving videoconferencing supervision in a cross-racial supervisory relationship.

Addressing the grand research question of the experience of racial microaggressions within cross-racial videoconferencing supervision was well suited for a case study design because there was a gap in the literature that explored the intersection of supervision that is both technology-assisted and cross-racial in nature. A case study approach was selected because the researcher had a clearly identifiable case (i.e., supervisees and supervisors) with boundaries (i.e., engaged in cross-racial and videoconferencing supervision) and sought provide an in-depth understanding of the cases or a comparison of several cases (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, a case study approach was used to understand the experience of microaggressions and their three forms of microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations (Sue et al., 2007) within cross-racial videoconferencing supervision.

**Propositions**

Within case study design, propositions help to frame the focus of the study.

Similar to a hypothesis from traditional quantitative studies, propositions are a speculation, based on literature, of what the researcher expects the findings will be. Propositions were developed to guide this study by forming a foundation for elaborating on the “how” and “why” of the grand research question (Yin, 2013). When a case study incorporates propositions, there is an increase in the likelihood of the researcher being able to place limits on the scope of research (Baxter & Jack, 2008). For this study, propositions were developed to narrow the focus of specific aspects of the supervisory relationship being explored. Additionally, developing propositions serve such functions as: focusing data collection, directing attention, and establishing the focus of research. Collectively, propositions form the foundation for a conceptual framework for the study (Stake, 2006). In developing the propositions for this study, consideration taken into account when determining propositions included the existence of an inherent power differential in supervision, the multi-level impact of unintentional racism and racial microaggressions, and the increased importance of examining covert communication when using technology-assisted supervision. Intentional decisions were made to include propositions that reflected an integration of critical components found in the literature related to cross-racial videoconferencing supervision. The foundational propositions that contributed to the conceptual framework for this study are defined in Appendix A.

*Figure 3.1: Propositions- Appendix A*

**Unit of Analysis: Defining “the case”**

The unit of analysis for this study was supervisees who participated in cross-racial, clinical supervision. The case, or unit of analysis, was bound by the supervisee’s personal experience of racial microaggressions within videoconferencing supervision. Bounding the case was important because it helped to determine what to be included in the unit of analysis and what was outside of the context of analysis (Yin, 2103). The unit of analysis focused on subtle forms of racism that existed in the supervision relationship, specifically the personal experience of racial microaggression experienced while using videoconferencing as a modality to receive supervision. By bounding the case to include this criterion, it helped to distinguish the data related to this construct from data external to the case (Yin, 2013). The unit of analysis was related to the initial research questions (Yin, 2013), and as such the grand research question was, “How do supervisees experience racial microaggressions within cross-racial, videoconferencing supervision when the supervisee identifies as a racial minority and the supervisor is a racial majority?” In distinguishing the design of this case study, the current study was a single case study with embedded units. The case was the supervisee experience with racial microaggressions within cross-racial, videoconferencing supervision and each of the supervisees in the study were the embedded units. The levels of data analysis between the embedded units will be further described in the data analysis section.

Equally important to developing propositions and defining the unit of analysis, the conceptual framework served as an anchor for this study and provided an initial framework for data interpretation (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The conceptual framework served numerous purposes such as identifying who was and was not included in the study,

describing the relationships based on experience and logic, and providing of intellectual “bins” for gathering general concepts for the researcher (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The conceptual framework will be represented in a graphical or narrative format. At this stage, the conceptual framework is based on the existing literature and personal experience.

### **Theory Driving Case Study**

A highly important aspect of case study design that sets it apart from other qualitative methods is the development of theory. Theory within case studies is defined differently than in the counseling literature of theory referring to major counseling theories. Within case study research in general and for the purpose of this study, theory was characterized as analytic generalization (Yin, 2013). Yin (2013) differentiated statistical and analytic generalizations by stating that rather than drawing inferences from data to a population, analytic generalizations compare the results of a case study to previously developed theory. Further, analytic generalizations are based on (a) confirming, rejecting, or advancing concepts referenced in the theoretical propositions when designing the case study, or (b) new conceptions that surfaced when the case study was completed (Yin, 2013).

Differing from the propositions in the study, which help direct attention to something to be examined in the study, the goal of the theory is to have an appropriate blueprint for the study and to provide guidance to drive and bind the study (Yin, 2013). The theory developed for this study was that microaggressions and unconscious racism do exist within cross-racial supervision and may even be amplified with the added layer of technology to assist in supervision. Because of limited sensory input in



videoconferencing supervision, microaggressions may be amplified and contribute to detrimental effects on the supervisee, clients, the supervisory relationship, and the supervisor. Sutton and Straw (as cited in Yin, 2013) illustrated this as, “a [hypothetical] story about why acts, events, structure, and thoughts occur” (p. 378). The analytic generalizations developed for this case study were based on a review of the existing literature. Specifically, this case study was driven and bound by the following theories:

1) Racial microaggressions are experienced by supervisees in cross-racial, videoconferencing supervision and impact the cognitive, behavioral, and emotional well-being of the supervisee; 2) Racial microaggressions are amplified with the added layer of technology in cross-racial supervision; and 3) There is an increased importance for attention on content, process, and the impact of exchanges on supervisee because of the limited sensory input and nonverbal communication.

*Figure 3.2: Constructs of Case Study Illustration- Appendix B.* Constructs surrounding this case study included cross-cultural supervision, technology-assisted supervision, and racial microaggressions. This case study focused on the intersection of each of these constructs, situated within the larger construct of clinical supervision, and in considering of the manifestation of the power imbalance with cross-cultural and technology-assisted supervision.

### **Data Collection**

Many forms of qualitative research do not have codified research designs, and case study approach is no different (Yin, 2013). The steps are not concrete for data

collection and analysis, rather they are specific to the topic being researched. To guide this study in data collection and analysis, a protocol was developed to increase reliability of the case study (Yin, 2013). A protocol provided a descriptive overview and general rules that were followed through the research process in this study. Typically, protocols have four sections and include: A) an overview of the case study; B) data collection procedures; C) data collection questions; and D) guide for the case study report (Yin, 2013). The current study addresses sections of the protocol by defining and expanding on Section A within chapters 1 and 2; Sections B and C within chapter 3 as well as appendix items; and Section D within chapters 4 and 5.

Collecting data for case study research involves different procedures than quantitative research and laboratory experimentation. The amount of control the researcher has over the data is limited and flexibility in the researcher is essential. Key informants provide a bulk of the data, which requires the researcher to cater to the schedule of the participants and allow the interviews to be more open-ended. Data collection tasks are an integral component of the data collection section of the protocol (Yin, 2013). Specific data collection tasks for the current study included gaining access to interviewees, having sufficient resources while doing fieldwork (e.g., computer, office supplies, and a quiet location for note writing), making a clear schedule and timeframe of the data collection activities, and providing for unanticipated events. The following sections address data collection tasks that were taken for this study. Additionally, the procedures for protecting human subjects will be described.

## **Participants**

In this section, I will describe the procedures and rationale for selecting participants who were included in this study. Further, I will describe the demographic information that was collected from participants prior to the interview, as well as the process for how informed consent was obtained from participants. Additionally, measures to ensure participant safety, privacy, and confidentiality will also be discussed.

A purposive sampling technique was used to identify and select a sample of three post-graduate clinical mental health counseling participants who have had the experience of the phenomenon under study. Purposive sampling technique enabled the researcher to select participants who had the potential to inform and address the grand research question (Charmaz, 2006). The sample size of three participants was supported by the recommendation of Creswell (2013) to not include more than four or five cases in a single study. He adds that this sample size provides ample opportunity for the identification of themes as well as cross-theme analysis (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, purposive sampling was helpful in generalizing the findings to similar cases (analytic generalization) as well as expanding and generalizing theories (Creswell, 2013).

The criteria for participation in this study included mental health practitioners who had received or were receiving videoconference supervision for clinical mental health counseling work with clients (this included practicum or internship) during graduate education or post graduate, received videoconferencing supervision for 10% - 25% of supervision hours, the supervisee identified as a racial minority and received supervision from a White supervisor, the acknowledgment that subtle forms of racism

exist, and personal experiences with racial microaggressions in videoconferencing supervision sessions.

Participants were recruited through posting recruitment emails to the Counselor Education and Supervision Network Listserv (CESNET-L) and asking those interested to email me if interested in participating. The recruitment emails were posted to the CESNET-L listserv on April 30, May 16, July 24, August 14, and September 18, 2017. Additionally, recruitment emails were sent directly to program directors and department chairpersons from Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) accredited mental health counseling programs. The program directors and department chairpersons were asked to forward the recruitment email to current students and alumni from their counseling programs. These emails were sent on March 26, June 3, June 5, and August 14, 2017. In the recruitment email, a definition of racial microaggressions was presented and noted as one of the inclusion criteria for participation. Participants who were selected for participation had relevant personal experience with racial microaggressions in videoconferencing supervision, identified as a racial minority, and worked with a White supervisor. Experiences of racial microaggressions were made explicit in the recruitment email and assisted in the selection of participants. Further, participants were provided an opportunity to gain insight into the cognitive, behavioral, and emotional impact of racial microaggressions.

Participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire which included information on race, ethnicity, gender, educational level, amount of clinical supervision experience, and geographic setting of clinical and supervision practice. Participants were asked to sign an informed consent form that outlined the expectations of participation in

the research project. The informed consent explained that participation was voluntary and discontinuation of participation could occur at any time. Pseudonyms were used instead of participants' names in the transcriptions and on the spreadsheet of demographic information, because the protection of privacy and confidentiality for participants was essential. The researcher was the only person with access to the interview recordings, which were stored on a password protected computer. The Minnesota State University, Mankato Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed the proposed research to ensure ethical compliance and appropriate consent procedure has been followed.

The sample of participants will be described following the collection of data.

### **Data Collection Sources**

A strength and hallmark of case study design is the use of multiple data sources, which enhances data credibility (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2013). This case study used the primary data collection source of in-depth interviews with participants as well as secondary data of the Racial Microaggressions in Supervision Checklist (Constantine & Sue, 2007; See Appendix C). Each data source served as a "puzzle piece," enhancing the overall picture and understanding of the phenomenon examined (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Furthermore, each data source converged into a holistic picture of the relationship within cross-racial, videoconferencing supervision, rather than each piece being examined independently (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Prior to the first interview question being asked, participants were asked to complete the Racial Microaggressions in Supervision Checklist, complete a demographic questionnaire, and informed that the focus of the interview focus was on subtle forms of

racism within videoconferencing supervision. The Racial Microaggressions in Supervision Checklist (Constantine & Sue, 2007) examines thoughts and feelings of supervisees about cross-cultural dynamics and issues that may arise in supervision. The instrument was developed as a result of a qualitative analysis of the perceptions of racial microaggressions among Black supervisees in cross-racial supervision (Constantine and Sue, 2007). There is a dearth of research about racial microaggressions in supervision, and subsequently, there is no research to indicate the validity of this scale.

Interviews with each of the participants was the main source of data and was treated as the most important sources of evidence in case study research (Yin, 2013). Although there was an interview protocol with specific questions to be examined, the interview protocol was not prescriptive and space was allowed for probing of additional areas of interest related to the broader goals of the study. The interview questions were fluid rather than rigid (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Aligning with a constructivist epistemology, an unstructured interview was used for this study to gain an understanding of the participants' worldview through their perspective and using their words to describe their experience. Interview questions were open-ended, and the researcher offered little direction or control over the participants' responses. Further, questions were asked in an unbiased manner to serve the need of the inquiry (Yin, 2013). To guide the interview, the following questions were asked of each participant:

1. What challenges have you faced as a racial or cultural minority with a White supervisor with racial microaggressions or subtle forms of racism in supervision? What thoughts, behaviors, and feelings were evoked in these experiences? How

did you address what came up for you and were you able to share this with your supervisor?

2. How would you describe the most noteworthy situation in supervision in which you felt uncomfortable because you perceived the interaction to have racial undercurrents? What feelings came up in that setting? How did that interaction impact your relationship with your supervisor?
3. In what way have these experiences impacted you personally and professionally? How has your experience with racial microaggressions impacted your work with clients and your professional development?
4. In what ways did these interactions impact your perceptions and feelings about your supervisor?
5. How have your strategies for dealing with experiences of racial microaggressions and subtle forms of racism changed over time, if at all?
6. Is there anything else you would like to add that I did not ask about specifically or that you would like to add?

Interviews took place in an office for one participant and online using HIPAA compliant videoconference software (Zoom) for two participants. Participants chose the location and format of their interview. Attention was paid to ensure distractions and extraneous noise were unlikely to occur. The privacy of the participant was considered by using a private space for the interview, both in person and online. Both in person and online interviews with participants were recorded using Zoom software and a copy of the video recording was saved on a password-protected computer. Following the interview, participant names were removed from the data and participants were given a pseudonym

when I transcribed the interviews. In addition, information from the demographic form and the Racial Microaggressions in Supervision Checklist (Sue & Constantine, 2007) was transferred to a spreadsheet, and participant names were changed to pseudonyms. The transcriptions were reviewed for accuracy, and minimal phrasing such as “umm” and “hmm” was deleted. The data coding and analysis procedures will be described in the subsequent section.

### **Data Analysis**

To produce empirically sound findings in the process of data analysis, I sought to examine, categorize, tabulate, test, and recombine evidence (Yin, 2013). In addition to the current study providing insight into the experience of racial microaggressions in cross-racial videoconferencing supervision, there were questions that remained unanswered through the inquiry. However, this study aimed to raise consciousness through the examination of the impact of experiences of supervisees in this type of supervisory relationship. The data analysis section includes a summation of techniques and strategies employed to answer research questions, defines assertions that can confidently be made, and determines additional areas of study (Stake, 2006).

Further, it was essential for me as the primary research instrument to examine my experiences, personal assumptions, and biases and how they influenced the data collection and analysis. Fitting within the constructivist perspective, my experience, bias, and sociopolitical status undoubtedly influenced the data analysis. Moreover, meaning created from the data collection in any given sociopolitical context could have been influenced by my experience and bias (Creswell, 2007). For these reasons, I make my experience, bias, and assumptions explicit in a Researcher Worldview statement toward



the end of this chapter. I attempt to maintain transparency with the participants and readers of this research and be critically aware of the dynamics of power throughout data analysis and throughout the research process.

### **Analytic Strategies**

Yin (2013) suggests four general strategies for data analysis in case study research, which include (a) relying on theoretical propositions, (b) working data from the “ground up,” (c) developing case descriptions, and (d) examining rival explanations. For the purpose of the current research, the analytic strategy relied on the propositions and theories driving the research (Baxter & Jack, 2008). By returning to the propositions (in Figure 3.1), I was able to stay focused on the purpose of this case study and maintain analytic priorities based on the propositions and theories.

Data collection and analysis occurred concurrently (Baxter & Jack, 2008) in this study. Case study design supported the use of analytic generalizations, rather than statistical generalizations of empirical research (Yin, 2013). As previously stated, analytic generalizations compare the results of a case study to previously developed theory, which is different from statistical generalizations which draws inferences from data to a population. As data were collected and analyzed, the findings were not generalized to all supervisees who are engaged in cross-racial videoconferencing supervision, rather it shed light on the important issue of the experience racial microaggressions within cross-racial videoconferencing supervision.

The steps taken to analyze the data for this inquiry included: (a) transcription of interviews; (b) coding interviews for categories and themes; (c) creation of a matrix of categories and placement of evidence supporting category within matrix; (d) comparing

emergent categories and themes to propositions; and (e) use of pattern matching technique to assess congruence between empirical and predicted pattern.

I transcribed the interviews and reviewed for them accuracy. Following transcription, I read the documents through the text several times to gain a sense of the data as a whole, prior to breaking it down into several parts (Agar, 1980). During this process, I took notes in the margin and formed initial codes. The codes represented distinct concepts and categories found within the text from what participants had said during the interviews. During the first phase of coding, concepts and categories were highlighted within the text, using different colors to distinguish each of the concepts and categories. Next, I detailed a description of the case and its context from the list of codes that was initially created. From the list of initial codes, broader themes and categories of information were formed (Creswell, 2013). Further, properties and dimensions of categories were continuously refined through this process. The process of data analysis, again, serves to answer research questions, define assertions that can confidently be made, and determine additional areas of study (Stake, 2006). Themes were generated from an aggregate of codes that were then used to identify patterns that emerged from the data.

Next, to assist in interpreting and making sense of the data, a matrix was created to display categories. For each category that was created, supporting evidence in the form of quotes from participants was placed within the matrix. The matrix was used to make sense of the themes and codes that had been created and also to aid in larger abstraction of the data. Data in the matrix were used to compare the emergent categories and themes to propositions found within the literature. In essence, I interpreted the data by comparing emergent categories and themes with the propositions that had been

identified in the research prior to the data gathering stage (Creswell, 2013). During this stage of the data collection and preliminary analysis, a pattern matching technique was used to assess congruence between the empirical and predicted pattern. In addition to data collection and initial analysis, analytic strategies were concurrently employed to provide direction for analyzing the data.

The analytic strategy employed in this research was the constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This strategy involves breaking the data down, followed by coding the data into categories. By using the constant comparative method, categories that emerged from the data derived from the customs and language of the participants, or from my identification of a category that was significant to the focus of inquiry. The categories that emerged from the language of the participants served to conceptualize the experience and worldview of the participant (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The experience of participants was captured by using their language, rather than my language as the researcher. Conversely, the categories that emerged from my perspective served the purpose of aiding in developing theoretical insights into the social processes at play in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As the categories were continuously refined, relationships to each other were explored and the experience were integrated into the matrix, as previously described.

### **Analytic Technique**

Within the analytic strategy of constant comparative method, an analytic technique of pattern matching was used to develop internal and external validity for this study. Pattern matching serves as one of the most desirable techniques to use, and compares empirically based patterns found in the data with predictions made prior to

collecting the data (Yin, 2013). Pattern matching increases internal validity by matching an “observed pattern” (a pattern of measured value) with an “expected pattern” (hypothesis; Hak & Dul, 2010). The expected pattern, and theory driving this research were: 1) Unconscious racism (and microaggressions) can manifest in a cross-racial supervisory relationship and may have harmful effects on supervisees, clients, the supervisory relationship, and supervisors; 2) Due to limited sensory input within videoconferencing supervision, and the experience of a cross-racial relationship, there is an amplified need for supervisors to connect with supervisees regarding the overt and covert nature of interactions; and 3) The experience of racial microaggressions contributes to a perceived lack of safety and trust in supervision, which negatively impacts the experience of multiculturally competent supervision.

As the data were coded and categories and themes were generated, the patterns were compared to the expected patterns identified above. The expected patterns also served to simultaneously contribute to refining the categories and themes generated from the data.

### **Establishing Credibility and Trustworthiness**

Many frameworks have been developed to evaluate rigor and assess trustworthiness in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Moreover, general guidelines for critically appraising qualitative research have been established (Mays, 2000) and strategies to establish credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability have been written about across fields (Krefting, 1991). The following section discusses general aspects of trustworthiness and credibility as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985), and identifies specific strategies to address construct validity,

internal validity, external validity, and reliability within case study design, as described by Yin (2013). Additionally, aspects of triangulation, member checking, and memo writing are discussed.

A number of writers have outlined criteria for judging the quality of qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that quality markers of qualitative research parallel a process used to judge positivist, quantitative research. Common markers of internal validity are equated with credibility, while external validity is equated to transferability and reliability is equated with dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that one of the most important factors of establishing trustworthiness is ensuring credibility. One component of establishing credibility and trustworthiness is prolonged engagement with participants in qualitative research. Prolonged engagement is important to gaining trust of participants and was employed in this study by hour long interviews and back and forth email communication. Another important provision a researcher can make to bolster the credibility of a study is member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking involves testing the analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions with participants who had originally provided the data being interpreted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the second round of data analysis, member checking was used to illustrate themes and categories that emerged from the data and to determine their fit with the experience of the participants. The next part of this section describes specific strategies to address validity and reliability within a case study design.

Construct validity can be challenging in case study research and has often been criticized for the tendency of researchers to use their subjective judgments as a measure

to collect data, rather than operationalizing a set of measures for data collection (Yin, 2013). This research utilized the tactic of member checking to increase construct validity. To implement this tactic, each participant was emailed the list of themes and categories gleaned from the first round of data analysis and participants were asked for feedback of the interpretations from the interviews and participants were given the opportunity to discuss and refine the interpretation (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Participants were given the option to email feedback back to me, or to set up a phone call to discuss their thoughts and perspective. Also, through member checking, participants had the opportunity to contribute new or additional perspectives to the focus of the current study.

The second aspect of establishing trustworthiness for the present study is with internal validity, which seeks to establish a causal relationship in which certain conditions are believed to lead to other conditions (Yin, 2013). In case study research, internal validity is concerned with the issue of making inferences and an inference is made each time an event cannot be observed (Yin, 2013). I used the tactic of pattern matching to address the concerns with making inferences about what the data meant. Essentially, the “observed pattern” within the data collected, was compared to the “expected pattern” as was hypothesized in the propositions and theory.

Third, external validity in case study design is concerned with issues related to analytic generalizations, which may be based on advancing theoretical concepts identified in designing the study or establishing new concepts that arose from the case study (Yin, 2013). Differing from experimental studies that are concerned with statistical generalizations, case study research supports analytic generalizations. To address concerns with the external validity, this study utilized the strategy of the use of theory

and propositions related to microaggressions. Attention was given to the use of existing literature to form initial propositions and theory that linked to the grand research question. By clarifying propositions for the research, the groundwork was initially formed as a starting point of addressing external validity.

Fourth, reliability was addressed by using a protocol and by making the steps of the research process as operational as possible. The protocol was developed with documented detail of the research process, which aids in possible replication of the study. Additionally, I identified my worldview and biases through a worldview statement, which was another strategy to address reliability. This is expanded upon in the following section.

As illustrated, multiple strategies to increase credibility and trustworthiness of the study were employed. The following section makes the researchers worldview, bias, and experience explicit.

### **Researcher Worldview**

One of the unique characteristics common to case study research design and critical research paradigm is the researcher making her experience and biases explicit (Creswell, 2007). Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) state, "...critical researchers enter into an investigation with their assumptions on the table, so no one is confused concerning the epistemological and political baggage they bring with them to the research site" (p. 406). In the following section, the researcher worldview is described, so as to add context to the lens through which I filter the data collection and analysis.

As previously stated, I identify as a middle class, White, heterosexual, cisgender woman. I was born and raised in a suburb of Saint Paul, Minnesota to a father who

worked in construction and a mother who was a teacher. Growing up in a middle class, suburban, neighborhood, my race typically matched that of other kids in my neighborhood. I racially identified with the White majority, and graduated high school where White was the major racial group represented. I had few friends who differed racially or culturally from me. However, even from a young age, I was dumbfounded by racism, bigotry, and prejudice. Even then I subconsciously understood the oppressive social structures that stacked the deck in my favor, partially because of the color of my skin and the time and place in history in which I was born. Racism, classism, and prejudice never made sense to me, and as I continued in my education, I completed a great deal of coursework and continuing education in diversity and cultural competence.

My professional training is in Alcohol and Drug Counseling (ADC) and Counselor Education and Supervision, and my professional identity is a combination of both of these disciplines. One of the aspects that drew me to counseling those who specifically struggled with substance use disorders was the experience of stigma surrounding substance use and abuse. People who deal with addiction often represent a marginalized portion of society because of the stigma that they cannot handle life's challenges and need to turn to alcohol and other drugs to deal with it. Also, forces of power seemed to be exerted by non-users onto users as more important, morally capable, and stronger than those who fell into addiction. Social positions of people more vulnerable to substance use and abuse are reinforced by exertions of power by those who have resources to prevent and treat addiction.

To make sense of my clients' experience with alcohol and drugs, I examined my own feelings as a middle class, White, heterosexual, cisgender woman towards people



with substance use disorders. As I did this (and make every attempt to continue) I gained an appreciation for the complexity and layers of the human experience and of my clients. Further, I have gained an appreciation for the unfortunate results of exertion of power and the reinforcement of social structures that continue to keep marginalized members of our society in an oftentimes powerless position. I also gained insight into the inherent power differential between clients and myself because I was their counselor. I further realized the importance of not exerting my power in the relationship and having the courage to have conversations about race, power, and oppression in attempting to understand the worldview of clients with whom I worked.

Through my doctoral coursework in Counselor Education and Supervision, I had an opportunity to teach clinical supervision to mental health graduate students. One aspect of pride for the doctoral program I am a student in is their clinical lab facility, which has technological tools for clinical skills instruction and videoconferencing. My predominant experience with videoconferencing technology was in having classmates attend class when they were unable to physically be present at class. In addition, I have used videoconferencing to provide clinical supervision as a teaching assistant to mental health graduate students. These experiences could contribute to bias because the experiences I had with videoconferencing technology and clinical supervision were quite positive for me. For myself and for the students I supervised, the comfort level with technology was quite high.

Based on my previous experiences in clinical supervision and cultural diversity, some of my bias in researching the experience of supervisors and supervisees in cross-racial, videoconferencing supervision are: (a) I am a middle class, White, heterosexual,

cisgender woman, which could have impacted my choice of topic, research questions, data collection, data analysis, and dissemination of results; (b) I have experienced providing and receiving clinical supervision using videoconferencing as a tool for supervision and experienced positive outcomes using this format; (c) when providing and receiving supervision with a videoconferencing tool, I experienced a high level of comfort with the use of technology in users and no technological issues were experienced; (d) power differentials inherently exist in clinical supervision relationships and with the added layers of a cross-racial relationship that uses videoconferencing to provide clinical supervision, the power differential between supervisor and supervisee may be amplified; (e) I have observed the consequences of unintentional racism and microaggressions, and (f) power imbalances and oppression are systemically based and technological advancements failing to consider the impact on marginalized groups of people may further contribute to the oppressive system and power imbalances.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter described the qualitative approach, specifically case study research method, which was utilized to explore the experiences of supervisees and supervisors engaged in cross-racial, videoconferencing supervision. A description of the philosophical foundation of constructivist framework was provided as well as a delineation of the purpose of the research and the grand research question. This section clarified propositions that guided inquiry by forming a foundation to elaborate on the “how” and “why” components of the research question. Moreover, this section identified the unit of analysis as supervisees who are participating in cross-racial, videoconferencing clinical supervision. The theory driving this case study was specified,

and the data collection, participants, and data collection sources were described. Also, this section discussed the data analysis strategies, analytic techniques, and strategies that were employed to increase credibility and trustworthiness of the study. Finally, the chapter concluded by describing the worldview of the researcher, how previous experiences contributed to biases held by the researcher, and how it can impact all elements of this research study.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS: INCIDENTS OF MICROAGGRESSION

In the first three chapters, the topic of the experience of racial microaggressions in videoconferencing supervision was introduced, pertinent literature that informed the study was reviewed, and the methods used to research the topic of microaggressions within cross-racial, videoconferencing supervision were described. This chapter includes a description of participant profiles and details the data analysis and technique. Next, the data analysis strategy will be reviewed and a description of the major themes that emerged from the data will be defined and the case will be examined from an individual and collective participant perspective. The chapter will conclude with matching data with the expected pattern of the propositions. Each proposition and supporting evidence from the case will be presented.

### **Participant Profiles**

The subsequent participant profiles serve as pertinent background information about the participants who contributed their stories and their experience to this process. Each participant has her own biographic and demographic information that contributes to forming the case to be analyzed for the study. Rich data were collected from each participant and were meant to provide the reader with additional context to illustrate and confirm an effective case study report. The following participant profiles describe biographic and demographic information of each participant. Pseudonyms were chosen to replace participant names to protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants.

#### **Adrian**

Adrian is a 27-year-old, Hispanic female who resides and practices counseling in a suburban Southern state. Her highest level of education completed is a PhD and has been working in a clinical setting for two and a half years. Both Adrian and her supervisor are located in a suburban setting, where they work serving clients in hospice care. Adrian describes her supervisor being very instrumental in teaching her “everything she knows” about working with clients in hospice care. Her supervisor is a 47-year old female who holds a PhD and is a Licensed Professional Counselor Supervisor in the state of Texas. Additionally, Adrian’s supervisor has more than 20 years of experience in counseling and supervision. At the time of the interview for this case study, Adrian and her supervisor had worked together for more than two years.

**Tabitha**

Tabitha is a 54-year-old, mixed race African American/Hawaiian female who resides in a rural area of a Northern East Coast state. She works delivering in-home counseling to individuals and families in rural Pennsylvania. Tabitha has a Master of Science degree and has been working in a clinical setting for two years. While attending a graduate program in counseling, she worked with a supervisor who provided group supervision in an online format at her University. Tabitha’s master’s degree in counseling was completed in a fully online format. In addition, Tabitha’s supervisor is a White male in his late 50s who came into Counselor Education and Supervision following a career as a police officer.

**Riley**

Riley is a 35-year-old, African American female who resides and works in an urban setting in a Midwest state. Currently attending a doctoral program for Counselor

Education and Supervision, Riley completed her Masters of Science in counseling in an online counseling program. She has been working in a clinical setting for eight years and is attending a solely online doctoral program in Counselor Education and Supervision. Riley identifies her geographic setting as urban and the geographic setting of her supervisor as suburban/rural. Riley's supervisor is a female whose highest level of education is a PhD and is in her late 50s.

### **Data Analysis Strategy and Analytic Technique**

While working with each of the participants and gaining insight into the nuances of their experience, data collection and analysis occurred concurrently. Specifically, the data analysis strategy utilized for this study relied on the propositions and theories that drove the research questions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The two analytic strategies used for this study were to rely on the propositions and utilize the analytic technique of pattern patching. To serve the purpose of providing limits around the case and helped to narrow the focus of the inquiry, the technique of relying on propositions and matching emergent themes with the anticipated findings was used.

Reliance on the propositions and pattern matching, as data analysis and analytic technique, provided support for the analytic generalizations for the study.

The propositions, listed in Appendix A, helped to answer the “how” and the “why” associated with learning about participants’ experience with microaggressions in videoconferencing supervision. Additionally, they helped to form the conceptual framework for the study (Stake, 2006). Propositions that helped in data analysis of this study focused on the potential for microaggressions to be present in cross-cultural supervision, the potentially deleterious impact of unconscious racism and lack of cultural

awareness on the supervisee, the importance of supervisors addressing the overt and covert nature of communication, and microaggressions occurring in specific forms, categories, and posing psychological dilemmas.

In addition to the propositions guiding the data analysis, the expected pattern also served to guide the analysis of data. The expected patterns included: 1) Unconscious racism (and microaggressions) can manifest in a cross-racial supervisory relationship and may have harmful effects on supervisees, clients, the supervisory relationship, and supervisors; 2) Due to limited sensory input within videoconferencing supervision, and the experience of a cross-racial relationship, there is an amplified need for supervisors to connect with supervisees regarding the overt and covert nature of interactions; and 3) The experience of racial microaggressions contributes to a perceived lack of safety and trust in supervision, which negatively impacts the experience of multiculturally competent supervision. The following section discusses themes that emerged from the data, first within each of the participant cases and second, a discussion of themes common to all participants. Furthermore, the following section discusses the logic that links the data to the propositions and expected pattern.

### **Individual Case Themes - Adrian**

Five themes emerged from the data collected from Adrian. To review, Adrian is a 27-year-old, Hispanic female who resides and practices counseling in a suburban area of a Southern state. The primary data collected was an in-depth, in person interview with Adrian, as well as the secondary data of the Racial Microaggressions in Supervision Checklist (Constantine & Sue, 2007). Individual case themes identified for Adrian included: 1) lack of racial and cultural awareness; 2) assumption of relatability; 3) feeling

emotionally shutdown; 4) external processing; 5) role of power and impact of Skype session.

**Lack of racial and cultural awareness.** One theme that emerged from the data was a lack of racial and cultural awareness from Adrian's supervisor. This arose out of an assumption made by Adrian's supervisor that guidance around cultural aspects of case conceptualization was not needed if Adrian's clients were of similar cultural or racial background. The lack of racial and cultural awareness emerged and was an underlying condition and precursor that contributed to the likelihood of a racial microaggression occurring. The underlying assumption from her supervisor was that if she shared a cultural background with a client, then Adrian did not need additional support, since they shared a similar aspect of their identity (e.g., Mexican, Hispanic, or Catholic). Adrian identified feeling that the topic of race and culture was broached more by her supervisor when Adrian worked with a client who identified as a race or culture different from hers than she did with a client who had a similar identity. Adrian's supervisor had a skillset and competency to guide Adrian through conceptualizing a client if they did not have the same racial or cultural identity. "So, for example, if I'm working with someone who identifies as White and is Buddhist, she would have a lot more information and ways to conceptualize their case versus someone who identifies as Hispanic and is Catholic." On the Racial Microaggressions in Supervision Checklist (Constantine & Sue, 2007), Adrian endorsed items of her supervisor being insensitive about her racial or cultural background. In addition, she endorsed items of her supervisor having unconscious racial or cultural stereotypes about Adrian and her clients.



**Assumption of relatability.** Another theme identified was the assumption of relatability with clients of similar racial or cultural background. This theme emerged from Adrian describing assumptions made by her supervisor that she would relate more to clients who shared similar cultural or racial background than those she did not have racial or cultural similarities to. The assumption of relatability led to Adrian experiencing a racial microaggression from her supervisor.

I was sitting there and she introduced me to one of the families who happened to identify as White and she said, you know this is a great opportunity cause you have an adolescent now and I had been working with older adults and, she said you'll like them cause they're Catholic too. (Adrian)

Also, Adrian described her supervisor making assumptions about her ability to work better with and understand people who emmigrated to the United States from Mexico.

I think another example goes back to the assumption that I understand what family members who come to hospice that are coming in from Mexico - that I understand what they go through because I've had family members who have come in from Mexico. (Adrian)

Adrian described feeling like she'd been led into certain situations with clients that were based on the assumption that she would be able to relate more to a client who identifies as Mexican or Hispanic. Also, she described incidents in which her supervisor made assumptions that she spoke Spanish and could work with Spanish-speaking families despite her communicating that she did not speak Spanish to her supervisor on multiple occasions.

The theme of an assumption of relatability was further supported by the items Adrian endorsed on the Racial Microaggressions in Supervision Checklist. Adrian felt her supervisor, at times, was insensitive about her racial and cultural background. In addition, her supervisor sometimes denied having or minimized having racial or cultural stereotypes.

**Emotionally shutdown.** Immediately following the microaggressive comment from her supervisor, Adrian described a somatic response to the insult, “I just it was like... I didn’t respond any way in my head it was that my body physically reacted to her.” This physical response led to the emotional response of feeling shut down. Adrian described feeling insulted by her supervisor and having a tendency to shut down when she feels insulted or offended by someone. Adrian’s supervisor also made an assumption she would like clients more who identified as Catholic more than non-Catholic clients and described her reaction, “I think I kind of ended up feeling more quiet than anything.” This experience with her supervisor led her to feel emotionally shut down, and contributed to Adrian to not wanting to address these specific concerns with her supervisor. Additionally, she felt offended by her supervisor’s racial and cultural insensitivity.

Adrian was keenly aware of her professional identity and the expectations of her professional disposition within the supervision process. She did not want to have her competence questioned by bringing the issue up with her supervisor.

I think the professional piece always stays there, but I think as far as my wanting to do something to help right then and there, it kind of just pushes down so far within me because then I feel like my competence is questioned. (Adrian)

**External processing.** Despite feeling emotionally shut down after the incidents of racial microaggression, Adrian needed to process the situation with trusted people in her life. She would call and process the situation with a friend or her mom, “But, coming home I’m definitely calling a friend or calling my mom back home and just saying, “you won’t believe what happened.” By externally processing the situation with someone other than her supervisor, Adrian was able to get feedback that served her both personally and professionally. In response to one of the phone calls with her grandmother (whom she calls mom) Adrian’s mom responded,

‘What are some of the things you’ve assumed about her?’ Which is one of the things my grandmother will always ask. And it can be annoying as everything, because we don’t want to admit these things that we’re assuming or saying.

(Adrian)

Thus, the challenge experienced with her supervisor led Adrian to seek outside counsel. The outside counsel she received challenged her interpersonally with her supervisor and intrapersonally by her mom asking about her own assumptions made about her supervisor.

**Role of power.** The final individual case theme that emerged from the data provided by Adrian was the role of power within Skype supervision sessions. There was a keen sense of the power differential in the supervision relationship, yet Adrian described a sense that the power became more equal when using Skype, since she was able to participate in the session from her own home. At times, Adrian chose not to bring up concerns or issues with her supervisor in fear of negative repercussions from her supervisor. If her supervisor asked her to fix something, she would comply, “because they (her supervisor) happen to be the person in power and in control of signing these

things.” She feared if she brought up concerns, her supervisor may refuse to sign off on her client or supervision hours.

Adrian noted one of the differences between Skype and in person supervision sessions in that in person sessions felt like there was no option of escape when participating in supervision. Whereas in Skype supervision sessions, there could be an easier escape, if she were to place the blame on technological difficulties. One aspect of this theme was the idea that the incident of microaggression took meaning away from the supervision experience, even more so on Skype versus in person. There was a sense that the insult felt more shaming in Skype supervision than in person, since it occurred in her home versus in a less personal space like an office.

I definitely think that it took away from that experience. But I think the difference in that is I felt like those moments of when it happened through Skype there was more of a shameful feeling because most of the time we’re Skyping and it’s in my home. (Adrian)

She added, “And so, then I feel like I was insulted in my home versus, being out at the site itself.”

Despite the challenges Adrian experienced with her supervisor in Skype supervision sessions, Adrian remained loyal to the supervision process and acknowledged the vast amount of knowledge she gained throughout supervision. She recognized, “I think that everything that I know about working with the death and dying population, and working with hospice working with older adults, working with grief and loss I couldn't have picked a better LPCS (Licensed Professional Counselor Supervisor).” Additionally, contrary to most items Adrian endorsed on the Racial Microaggressions in Supervision

Checklist, Adrian endorsed feeling that her supervisor was often very knowledgeable about racial and cultural issues with regard to supervision and therapy. She then concluded, “I still wouldn’t change her for anything.”

### **Individual Case Themes - Tabitha**

Primary data were collected through an in-depth, in person interview with Tabitha, as well as the secondary data of the Racial Microaggressions in Supervision Checklist (Constantine & Sue, 2007). Tabitha is a 54-year-old, mixed race African American/Hawaiian female who resides in rural Northern East Coast state. Five themes emerged from the data collected from Tabitha, and included: 1) held to a higher standard; 2) feeling undervalued by her supervisor; 3) life situation impacting Skype supervision; 4) physical and emotional response; and 5) impact of Skype sessions.

**Held to a higher standard.** The first theme that emerged from the data collected was Tabitha feeling like she was held to a higher standard than the other students in her group supervision class. She described being the only person of color in her graduate school practicum cohort and feeling like the expectations were different for her than they were for other students. She described the double standard exhibited by her supervisor, who cut more breaks for her classmates than he did for her. Tabitha suggested this materialized because of the racial familiarity her supervisor had with all other students but her. Tabitha said, “I think it just begins simply because you’re familiar with someone of the same race, so there’s a lot more leeway, you know what I mean, there’s a lot more forgiveness, there’s a lot more acceptance.” When participating in Skype sessions, Tabitha described the expectations for her timeliness to class and feeling like more grace was given to other students who were late to class. Tabitha felt like no matter what she

did he already had his mind made up, “I’m very specific with what I do, I have to be specific because I’m a Black woman.”

On the Racial Microaggressions in Supervision Checklist, she endorsed feeling like her supervisor focused on her clinical weaknesses in supervision because of her racial group membership. Additionally, she felt as though being a Black woman contributed to the elevated standards she was held to.

I think that as a Black woman I am always held to the strictest, you know the rules are the rules for me- there’s no hey Tabitha, I’m sorry you went through that, you know, what can I do for you? It’s none of that, it’s you weren’t in class, there’s no excuse. (Tabitha)

There was also a sense of being so new to the field that she did not know what was and was not permissible. Tabitha felt held to standards of professionalism, despite being unclear what the expectations were. Furthermore, Tabitha felt scrutinized by her supervisor, with a lack of grace to make mistakes, “but it seemed like every time he could, he would find something wrong with me or something that I was violating.” The theme of feeling held to a higher standard than her classmates emerged as a precursor to the experience Tabitha had with a microaggression from her supervisor.

**Feeling undervalued.** The second theme emerged from the data was Tabitha feeling undervalued by her supervisor. She described feeling she was always on the defense and like there were consequences for her being in the program. Tabitha described her supervisor demonstrating a lack of care and concern for the learning process. Tabitha stated, “There was never any gentleness there, there was never any simple conversation.” Feeling undervalued by her supervisor, Tabitha felt as though her

supervisor was unaware of the realities of race and racism. At times, she felt he had unconscious racial stereotypes about her, although they were minimized. Further, she felt her value as a therapist went wholeheartedly unrecognized by her supervisor, and that he did not recognize the assets she contributed to her work as a therapist. Tabitha continued, “Everything I’m telling you, there was no... I know I’m at a loss for all the clinical words. But there was no, he wasn’t paying attention to the antecedent. He had already made up what it was.” Not only was her value not recognized by her supervisor, Tabitha experienced a lack of grace and understanding from her supervisor.

**Life impacting supervision.** Another theme highlighted by Tabitha was her supervisor overlooking the manner in which her life situation impacted supervision sessions that occurred via Skype. Tabitha’s supervisor did not pay attention to or ask about contextual life factors or how they could impact the videoconferencing supervision experience. She described working full time as an aide for a local politician and making enough money to support herself through graduate school, and when the candidate she worked for lost the election, Tabitha went “straight into poverty.” Even Tabitha acknowledged she did not have any idea of the types of challenges that would arise in an all online graduate program in counseling. She mentioned struggling with making her rent payment, continuing coursework in her graduate program, trying to keep food on her table, and the electric bill paid, “so that you won’t, you know, lose the internet, so that you can go to grad school.” Tabitha described a conversation with the internet provider, “I have my papers due next week, can you please just you know- wait.” Tabitha described her compounding stress as “struggling in graduate school, trying to finish my program, trying to get part time jobs, (having) a broken-down computer, and trying to

piece things together.” But her supervisor did not see those things, he did not ask or try to know things outside of their time together during supervision. She added, “...with videoconferencing, you can’t even comprehend what’s going on in your students’ lives.”

**Physical and emotional response.** Previous themes that were identified served as precursors to the experience of a racial microaggression Tabitha experienced from her supervisor. Tabitha described her most memorable incident of a microaggression that occurred when she missed class due to experiencing deaths of three people she cared about in one week. Upon telling her supervisor this information and “going above and beyond” including sending him the obituaries of the people who had died, Tabitha said that her supervisor did not believe her. The conversation between she and her supervisor ended in him stating that she could have sent him the links to “anybody.”

Tabitha immediately experienced this incident as “a total sucker punch” and went on to describe physical and emotional responses to this experience of a racial microaggression from her supervisor. In the moment, Tabitha’s emotional response was to feel “appalled that I had my whole entirety questioned that way. It was more of a deeper, professional integrity has been compromised.” She felt hurt that her supervisor questioned her integrity and professionalism and from that point on, her focus was solely on completing her program. As an isolated incident, Tabitha may not have experienced this as a racial microaggression. However, previous experience led her to feel undervalued and held to a higher standard by her supervisor, in part because of her race. These contextual factors may have contributed to Tabitha perceiving this incident as a racial microaggression.



Following the incident, Tabitha became disengaged from her supervisor and committed to solely focusing on graduation, “From then on, all I did was to just get finished. What do you want me to write? Okay.” Her focus shifted towards following directions exactly as her supervisor and other instructors told her, as a means to the end of graduation. Tabitha described a sense of framing her graduate experience as a “before and after” her experience with the racial microaggression from her supervisor. The incident had lasting effects on her willingness to emotionally invest in her program, Tabitha commented “after those things happened to me I didn’t have a connection to the school anymore, or the professors, or the teachers.” Sadly, the incident also contributed to Tabitha’s decision not to attend graduation, “I think that I’m kind of good because I’m a wounded person as far as that. I didn’t go to my graduation.” Tabitha felt wounded from the incident of the microaggression and was impacted so greatly that participating in graduation no longer held significant value for her.

**Impact of Skype.** The final theme that emerged from Tabitha’s case was in the impact of Skype on supervision and the experience of the racial microaggression. Tabitha described the absence of intangible, energetic qualities in videoconferencing sessions that she felt could have impacted her experience with her supervisor. She reflected on her experience and wished that her supervisor could have sensed her grief, her honesty, and understood her genuineness in what she had communicated to him about her experience. Tabitha reflected on the experience with a sense of forlorn,

He would have had a chance to get to know me, you know, yeah. I just think that people can feel you, you know- you always see the kids “you feel me”- you know, but maybe he would have kind felt my grief. Maybe he would have felt you

know, my sincerity. Maybe he would have felt all those things, I don't know.

(Tabitha)

Tabitha believed that her experience would have been different in person versus being over Skype. She commented that the assumptions her supervisor made about her were impacted by the context of having supervision on Skype. She tearfully acknowledged, "Oh well, you just made me tear up...because they would have known- they would have known what kind of person I am. A lot of his discussions were based on what he believed Black women were." She also felt the preconceptions her supervisor had towards her impacted how he treated her in their interactions on Skype. "It was whatever conceptions he had of a Black woman that's what he was coloring everything that he was talking to me." This theme emerged from the lack of nonverbal, intangible energy that this participant felt unable to communicate to her supervisor in sessions using videoconference.

The impact of Skype supervision did not only have negative connotations for Tabitha. Similar to Adrian, Tabitha experienced situations in supervision that felt hurtful and awful. However, Tabitha took her experience and reframed it as a learning opportunity. She described a sense of triumph in overcoming obstacles set before her during her graduate program, especially during supervision, "I feel very confident in my skills. I feel like the program at *university name* did prepare me, even the bad stuff made me an excellent therapist." This confidence also contributed to her sense of identity and self-confidence. Tabitha added, "You know, I'm able to stand my ground, I'm able to know my own integrity." Tabitha worked through her experience and was able to express appreciation towards her supervisor for what she learned, despite the challenges.

She said, “I did write him a note eventually telling him that he made me a better therapist. And you know, that’s what I left with from this whole program. I left thinking they made me better therapist.”

### **Individual Case Themes - Riley**

The primary data collected was an in-depth, in person interview with Riley, as well as the secondary data of the Racial Microaggressions in Supervision Checklist (Constantine & Sue, 2007). To review, Riley is a 35-year-old, African American female who resides and works in an urban setting in a Midwest state. Seven themes emerged from the data collected from Riley, and included: 1) quality of communication differences between videoconference and in person supervision; 2) underestimation of knowledge and skill of supervisee; 3) lack of depth in discussions of multicultural counseling, race, and racial identity; 4) double standard around perceived credibility; 5) holistically assessing the situation; 6) emotional and somatic response to incident; and 7) personal development resulting from incident.

**Different quality of communication.** The first theme that emerged from the data collected from Riley was the qualitative differences between in person and videoconferencing supervision. One of the processes that was different in videoconference versus in person supervision was the norming process of establishing a working group dynamic. Not only does Riley describe this as taking longer, she noted importance in over-communicating to ensure understanding.

I would say earlier on in like the videoconferencing experience there’s kind of a norming process that kind of happens with what’s the proper etiquette, so, there’s

kind of some over-communication that happens and to make sure that your point is being received. (Riley)

Riley also suggested that there is a difference in proximity and ability to use body language that impacts how information is communicated and received in videoconferencing supervision. She suggested, "...there's not the leaning in to be perceived as engaged or more engaging versus sitting back and feeling less engaged or more restricted or distancing." In addition to the nonverbal communication of leaning in or sitting back, Riley describes additional ways the absence of nonverbal cues impacts supervision, "you can kind of see shifting in a chair, but not as much because people want to stay, or at least I would want to stay in the visual window." Moreover, body language that suggests discomfort is absent when engaging in supervision using a videoconference platform.

**Underestimation of knowledge and skill of supervisee.** In addition to the nuances of in-person and videoconference supervision, another theme that emerged was the surprise Riley's supervisor felt when Riley demonstrated knowledge or skill that did not fit the expectations or preconceived notions of her supervisor. Riley described this occurring with herself as well as other students,

It hasn't always been about me, although there have been two times where the supervisor was particularly surprised by my knowledge of a particular kind of intervention or challenged a diagnosis that I had come to and just was surprised that I knew that or I was aware of that. Or that I made that kind of connection of certain things. (Riley)

Riley described those incidents as unanticipated, stating, “those kinds of instances always kind of surprise me and take me back to, why wouldn’t I know that, why wouldn’t I have that information, isn’t that what we’re supposed to do?” The preconceived thoughts her supervisor had about Riley engendered a sense of surprise by her supervisor when Riley could articulate a response to the question. At times, she felt offended because of the racial or cultural insensitivity of her supervisor. Riley added, “So, it’s mostly the shock and surprise of knowing something or understanding something or resourcefulness, those kinds of things.”

**Lack of depth in discussions around race.** Connected to the preconceptions Riley’s supervisor had about her, another theme that emerged was the lack of depth in discussions of multicultural counseling, race, and racial identity. Riley acknowledged the multicultural awareness her supervisors demonstrated in videoconferencing supervision, however, she felt it occurred at a surface level. Riley said that her supervisors had even been the ones to bring up multicultural counseling conversations, “but it’s been very, again, surface-y.” This theme emerged as a precursor to the experience of a racial microaggression in Riley’s case.

So, there’s the perception or willingness to talk about it to a certain extent. Right, so the discussion only goes so far when it comes to integrating and understanding racial and cultural issues in the presentation of mental health symptoms. (Riley)

There was an external awareness of and discussion of multicultural counseling, however, there was an absence of fully integrating the impact of race and culture in case conceptualization of clients. Her supervisor minimized and seemed unaware of the realities of race and racism. Moreover, her supervisor avoided discussing or addressing

racial and cultural issues in supervision and important issues around race and culture in general. Riley discussed the tendency for her supervisor to overlook contextual factors and not conceptualize clients in a systemic manner, stating, “But it doesn’t go far enough for what that means with the environmental experiences like the sociocultural or the sociopolitical kind of climate and how that’s impacting (the client).” Specifically, she continues,

Yes, this person is a person of color, but it doesn’t go to what does that mean for their work and their relationships and their involvement in the criminal justice system that brought us to this place, and to see us in the first place. (Riley)

This theme integrated the notion of an assumption made by Riley’s supervisor that if a clinician is White, then there is not a need to consider culture. “So, working with clients who identify as White or European, there’s not that explicit, intentional- at least from my supervisors with, what is their cultural background, how does that influence them?”

Furthermore, Riley pondered,

And what does that mean for you as a woman of color working with a White man or a White woman or you know something like that. You know, I don’t think it’s ever been brought up, actually. Even though I feel it. (Riley)

**Double standard around perceived credibility.** Another theme that emerged from the data was the added pressure to demonstrate credibility as an African-American woman. The underlying assumption was that if the supervisee had racially identified as White, credibility would be assumed. Riley experienced added pressure to demonstrate her credibility by going above and beyond what a White supervisee might have, by justifying and defending choices for client care. Riley considers the experiences she had,

“It also has challenged me to be prepared for explaining myself and giving very solid explanations of why I’m thinking what I’m thinking, or why I’m drawing the conclusion that I’ve come to.” She described feeling added pressure as a woman of color, to know client conceptualizations really well and be able to “say it right now and have it accessible to pull up at any time.” Additionally, Riley considers her racial identity as an African American woman and concluded,

I think as that translates to other parts of being in the profession, it definitely has pushed me to be really sure, or at least try to be really sure of what I’m saying and to say it well, with a solid argument supporting it. (Riley)

Thus, her experiences contributed to an increased level of preparation to know and be able to communicate her level of knowledge well.

Riley gave an example of a racial microaggression that she experienced during a presentation of a case conceptualization. She identified the client being presented was a person of color and the interaction between her supervision group and her supervisor.

There was starting to be discussions about the socio-political environment and how that was affecting the client and how that was affecting the organization...and you know, it got kind of like really heavy and there was something, I don’t remember the exact words, but it was basically like, ‘we need to lighten the mood.’ (Riley)

Riley added that her supervisor agreed with this comment and moved on from the topic. Courageously, Riley spoke up and asked the supervisor to go back to the topic that they had moved on from. She sensed the discomfort of her classmates and her supervisor in

discussing the systemic barriers for her client. The topic was briefly revisited and the class moved onto another topic.

**Holistic assessment of situation.** One theme that emerged as a response to the experience of a racial microaggression was a sense of needing to holistically assess the situation. Riley described feeling conflicted and asking herself if “it’s really that (a microaggression)” and the tendency of her classmates and her supervisor to minimize that piece of understanding the client. She felt as though her supervisor had not allowed for discussions of cultural considerations and the way the sociopolitical climate impacted conceptualization of her client. The situation caused her to question herself and think about alternate explanations for what she was experiencing. Riley said, “That it has caused me to really think about what is it that I’m seeing? Is there an alternative explanation? And which one is the one that I kind of, want to decide?” Again, this correlates to a previous theme of feeling pressure to have solid evidence to support claims she was making. She felt the same pressure to holistically evaluate her experience of a microaggression and assess if that was in fact what she had experienced.

**Emotional and somatic responses to microaggression.** Another theme that emerged from Riley’s experience with a racial microaggression, was emotional and somatic responses to this incident. Immediately following this incident, Riley described feeling anxious, offended, and invisible. Moreover, she described an awareness of a tingling sensation in her chest, a very somatic tightening in her chest. Riley said that she has experienced this feeling in other non-work situations, and it has indicated that something did not feel right about the situation. She describes, “and it’s usually my alert to this doesn’t feel right. And it’s that way in other situations, so I kind of trust it.”



Additionally, in the moment Riley asked her supervisor to revisit the topic in the class discussion, Riley stated, “it was definitely- I’m sweaty, I’m anxious, I’m feeling- I’m feeling sure but still hesitant.” When asked to elaborate on this, Riley reflected that even though she knew she was doing the right thing, she was still uncomfortable with it. She reflected on this moment as an act of bravery. “So, I guess I would describe that as bravery.” Riley’s experience with a racial microaggression in part, played a role in her personal and professional development, because it gave her confidence to speak up when she knew something did not feel right. She recognized after speaking up the first time, “It definitely, I felt more comfortable with her and it gave me more confidence to say what I need to say or to continue to speak up.”

The courage that Riley demonstrated by speaking up when the microaggression occurred impacted the way her supervisor followed up on the situation. She described the unexpected next step of her supervisor, which occurred the following week in class.

She sent out an email saying I just realized that this happened, I’ve been processing it you know and I apologize and I’d like to process it during our next session. And then we spent, really almost the entire session processing that incident- what happened, why people were uncomfortable, what that meant. So that was really refreshing. (Riley)

The feedback Riley experienced from this incident was that because she had the courage to speak up, her supervisor acknowledged and took ownership for her part in the incident and the class had an opportunity to work through the challenging situation.

**Personal development.** The final theme that emerged was personal development. Riley described a sense of growth in personal and professional identity as a result of her

experiences in supervision, however, she notes her personal development was more prevalent. She described a stronger sense of identity that emerged from her cumulative experiences in supervision. Through a stronger sense of identity, Riley's likelihood to speak up increased an increase when she noticed racial insults or microaggressions occurring. Riley stated, "Yeah, I've definitely been more vocal over the years with identifying them and challenging them than I was when I was receiving my bachelor's degree or even finishing my master's degree." In conjunction with the experience of other participants, Riley grew from her experience with microaggressions and increased her skillset in consulting with others to validate her perspective.

Personally, I think it has definitely required me to seek out multiple opinions, multiple perspectives, to- for validation, validation on perspective, of understanding, or interpretation of different things. So, it has allowed me to improve my consultation skills, I would say. (Riley)

The sense of bravery and courage Riley demonstrated in addressing the incident of racial microaggression in the context of the group supervision class was unique to her participant experience. One conclusion that could be drawn from Riley's description of her supervisor and the experiences she had with her was that Riley's racial identity development was more advanced than her supervisor. The lack of depth and breadth that race, culture, and a full integration of multicultural counseling concepts into case conceptualization supports this assertion. In addition, the astute observations and perceptions Riley described in understanding the role of race and racial identity in working with clients, demonstrated an awareness and skill that appeared to exceed her supervisor's. For Riley, this more developed racial identity added a layer of complexity

to the supervisory relationship. The inherent power differential could have been amplified if her supervisor consciously or unconsciously felt threatened by this state. Conversely, the power differential could have approached a more equal state because of Riley's evolved identity.

### **Collective Case Themes**

While there is significance in understanding themes within each participant in this case study, the presentation of this bounded case lies within the collective case themes, which will be presented here. Collectively, five themes emerged from the participants that represented a shared and common experience either as a condition or result of their experiences of a racial microaggression within videoconferencing supervision. The criteria used to include collective case themes was if all three participants identified the theme as a dimension of their experience. The following five collective case themes were identified as significant aspects to the experience of each participant. Collective case themes included: 1) sense of disbelief; 2) unintended consequences of supervisor not acknowledging various aspects of identity; 3) new meaning created during interview; 4) difference in experience with microaggression online; and 5) resilience and ability to find silver lining in experience.

**Sense of disbelief.** The first theme that emerged from participants' collective experience was a sense of disbelief and questioning the reality that a racial microaggression had occurred. There was a sense of disbelief that microaggressions could occur in the context of the mental health counseling field. In addition to the immediate emotional responses, which were described in individual case themes, what followed was an inner dialogue and processing of the situation. Adrian recalled thinking,

“...she didn’t mean it that way. It wasn’t meant that way. You know, trying to make those excuses, if you will.” Riley added,

It feels like a challenge to ‘is it really that?’, it’s kind of minimizing that piece of understanding the client. That it has caused me to really think about what is it that I’m seeing. Is there an alternative explanation? (Riley)

Participants grappled with discerning the meaning of comments from their supervisors. They described attempts to interpret the situation from multiple perspectives, and examined whether the situation was racially insensitive or insulting. Tabitha discussed her inner dialogue of the racial microaggression occurring in a higher education setting. Her disbelief and shock was preceded by the thought, “It just – in an educated, higher (education setting) – you just don’t think that that is a possibility. It can’t be because I’m Black.” Tabitha described not believing that this could occur in a clinical mental health graduate class.

**Unintended consequences of supervisor not acknowledging various aspects of identity.** Another emergent theme was unintended consequences that occurred because supervisors did not initiate conversations about racial or cultural aspects of identity and how they manifested in supervision. Participants had an amplified awareness of the power differential that is inherent in all supervision, and were more attuned to the impact of racial and cultural differences between them and their supervisors. Participants were hesitant to speak up and bring voice to the racial microaggression in fear that it could negatively impact their ability to either pass the supervision course or get their hours signed off on by their supervisor. The sense of hesitancy to speak up emerged oftentimes from the supervisor’s lack of initiating conversations acknowledging their own

dimensions of identity, suggesting culturally appropriate conceptualization of clients, or a failure to recognize the influence of racial or cultural background on client care.

Adrian indicated that the power differential decreased when she Skyped from home, as opposed to supervision sessions that occurred in person at her supervisor's office. For her, it seemed to equal out the power differential, however, there was still concern about voicing concerns in this context. She worried about the unintended consequences of voicing concerns she had with her supervisor in sessions.

If she has something negative to say, what does that mean for me in the program?

You know if she doesn't feel that I'm a good fit as a counselor and I've gone all this time, then what happens. If she feels, if I brought something to her attention and I catch her on a bad day, filling out paperwork, what does that mean for me?

(Adrian)

Adrian felt reluctant to voice her concerns about things her supervisor had said in sessions, in fear that her supervisor would not sign off on hours. Adrian seemed to internalize the meaning of her supervisor's comments as racially motivated, thus feeling increasingly reluctant to bring up concerns to her supervisor. Adrian described, "You know, not wanting to say some things because they happen to be, to me, the person in power and in control of signing these things." Moreover, Adrian was very intentional to follow directions from her supervisor with great attention to detail, as she knew her supervisor had the power to pass or not pass her. She stated,

If there was an issue, you know I was going to fix it how they wanted me to fix it, what they wanted me to do and, you know, my family will say, "well that's what got you out of there" (Adrian)

Similar to Adrian's experience, Tabitha described an acknowledgement of the power differential after her experience of a racial microaggression with her supervisor. Knowing he signed off on her paperwork, Tabitha became very focused on doing things exactly as her supervisor asked her to do. She describes, "From then on (after the microaggression), all I did was to just get finished. Yeah, what do you want me to write? (motions writing and putting "blinders on" with hands)." Tabitha's focus shifted solely toward graduation and was diligent about following directions exactly as her supervisor and other instructors instructed her. A dimension of Tabitha's experience with the abuse of power is in her description of the visceral sense of the abuse of power by her supervisor. While the power differential existed, Tabitha responded to the microaggression, stating that the incident felt "like a sucker punch" and "like I got knocked to the floor." This embodiment of the power differential emerged as a sense of physical domination over Tabitha, in addition to the administrative and evaluative power he had over her. Tabitha's supervisor was a former police officer, which added a layer in her experience of the power differential.

Riley acknowledged the power differential between her and her supervisor, and was driven to have strong rationale supporting her course of action for client care. Riley described an amplified level of preparation needed from her more privileged counterparts. She recognized and was aware of the evaluative and knowledge power her supervisor had over her, thus felt increased pressure to be really sure of her assertions in supervision.

But I think as that translates to other parts of being in the profession, it definitely has pushed me to be really sure, or at least try to be really sure of what I'm saying and to say it well, with a solid argument supporting it. (Riley)

With the increased pressure of having readily accessible information to support claims she made, Riley described this contributing to her personal and professional development, “but I would definitely say personal” Riley stated.

Acknowledgement of the power differential also emerged from Riley’s experience in how she described the need for clinical documentation to match the expectations of her supervisor and the field of clinical mental health counseling. Riley described the implicit pressure to speak and provide documentation using more formal discourse and standard language than was actually communicated with the client.

Yeah, so in documentation, even though it’s not doing anything drastically different, but I’m using kind of the standard language- discourse, kind of formal ways of documenting how we’re taught and the names of the interventions and that. but when I’m with a client, I’m definitely more laid back, calling it something different, speaking a different language that I don’t necessarily translate into the documentation. (Riley)

Riley described this phenomenon as code switching. Code switching refers to alternating between different languages, dialects, or styles of verbal or behavioral ways of communicating (Demby, 2013). As Riley described, her communication and behavior around her clients was different than presented in supervision and around her professional peers. Furthermore, the clinical documentation differed from the language used in session with clients.

**New meaning created.** Another collective theme was a sense of new meaning created as participants had an opportunity to share their experience during the interview. For participants, much of the processing around these incidents was done either on their

own or with trusted confidants. Adrian processed her experiences of microaggressions with her mother on the phone after each incident occurred. Tabitha kept her feelings about her experience internalized and became disengaged from the remaining courses in her counseling program. Riley described the necessity of seeking out multiple opinions and perspectives for validation on her interpretation of the incident. Although every participant processed incidents of microaggressions with external sources, none identified discussing or processing the racial microaggression with their supervisor. Since participation in this research may have been one of the few opportunities to process the experience they had, participants described new meaning as they shared their stories.

Adrian considered discussing the incidents and her feelings about them with her supervisor, however, was ambivalent about having this conversation. She verbalized the ambivalence, "The more that I talk about things that have been said, the more I think that maybe I would feel comfortable talking about, maybe she wouldn't react so differently, or in the way that I'm thinking." Tabitha came to realize how much hurt and damage was caused through the situation with her supervisor. She acknowledged an experience of grief from the incident and expressed an openness to begin the healing process as personal and professional development. She stated, "So, I'm kind of working through my own process of, I haven't really allowed myself to really heal from that. I'm sensing that now just talking to you that I should really work on that." Tabitha added that these old wounds were beginning to break open as she was invited to talk about them during the interview. Since she had been in survival mode and focused solely on graduating, she had not had the opportunity to process through and grieve what happened to her. She added, "You know, I really did need to talk about it and to be heard."



Riley described the missed opportunity by her supervisor to bring up discussions of how a client with a White cultural identity impacts the counseling relationship for a counselor of color. Riley asserted that her supervisor never brought up what it was like for Riley, as a woman of color, to work with a White client and how clients perceive her. She came to the realization that this had not been addressed in supervision but, “maybe I should have brought that up.”

**Difference in experience with microaggression online.** Another collective case theme that emerged was the sense of the microaggression being experienced differently online versus in person. The videoconferencing condition lacked nonverbal and energetic components that participants felt contributed to their supervisor missing important aspects of what they were communicating. Participants noted the lack of nonverbal communication contributed to the difference in experience in videoconferencing supervision. Many emotions provided a thick description of this theme, as the participants described feelings of loss, anxiety, invisibility, shame, being offended, and becoming emotionally shutdown.

Adrian experienced the microaggression on videoconference with an increased level of insult from her supervisor. She felt as though she was being insulted in her own home versus onsite, had her supervision occurred in person. In particular, Adrian described the increase in the shame she felt, “I felt like those moments of when it (racial microaggression) happened through Skype there was more of a shameful feeling because most of the time we’re Skyping and it’s in my home.” Adrian described the difference in the role of power in person versus with videoconferencing. She felt as though the power was slightly more equal on videoconference than at the office where her supervisor works

with clients. She went on to describe the negative impact of her supervisors comment on their relationship. Moreover, Adrian described that respect was lost after her supervisor commented on something in the background of Adrian's visual field on videoconference.

Threads of the theme emerged from Tabitha's experience and is similar to the individual theme discussed previously. The collective case theme differs from Tabitha's individual case theme by specifically addressing the differences in the experience of the racial microaggression online versus in person. She experienced judgements from her supervisor because of her racial identity as a Black woman. Moreover, Tabitha felt that her supervisor would have been able to understand her motivation, drive, and commitment to her graduate program if he had the opportunity to meet her in person, rather than solely experiencing an online supervision relationship. With the lack of physically being in the same room, Tabitha described an absence of energetic feel or communication. She felt as though her energetic essence could not be communicated online the way it could when physically in the same room. Additionally, Tabitha said her supervisor was not able to feel or experience the grief she was going through. If they had been physically in the same room, Tabitha concluded, "...maybe he would have kind felt my grief. Maybe he would have felt you know, my sincerity."

In response to an interview question about the experience of microaggression online versus in person, Riley replied that yes there is a qualitative difference. Body language is something unseen, which can impact the experience of a racial microaggression and the timing of when it is likely to occur.

You don't get to see the leaning in, or the pulling back or the leg shift or kind of, you can kind of see shifting in a chair...so those kinds of just body language that suggests discomfort is not there. (Adrian)

Another factor that impacted the experience of microaggressions in a videoconference session was the group norming process that occurs differently online than in person. She described the group norming process occurring earlier in videoconference supervision because of the importance of being explicit with over-communicating verbal messages. During this phase of group development, there is a sense of over-communication that exists in order to make sure the point is being received. Once the level of comfort with technology is established, Riley suggested that is when the subtle microaggressions are more likely to occur. She stated, "after you're comfortable with technology and each other in that format, I think that's when things begin to occur, as far as those little subtle things because there's a sense of comfort with communicating." This indicates a difference from in-person supervision, where the group norming process does not necessitate as much overt communication to establish a cohesive group, therefore, creating a potential difference for when microaggressions are likely to occur. There may be an increased likelihood of a microaggression to occur sooner in person than in an online, videoconferencing format.

**Resilience and silver lining.** The final collective case theme that emerged from participants was their resilience and the ability to find silver lining in their experience of a microaggression. Despite indicating a lack of trust in their supervisors because of racial insensitivities or biases, each participant described a desire to give their supervisor the benefit of the doubt in the comments that were made.

Adrian discussed empathy she had towards her supervisor, as well as learning to be increasingly mindful of not making similar mistakes with the clients she works with. She learned the importance of not making assumptions and allowing clients to be active agents in helping her as the clinician to develop a case conceptualization. Adrian reflected, “I think those experiences have allowed me to develop more empathy for clients who have such different experience from mine and taking it a step back into how I’m asking the questions and what I’m asking them.” Her insight considers clients as an author of their own story. She continued,

But I think very recently that's came more to in the forefront, just to build more of that empathy and build understanding. For my clients, that they can teach me and there's a way for me to learn without being insulting. (Adrian)

Adrian reframed the challenges of her experience as a learning opportunity for improving work with clients.

Adrian described another learning opportunity that came from a conversation with her mother. After an insulting conversation with her supervisor, she called her mother, who challenged her by asking about the incident Adrian had with her supervisor. In the midst of Adrian venting her frustrations with her mother, her mother replied, “what are some of the things you’ve assumed about her?” This challenged Adrian to contemplate judgments and assumptions that she had about her supervisor and make an attempt to find the learning opportunity within her experience. Finally, Adrian used her experience with her supervisor to inform how she conceptualizes her work with clients. She reframed the experience from a negative one to one she could learn from, specifically in how she gets to know clients.

Despite some of the situations we've been in, and I think with those experiences, taking them and thinking about taking my time to get to know clients. You know, taking my time before thinking that I know the answers how, you know, to solve their problems. (Adrian)

Tabitha spoke of compassion gained through the experience with her supervisor. She learned compassion for her supervisor, compassion for her clients, and compassion for herself in the learning process. Tabitha has wished that she and her supervisor had worked through the conflict that arose, because she valued his previous experience as a police officer that he brought to the supervision relationship, the university, and the counseling profession. She acknowledged, "He was a wealth of information. He was a wealth of wisdom and knowledge." The silver lining of the experience with the microaggression from Tabitha's supervisor was a recognition that he had his own story, filled with his own lived experience and trauma, "Because he's traumatized too. He has traumas too." Tabitha further described compassion for other graduate students, and reasoned that if the racial microaggression was happening to her, it could be happening to others as well. She gained awareness and understanding for others who may have found themselves in a similar situation as she was. Tabitha reframed her experience with her supervisor in seeing herself as a survivor who also had the capacity to unintentionally put others in situations where they felt she committed a racial microaggression against them. She reflected, "I'm thinking about what that experience was. But what if I'm doing that to other people. I mean if I'm going to do that to others – how am I expressing myself with other races." Tabitha aspired to be mindful and aware to not put others in a similar situation to the one she was in with her supervisor.

Riley demonstrated compassion and understanding in the way she perceived the likelihood for racial microaggressions to occur in supervision. The compassion she demonstrated led her reflect on the experience with acceptance that the microaggression occurred.

I accept it for what it is. So, it doesn't, or it hasn't created any lack of respect or any of those things. I just understand that we have a different worldview and that's just how it is, so just acceptance that it's going to happen. (Riley)

Her ability to mentally reframe the experience as a difference in worldview demonstrates an acceptance of her supervisor from a place of compassion for things that arose within their relationship.

The silver lining that Riley had found in her experience is in taking responsibility to bring up issues and questions about race in conversations, even if her supervisor did not bring it up. She asserted, "it's not the issue of race or that of culture doesn't necessarily come up, at least from the supervisor, I have worked hard on making sure that I don't do that myself." Riley gained courage and bravery to speak up and challenge issues related to race and culture through her experiences in her education and work in the counseling field. She said, "Yeah, I've definitely been more vocal over the years with identifying them and challenging them than I was when I was receiving my bachelor's degree or even finishing my master's degree." Again, Riley demonstrated compassion for herself in the experience by taking on the responsibility to work through challenges that arose in the supervision process. Riley described the tendency for her supervisor not to bring up how her racial identity could impact serving clients as a woman of color, stating,

And what does that mean for you as a woman of color working with a White man or a White woman or you know something like that. You know, I don't think it's ever been brought up, actually. Even though I feel it. I think, how are they going to perceive me, as far as my clients? I just kind of internally work that out. (Riley)

The compassion for herself was embodied in the strength and courage it took to take on the responsibility for processing through how her racial identity impacts her clients and the counseling relationship.

### **Linking data to Propositions and Expected Pattern**

This section describes the propositions that helped to answer questions of “how” and “why” in understating the experience of participants with racial microaggressions in supervision. The propositions helped to bind the case by placing limits on the data obtained and analyzed for the study. Data gathered from participants provided support to the assertions made in the literature. Each proposition is listed, followed by a discussion of the manner in which it informed and contributed to the case being examined.

**Cross-cultural supervisory relationships have the potential to exhibit racial microaggressions.** Within supervision relationships, the supervisor has evaluative power over the supervisee, which can be impacted by the cross-cultural dynamics related to racial and cultural identities of both the supervisor and the supervisee (Baltrinic et al., 2016; & Constantine & Sue, 2007). In addition, within cross-racial supervision, potential harm can come to supervisees and clients they serve if dynamics related to power and multicultural issues are not attended to by the supervisor (Bernard & Goodyear; Constantine & Sue, 2007; & Hays & Chang, 2003). With the existence of two features of power differentials, including cross-racial and videoconferencing conditions of

supervision, there is an increased likelihood for racial microaggressions to occur. Participants articulated an awareness of the power dynamics at play within the supervision relationship. They experienced hesitation when deciding whether or not to confront their supervisor about the racial microaggression that had occurred. In addition, participants experienced fear of their supervisor giving them a poor evaluation if they spoke up about the experience. The actions of Adrian and Tabitha symbolize an act of submission to the dominance of their supervisor. This demonstrates concern of the harm caused to the supervisee if issues of power related to multicultural issues are not addressed.

**A lack of racial-cultural awareness by the supervisor in a cross-cultural supervisory relationship could have harmful ramifications for the supervisees' perception of supervision, as well as negatively impact the clients the supervisee serves** (Constantine & Sue, 2007). This multi-layered impact of a lack of awareness of racial-cultural issues by the supervisor can have far reaching impacts on supervisees and the clients they serve. This proposition helped to draw attention to the dynamic that participants exhibited in seeking outside resources to get their needs met. When the racial microaggression occurred, all supervisees discussed disbelief that the experience was happening, as well as seeking external validation to confirm their response to the experience. Supervisees sought validation from other trusted sources because of the complexity of the relationship and the lack of racial-cultural awareness from their supervisors. Arguably, supervisees placed less value on the supervision relationship than they did on the other trusted relationships, or they would not have confided in these



people. This demonstrates a rupture in the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee, and in their perception of supervision.

Moreover, this rupture can carry over and impact clients the supervisees serve. Participants described the possible impact on client care when they provided examples of unrelated discussions that took place of conversations around racial and cultural impact on client care. Adrian discussed a supervision session that got derailed by her supervisor, in which her supervisor interrupted Adrian's case conceptualization about a client,

Probably mid-40s or so. He identified as Mexican, and his main concerns were around relationships with his mom. He was still living at home and he wanted to continue having this close, tight relationship with mom. Girlfriend was concerned, mad about the relationship, things like that. I remember going to supervision, and I was talking to her a little about his case and she said you know, that's what I don't understand about how overbearing Mexican mothers raise their boys to grow up to be. (Adrian)

Her supervisor continued, "to tell me that she had dated someone who she wanted a relationship with and that the mom was just so overbearing that it became too much for her." As a result of this unfocused supervision session, in which Adrian did not feel as though her needs for supervision around client care were met, Adrian asked her supervisor, "Are we going to have another session?" Tabitha described a group supervision discussion around the impact of the socio-political environment on the client and her supervisor made a comment about "lightening the mood," and changed the subject. Client care could be negatively impacted if conversations around the socio-

political environment are avoided in supervision, because aspects of client understanding, conceptualization, and treatment planning could be missed.

Participants also described a sense of responsibility to be educated and knowledgeable about racial-cultural issues in the work they do with clients, despite experiences in which their supervisor did not exemplify keen racial-cultural awareness. Participants described a sense that the onus of responsibility was on them to be aware of racial and cultural considerations when working with clients, and also within the supervision relationship. Two of the three participants (Adrian and Tabitha) noted a sense of surprise and disbelief that they experienced a racial microaggression, considering the field of clinical mental health counseling and its emphasis on multi-cultural counseling competence. That sense contributed to Adrian and Tabitha questioning if what they experienced really was a racial microaggression. Adrian noted that those experiences increased awareness and intentionality in the way she worked with clients, to avoid having them experience microaggressions like she experienced from her supervisor.

**White supervisors are more likely to commit subtle forms of racism because of the prevalence of White supervisors in these roles, and it is vital to discuss subtle racism within the context of cross-racial issues and dynamics in this relationship** (Sue et al., 2007). The data analyzed for this case study supported that White supervisors did not initiate or provide space for discussion of subtle forms of racism within supervision. In addition, supervisors did not initiate discussions regarding cross-racial dynamics within the supervisory relationship. Moreover, not only was the issue of cross-

racial issues in supervision not addressed, most often, it was not discussed with regard to client care or case conceptualization.

**Racism can manifest in supervision and have a detrimental impact on supervisees, supervisors, clients, and the supervisory relationship** (Constantine, 2003; Utsey et al., 2005). The expected pattern for this proposition is that more than overt forms of racism, unconscious racism and microaggressions can manifest in a cross-racial supervisory relationship and have harmful effects on supervisees, clients, the supervisory relationship, and supervisors. All participants described emotional, physical, and psychological impact of the microaggression. Each participant felt challenged personally and professionally by the experience and sought outside support and consultation to reflect on and make sense of their experience. Tabitha's supervisor was dismissed from the University he was employed at when supervising Tabitha, in part because of the poor experiences she went through with him during videoconferencing supervision. Riley described the impact on her supervisor that challenged her to examine her own contribution to the incident between sessions, and have the courage to send an email and discuss the issue at the next supervision session. Adrian advocated for a make-up session with her supervisor from a session that had gotten off course in her supervisor asking inappropriate questions about "overbearing Mexican mothers".

The racial microaggressions that occurred in supervision contributed to a poor experience of supervision by the participants. Though there was no direct evidence that client care was impacted, it is highly likely that client care was directly impacted. Riley noted the absence of systemic awareness when processing a case conceptualization in supervision. Additionally, she described the message from her supervisor was that if you

are White, there is not a culture to consider. There was an absence of discussions around what it meant for Riley being a woman of color, working with a White man or White woman, and how her racial identity influenced work with clients. This could contribute to negative effects on client care and the client – counselor relationship.

As discussed within the collective case theme of finding the silver lining in their experience, each participant experienced a racial microaggression that had a detrimental impact on their supervision relationship. Participants discussed an intention of not making the same mistakes as their supervisor did and learning to be more mindful when working with clients to not put them in similar situations as their supervisors did.

**In technology-assisted supervision, because of limited sensory input, it is essential for supervisors to connect with supervisees regarding the overt and covert nature of interactions** (Baltrinic et al., 2016). The expected pattern for this proposition was that there was an amplified need for supervisors to connect with supervisees regarding the overt and covert nature of interactions because of the added layer of cross-racial dynamics. Only one of the three participants described the initial stages of the videoconferencing group experience and the norming process that occurred to determine proper “netiquette” and to set expectations. Neither Adrian or Tabitha had discussions with their supervisors about the overt and covert nature of the interactions when participating in videoconferencing supervision. The absence of this conversation could have impact the likelihood for a racial microaggressions to occur, since there was not an awareness of how to interpret verbal and nonverbal cues. In her description of the overt and covert interactions, Riley stated that there was a norming process to determine proper etiquette that had occurred, and “there’s kind of some over-communication that happens

and to make sure that your point is being received.” Moreover, Riley stated that once this norming process had occurred, she perceived the likelihood for microaggressions to occur increased, since the level of comfort in that format of supervision was established. While this may seem counterintuitive, Riley described the likelihood of microaggressions increasing because once group members let their guard down, they were less likely to be hypervigilant around topics of conversation. Therefore, as safety increased, group members were more likely to commit social blunders and verbalize comments that could be construed as racial microaggressions.

**Microaggressions occur in the form of microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations** (Sue et al., 2007). To review, *racial microaggressions* are defined as “brief everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273). All three forms of microaggressions, including microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations helped to further describe the incidents experienced by participants. One of the participants, Tabitha, described an example of a microassault, which is a more overt, often conscious, racially derogatory attack meant to hurt the victim (Sue et al., 2007). Tabitha described an incident where she missed class because she had experienced the deaths of three people close to her in one week and unintentionally missed class. Her supervisor responded by calling her a liar and when she sent him the obituaries of the three people she had lost, he replied, “you could have sent me links to anybody.” Tabitha viewed this as a racially-charged comment because of previous comments from her supervisor that she felt has a racial element to them. This form of overt, purposeful, discriminatory action emerged in the form of a microassault. Adrian described additional situations that

could have been perceived as microassaults, however, there was not enough supporting evidence to draw a conclusion regarding the intent of her supervisor's statements.

One of the two unconscious forms of microaggressions is microinsults, which are behavioral or verbal comments that convey rudeness and insensitivity, and demean a person's racial heritage or identity (Sue et al., 2007). Many of the experiences with microaggressions described by participants took the form of a microinsult. For example, Adrian described an incident when her supervisor, knowing that Adrian identified as Catholic, assigned Adrian a new client who identified as White, and her supervisor commented, "you'll like them cause they're Catholic too." This conveyed a sense of insensitivity to Adrian's Catholic identity, as Adrian stated that she did not attend church weekly and did not feel as though she had additional knowledge of Catholicism that would make her feel more competent to work with a Catholic client. Adrian also experienced a microinsult when her supervisor assumed she spoke Spanish and could translate for their Mexican or Hispanic clients, however, Adrian had told her on multiple occasions that she does not speak Spanish.

The other form of unconscious microaggression is a microinvalidation. A microinvalidation is a comment or behavior that negates the psychological feelings, thoughts, or experiential reality of a person of color (Sue et al., 2007). An example of a microinvalidation was described by Adrian and it began with a microassault when her supervisor had made the assumption that Adrian spoke Spanish because she was Hispanic. The microinvalidation occurred when her supervisor kept pushing her to work with a family that only spoke Spanish, not believing Adrian when she told her she did not speak Spanish.

And I sort of looked at her and I thought she was playing around at first and I said, I don't speak Spanish and she said, yes you do, you said that your family that they all speak Spanish and I said, yes, THEY (emphasized tone) speak Spanish, but I (emphasized tone) don't speak Spanish. (Adrian)

Adrian's experiential reality that she unequivocally knew she did not speak Spanish, which was negated by her supervisor did not believe what Adrian had told her supervisor.

Riley also described an incident with a microinvalidation with her supervisor. The experience occurred during group supervision and the conversation centered around the sociopolitical environment and the way it had been impacting clients and the organization. When the discussion elevated slightly, Riley's supervisor made the comment, "we need to lighten the mood." Riley sat there for a minute, and then asked to revisit the conversation because of the realization that her supervisor had wanted to move on because talking about race and culture was too uncomfortable for her supervisor, so they moved on from the conversation. This response demonstrated an insensitivity to the importance of having difficult and uncomfortable conversations about race, culture, and ways the sociopolitical climate was impacting the client and the system they were working in.

**Microaggressions pose four psychological dilemmas (Sue et al., 2007).**

Incidents with microaggressions pose dilemmas for White supervisor as well as supervisees of color. Each dilemma is described below, with a case example to illustrate the psychological dilemma.

***Dilemma 1: Clash of Racial Realities.*** One of the four psychological dilemmas that helped to structure and explain the challenges faced by supervisees and supervisors,

was the clash of racial realities. Research indicates that the racial perceptions of people of color differ dramatically from the racial perception of Whites (Jones, 1997). Most commonly White Americans perceive racism to be on the decline, that minorities are doing better in life, and equality has been achieved. On the other hand, people of color commonly perceive White Americans as racially insensitive, unwilling to share their position of wealth, and treating them poorly because of their race (Sue et al., 2007). This clash of realities as a psychological dilemma was most poignantly described by Tabitha, who painfully acknowledged this reality. Tabitha stated, “I’m very specific with what I do, I have to be specific because I’m a Black woman.” Moreover, Adrian similarly acknowledged the clash of racial realities by describing the numerous assumptions her supervisor made about her, based solely on her Hispanic identity. The clash occurred because the reality of her supervisor was different from hers, and it created the conditions for microaggressive comments to occur. If Adrian’s supervisor perceived that equality had been achieved, she could be less culturally sensitive and make assumptions about the type of clients Adrian would work well with. Lastly, Riley commented on her awareness of the different racial realities and worldview between she and her supervisor. Riley described, “I accept it for what it is. So, it doesn’t, or it hasn’t created any lack of respect or any of those things. I just understand that we have a different worldview and that’s just how it is.”

***Dilemma 2: The Invisibility of Unintentional Expression of Bias.*** The second psychological dilemma that served to frame understanding of the data was invisibility of the unintentional expression of bias. Racial microaggressions may become automatic because of cultural conditioning (Sue et. al, 2007), however, the challenge lies in how



one proves that a microaggression occurred. Research indicates that most people born and raised in the United States have inherited racial biases of society and the most accurate assessment of whether the microaggression occurred, lies with the person who is marginalized, more so than the person with power and privilege (Sue et al., 2007). The most prominent example of this within the case was when Riley confronted the microaggression in group supervision with her supervisor. While in the moment her supervisor was not able to recognize the bias had occurred, her supervisor reflected on the incident after supervision session and emailed the class to acknowledge her error and asked to process it at the next class meeting. This exemplified the invisibility of the bias as well as exemplifying that the most accurate assessment of whether or not a racial microaggression occurred came from the African American supervisee, who, based on her racial identity, had far less privilege and less power than her White supervisor.

The second example that supports the psychological dilemma of the invisibility of the unintentional expression of bias emerged from Adrian's experience. When she first read the recruitment email to participate in the present study, her first reaction was not to think she met the inclusion criteria to participate. She described the subtlety of microaggressions and once she began paying attention, she noticed incidents from her supervisor.

I think I remember when I got your email about the study I was like no, I can't, thinking, like no, we've been great...But then I think I started to pay more attention to it. And we just happened to have the meeting over Skype and I was giving her updates on the clients I had reached out and talked to. And, yeah just

even something as subtle as that was just a very, very subtle microaggression.

(Adrian)

She described the painful awareness as she began to notice these subtle forms of racism, the more challenging it became for her to process and work through challenging situations.

***Dilemma 3: Perceived Minimal Harm of Racial Microaggressions.*** Another psychological dilemma that assisted in framing the interpretation of the data was the perception of minimal harm of racial microaggressions. In many cases of microaggressions, there is a perception from the perpetrator that the victim overreacted and is being overly sensitive (Sue et al., 2007). Research indicates that this is not the case, and that microaggressions are harmful and cumulative over time, contributing to feelings of self-doubt, frustration, and isolation on the part of the receiver of the microaggression (Sue et al., 2007). Dimensions of the collective case supported the emotional and psychological impact of the microaggressions from supervisors. Participants felt anxious, offended, invisible, emotionally shutdown, insulted, shamed, and undervalued.

Adrian illustrated the shame she felt when her supervisor asked if she had prayer candles in her house while they were in a videoconference session. Her supervisor craned her neck to check the background of Adrian's home, as if looking to see if she had the prayer candles. She stated, "I don't know what was worse. I don't know if it was worse, the assumption or that I really did, or that I do. Except that they're in my bedroom. They're not out here in the, I don't know." This statement also demonstrated the psychological distress Adrian felt in discerning what her supervisor meant by asking her

that question. Tabitha indicated feeling wounded from her experience with the racial microaggressions from her supervisor. The wounding emerged from her physical response to the incident, and also in the trauma stored in the body as a reaction to the racial insult. Riley described the “Tingly sensation in chest—very somatic like a tingly tightening in chest” that had occurred in situations previous to the incident with her supervisor, and she has learned to trust the sensation and the message it carries. Her body knows the cumulative trauma and can feel it before her mind registers something wrong. This was cumulative and stored in the body for participants.

***Dilemma 4: The Catch-22 of Responding to Microaggressions.*** The final psychological dilemma that helped to frame understanding of microaggressions was the catch-22 of responding to microaggressions. Oftentimes, the immediate response is filled with questions if the microaggression really occurred, how to respond, and if the act was intentional or unintentional (Sue et al., 2007). The first challenge within this dilemma is determining if the microaggression really occurred. Second, the challenge lies in determining the impact of various responses to the microaggression, and the impact of not responding to the microaggression. Lastly, a response filled with anger is likely to have negative consequences, and thus, contributing to the psychological dilemma of how to respond to the microaggression (Sue et al., 2007). Adrian expressed the challenge she experienced with attempting to manage the professional relationship with her supervisor, as well as wanting to speak up when the microaggression occurred.

I would say it’s probably a catch-22 for me...I think the professional piece always stays there, but I think as far as my wanting to do something to help right then and

there, it kind of just pushes down so far within me because then I feel like my competence is questioned. (Adrian)

The catch-22 of this situation created a sense of immobility and nonaction for Adrian.

Tabitha experienced this psychological dilemma when reflecting on the microaggression she experienced. Initially, she questioned the possibility of a microaggression occurring in a graduate counseling program. However, when the incident occurred, she described not wanting to believe that it had happened because of the color of her skin, “It can’t be because I’m Black.” Tabitha described her experience as “more detrimental and horrifying than anything.” Similar to Adrian, Tabitha felt like her integrity was challenged in that moment by her supervisor. Tabitha described the inner challenge, “In the moment, I’m like appalled but I had my whole entirety questioned that way. It was more of a deeper, professional integrity has been compromised.” For both Adrian and Tabitha, the likelihood of speaking up about the microaggression decreased when their professional integrity was questioned by their supervisors.

**The experience of racial microaggressions contributes to a perceived lack of safety and trust in supervision, which negatively impacts the experience of multiculturally competent supervision** (Constantine & Sue, 2007). This expected pattern of this proposition was confirmed by participants. Data supported this dimension of the case by participants seeking outside consultation from other professionals, family members, and another faculty to process the incident. By consulting others besides their supervisor, a lack of safety and trust in the supervision relationship was demonstrated.

Participants placed a higher value and increased comfort in external relationships, and thus sought counsel from others to process the situation they had experienced.

Additionally, participants hesitated to bring up the incident with their supervisor, further supporting the lack of safety and trust they felt with their supervisor. Adrian did not want to “rock the boat” by bringing up the incident to her supervisor, Tabitha became disengaged after the incident and focused solely on graduation, and Riley brought up the concern only to address the microaggression at a surface level by her supervisor. The lack of trust prohibited deep and difficult conversations about race, racial identity, and culture to occur within the supervision and counseling relationships. This proposition emerged from participants describing the surface level discussions occurring around race, culture, and racial and cultural identity. There was a dearth of conversations that deeply covered racial identity and the impact on the counselor and client, as well as the impact of racial and cultural identity at a more systemic level of case conceptualization.

### **Summary of Chapter**

This chapter detailed demographic information and profiles for each of the participants, in order to provide context and background of who the participants were and where they came from. Next, the data analysis strategy and analytic techniques were detailed and thick descriptions of individual and collective case themes were presented. Specifically, this section discussed themes that emerged from the data, first within each of the participant cases, and second, themes common to all participants were presented. Finally, the section concluded with an examination of the results by linking the data with the propositions and expected pattern.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The previous chapter discussed individual and collective case themes that emerged from the data gathered from participants. Furthermore, the case was bound by propositions and the theory identified in the literature prior to the data collection phase of the study. Here, a discussion of the findings will be presented, along with placing the findings within context of the existing literature of videoconferencing supervision and cross-cultural supervision. Next, measures implemented to establish trustworthiness and credibility will be described, followed by a section describing future practice and research directions. The discussion will also demonstrate alignment with critical theory and constructivist perspectives. This chapter will conclude with limitations of the study and concluding comments to this study.

### **Situating Findings within Context**

Each of the themes that emerged from the data occurred either at the individual or collective case level. The criteria used to determine collective case themes was if the theme occurred in the experience of all three participants. Each theme and its dimensions served to form a thick description of the experience of racial microaggressions within videoconferencing supervision in a cross-racial context. Here, an attempt is made to situate findings within the existing literature and in alignment with the propositions and proposed theory.

Although current research on this intersecting topic is sparse, recent literature points to the twofold importance of supervisors broaching multicultural issues with supervisees and training supervisees to effectively broach multicultural issues with clients

(Baltrinic et al., 2016). Results of this study found that when these twofold conversations did not occur, the supervisory relationship, supervisee, and client were negatively impacted. Furthermore, existing research indicated that active inquiry into the overt and covert meaning of verbal and nonverbal communication was essential, as well as the supervisor modeling more overt tactics of communication (Baltrinic et al., 2016). Findings of this study indicated that particularly in videoconferencing supervision, there was an absence of engaging in and modeling overt communication strategies (e.g., conversation about the meaning of verbal and nonverbal communication, ground rules and netiquette, and ways to process miscommunication) by supervisors toward their supervisees. Moreover, overt communication is of particular importance because of the videoconferencing nature of the supervision. The absence of modeling overt communication impacted the supervision process and led to misunderstandings of the message that was being communicated. One incident of a racial microaggression was described in the absence of these conversations, and will be described below.

Adrian described an incident with her supervisor who verbally questioned if she had a certain type of prayer candle common in the Hispanic culture and nonverbally craned her neck as if looking in the background of Adrian's room to see if one was there. There was no indication of the presence of prayer candles in the visual window of Adrian's screen, which led to Adrian felt slighted because of the presupposition that she had these candles because of her Hispanic identity. Prior to this conversation with her supervisor, Adrian had been discussing these candles with one of her clients, as a way of establishing the therapeutic alliance. She described this as a meaningful way she had connected and co-constructed the relationship with her client. When her supervisor made

assumptions about Adrian having these candles in her home, Adrian felt embarrassed, insulted, and that it took away from the connection she had made with her client. She stated, “And, I don't know what was worse, I don't know if it was worse—the assumption or that I really did, or that I do. Except that they're in my bedroom.” This example illustrated the impact of the absence of conversations about verbal and nonverbal communication in videoconferencing supervision. Her supervisor did not model this important preparation step in videoconferencing and did not appear to be aware of her own nonverbal communication and its impact on her supervisee. From a critical theory perspective, her supervisor demonstrated a lack of awareness of the power she held over Adrian, and unknowingly experted power over her in the form of a microaggression. For Adrian, this interaction significantly damaged the supervision relationship in the process.

In addition to the necessity of broaching multicultural issues and discussing communication for supervision, results from one previous study revealed the impact of racial identity development on the supervision working alliance in supervision (Bhat & Davis, 2007). This study indicated that the working alliance was stronger when supervisee – supervisor pairs demonstrated higher levels of racial identity development than those who scored lower in racial identity development (Bhat & Davis, 2007). Although the current study did not assess level of racial identity development in supervisors or supervisees or supervisory working alliance, results indicated that the supervisory relationship was damaged after experiencing a racial microaggression in supervision. The working relationship between supervisor and supervisee was fractured after the experience with a racial microaggression, and could have been impacted by the level of racial identity development in the supervisor and supervisee. Further research is



needed to assess the interplay of the level of racial identity development, supervisory working alliance, and racial microaggressions in cross-racial videoconferencing supervision.

Not only are racial microaggressions more likely to occur with White supervisors because of their prevalence in these roles and the role of power and privilege (Sue et al., 2007), but their harmful ramifications may be amplified by the limited-sensory input of technology-assisted supervision. From a critical theory perspective, systems of oppression exist and can be exerted from a member of a privileged racial group to a member of a marginalized racial group. All participants experienced racial microaggressions from their White supervisors, which had negative physical, emotional, and psychological effects for them. The physical awareness of the microaggression occurring caused the somatic sensations by Adrian, Tabitha, and Riley. Participants described feeling “knocked to the floor,” “my body physically reacted to her,” and “tingly sensation in chest-very somatic like a tingly tightening in chest.” Emotionally, participants felt hurt, shamed, and embarrassed, which contributed to a lack of trust in the relationship and supervision process. Psychologically, participants felt wounded and in need of healing, which for some, began during the interview process.

To aid in further situating the results of the study, the suggested guidelines for culturally-responsive technology-assisted supervision, as outlined in chapter two, will be revisited (Baltrinic et al., 2016). As previously indicated, the suggested guidelines include: (a) the supervisor being willing to share their worldview with their supervisee; (b) creating a supportive and open supervisory relationship that allows time to develop cultural understanding of supervisee; (c) continual training and expansion of education to

broaden cultural competence; (d) introducing and continuing cultural conversations throughout supervision; and (e) seeking out continuing education on cultural competence and technology assisted supervision (Baltrinic et al., 2016).

Based on these guidelines, participants described not being engaged by their supervisors to create an open dialogue and share their worldview with their supervisee (Baltrinic et al., 2016). Adrian described her supervisor inappropriately using one of their supervision sessions to gain knowledge about a personal relationship with a Mexican man, which indicated a lack of sensitivity and consideration of Adrian's time and supervision session. Moreover, Tabitha's supervisor severed the lines of communication by accusing her of lying about why she had missed class. Tabitha emotionally shut down following this incident, which also closed the door to ongoing dialogue regarding the supervisor's worldview.

The second guideline for culturally-responsive technology-assisted supervision indicates the importance of an open and supportive relationship, so the supervisor can develop a cultural understanding of the supervisee (Baltrinic et al., 2016). For Adrian, despite an almost two-year-long supervision relationship, there continued to be a lack of cultural understanding on the part of Adrian's supervisor. Adrian's supervisor demonstrated cultural insensitivity on multiple occasions, which contributed to difficulty in her supervisor developing a cultural understanding of her. Riley described an attempt from her supervisor to develop a cultural understanding of her, however, it remained at the surface level of understanding. Riley discussed her supervisor neglecting to assess how Riley's racial identity as an African-American woman played a role in work with White clients. Furthermore, there was a lack of conversations about how White clients

perceived Riley as their counselor and the impact Riley's racial identity had on the counseling relationship.

The third guideline for culturally-responsive technology-assisted supervision is ongoing education and training to broaden cultural competence (Baltrinic et al., 2016). Within the case, this guideline could help to improve the supervisory relationship and decrease the likelihood of racial microaggressions occurring. Similarly, if the supervisors of participants in this study would have engaged in training and education to broaden cultural competence, they may have been more aware of the additional layers of providing supervision in this format with supervisees of color.

The fourth guideline of continuing cultural conversations throughout supervision was best exemplified by Riley's supervisor (Baltrinic et al., 2016). Riley acknowledged conversations during case conceptualizations in which her supervisor would inquire into the role of race and culture in the presenting difficulties of the client. She described these conversations as surface-level, which felt insufficient to understand the complexities of the impact of culture on client care and supervision. Riley's supervisor also shut down the conversation around race and culture when it became too uncomfortable for her supervisor and the group. When Riley courageously asked her supervisor to revisit the topic, it was revisited briefly, then moved on from. Although acknowledged by her supervisor at the following session, Riley felt as though ongoing conversations about culture occurred only at a surface level. From a constructivist perspective, Riley made attempts to integrate difficult conversations about how race plays a role in client conceptualization, however, her supervisor prevented the conversation by shifting away from the topic when it became uncomfortable. Tabitha, conversely, noted the absence of

any conversations about race, culture, racism, or racial identity within her experience of supervision.

The final suggested guideline was in seeking out continuing education on cultural competence and technology assisted supervision (Baltrinic et al., 2016). Based on experiences of participants, supervisors did not exhibit a high level of competence with technology-assisted supervision. Riley described conversations around the overt and covert meaning of communication in a videoconference format, however, she did not indicate these conversations occurred from the prompting of her supervisor. Both Adrian and Tabitha's supervisors exhibited insensitivity and lack of awareness of basic levels of etiquette in videoconferencing supervision.

This section situated the findings within current literature around this topic. Furthermore, an attempt was made to align the case with propositions and proposed theory that were put forth prior to the data collection phase of the study.

### **Establishing Trustworthiness and Credibility**

Multiple measures were taken to establish trustworthiness and credibility in this study. Specific strategies to address credibility, construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability within this case study design are described below, and were used to increase the trustworthiness and credibility of this study. Furthermore, the tactic of triangulation, member checking, and memo writing will be discussed.

Credibility is arguably one of the most important factors establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The strategies used for this study included prolonged engagement and member checking. First, prolonged engagement was established by having each participant volunteer to participate in an

hour-long, recorded interview that sought answers to questions about their experience with a racial microaggression within videoconference supervision. In addition, prior to the interview, participants indicated suitability to participate by answering pre-screening questions in an email. Participants also completed the informed consent form, demographic questionnaire, and the Racial Microaggressions in Supervision Checklist. Following the interviews, the interviews were transcribed and initial codes were created. Written codes and categories were created and emailed to the participants for their feedback on the accuracy of identified codes and categories. In addition, participants were contacted at various times by email to clarify or provide additional insight on identified themes or categories. This strategy aligned with a constructivist approach to establishing credibility.

The above description of prolonged engagement converges with the strategy of member checking that was used to address construct validity for the study. To best understand the construct of racial microaggressions and their occurrence in videoconferencing supervision, member checking was used to gain feedback about the accuracy of the categories and themes that emerged from the data. Through member checking, participants had the opportunity to contribute new or additional perspectives to the focus of the current study. All participants provided member checking feedback through emailing their comments. This allowed themes to emerge from the collaboration between myself as the researcher, and the participants. Additionally, participants were given the opportunity to provide and contribute new perspectives or additional information to the focus of the study.

Pattern matching was the technique used to establish internal validity within this case study. Internal validity as a way of establishing trustworthiness is concerned with making inferences when an event cannot be directly observed (Yin, 2013). The technique of pattern matching compares the observed pattern with the expected pattern, as hypothesized in the propositions and theory. The pattern matching technique was expounded upon in chapter four in the section titled, “Linking data to propositions and expected pattern.” Each of the anticipated propositions, which was based on existing research, was compared to what was observed, in and emerged from the data, and in alignment with constructivist theory. In addition, the hypothesized theories were compared to the data that were gathered to complete the pattern matching technique.

Another strategy to establish credibility and trustworthiness was to examine external validity through the theory and propositions related to microaggressions (Yin, 2013). By relying on existing literature to inform and create initial propositions and theory, the emergent data that supported the propositions and theory served to increase the external validity of the study. Moreover, by returning to the theory and propositions created prior to data collection, there was an increased likelihood of keeping the focus on the case being examined. Additionally, the groundwork was formed to increase external validity by providing supporting evidence that emerged from the data.

The strategy used to address reliability was the use of a protocol. By making the steps and details of the research process as operational as possible, the likelihood for replication of the study increases. For additional reference to the protocol used for the present study, please refer to chapter three method section. Furthermore, I addressed reliability by making my bias explicit through the worldview and bias statement. It is

essential for critical researchers to enter into their inquiry with their assumptions and biases made explicit, so there is not confusion about the baggage brought with them to the research process (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). This statement added context to the lens through which I filtered the data collection and analysis.

As demonstrated, many strategies were used to establish credibility and trustworthiness for this case study. Next, limitations of the study will be discussed.

### **Limitations of Study**

The aim of the current study was to understand the experience of racial microaggressions within technology-assisted, cross-cultural supervision with a supervisee who identified as a racial minority working with a White supervisor. In-depth interviews, demographic data, and the Racial Microaggressions in Supervision Checklist (Constantine & Sue, 2007) provided insight into the research question that helped to drive and bind this research. The propositions, theory, and expected pattern also helped to drive and bind the research. Prior to exploring future direction for research and practice, there are limitations that warrant exploration.

First, this case study included a small sample size of three participants. Due to challenges with recruiting participants who met all of the inclusion criteria and who were willing to participate, there were limited individuals who were able to participate. Moreover, as recruitment efforts continued, participation criteria broadened to include the graduate and post-graduate supervisee experience. One of the challenges of recruitment was addressed by adding an incentive to participate for those who completed participation in the study. All participants received a \$50 gift certificate for their participation in the study. While saturation of categories was achieved by the three

participants, additional participants may have provided added insight and diverging experiences and points of view.

Another limitation that arose from the study was the use of a purposive sampling strategy. Since I did not identify potential participants prior to the initiation of the research, a snowball sampling strategy could not be utilized. The purposive sampling strategy that was utilized created difficulty in identifying participants who met the inclusion criteria and were willing to participate. Also, due to the nature of the topic of microaggressions from supervisors, some methods for recruitment were not utilized because of the perceived sensitivity of the topic. The likelihood of supervisors sending recruitment to their supervisees to identify a microaggression that they committed during supervision appeared an unlikely method to identify participants.

Along with the purposive sampling strategy limitation, the narrow criteria for participation created difficulty in identifying participants to contribute to the study. Due to difficulties experienced during eight months of active recruitment, inclusion criteria for participation were broadened to garner viable participants for the study.

In addition to the narrow criteria contributing to recruitment difficulties, another limitation was not having personal, first-hand experience with a racial microaggression within videoconferencing supervision. In addition, supervisees who have had experience with a racial microaggressions with a White supervisor may be hesitant to participate in a study about racial microaggressions from a White researcher.

My White racial identity also created a limitation by not knowing the first-hand lived experience of a person who identifies as a racial or cultural minority. The limitation is that my lived experiences as a racial majority is shared with the supervisors who



committed a racial microaggression against the participants, and could be perceived as biased. Systems of power and privilege created inherent limitations, based on my membership of a racially privileged class, as related to a critical theory perspective. Steps to ensure credibility and trustworthiness were taken to minimize the impact of this researcher bias. Member checking was the primary method employed to minimize the impact of bias on the findings and to most accurately represent the lived experience of participants.

### **Future Research Direction**

This case study details the experience of three supervisees who experienced racial microaggressions in videoconferencing supervision. Guided by the grand research question, “How do supervisees experience racial microaggressions within technology-assisted, cross-cultural supervision when the supervisee identifies as a racial-cultural minority and the supervisor is a racial-cultural majority?” several collective themes emerged, while each participant described intricacies of their own individual experience. In addition to the findings of this study, there are several directions for future research within this topic area.

One area of future research is to explore group supervision dynamics in online supervision and their role in racial microaggressions with racially diverse supervision groups. Within data collected for this study, one of the examples of a racial microaggression occurred within group supervision, thus it would be pertinent to further explore the impact of the stage of group, group composition, group cohesion, and previous group work of supervisees on the occurrence of racial microaggressions in videoconferencing supervision.

With regard to the collective case theme of the awareness of power differential and impact on behavior by the supervisor and supervisee, a future area of research would be to continue to explore role of power in supervision and negative impacts of the abuse of power. Specifically, an inquiry into the unintended consequences of committing racial microaggressions would be beneficial to research. Furthermore, future research into addressing manners of addressing the unintended consequences of racial microaggressions would be beneficial. From a critical theory perspective, an inquiry into the unintended consequences of committing racial microaggressions and identifying ways to address them would be beneficial for future research. Another area for future research would be to explore the role of power within administrative (i.e. signing off on hours, assigning grades, etc.) tasks in supervision and how the power differential impacts the supervisees willingness to bring up issues of unintentional bias and microaggressions. Furthermore, an important area of future research would be the supervisory working alliance and racial identity development. Specifically, how each of these factors mediate and moderate the experience of racial microaggressions in cross-racial, videoconferencing supervision.

Finally, a future area of research would be to describe the occurrence rates of microaggressions in videoconferencing supervision in urban and rural settings. With consideration to a critical theory perspective, it would be beneficial to explore access to technology and its accessibility for urban and rural supervisors and supervisees. Participant demographic information indicated one of the three participants lived and worked in a rural setting, while the others indicated suburban and urban settings. Future

research is needed to explore the likelihood for racial microaggressions to occur in rural or urban settings, based on the racial and cultural composition of these areas.

### **Future Practice Directions**

The findings of this study indicate several areas for future practice direction for supervisors and the supervisees they work with. First, supervisors need to initiate intentional dialogue around race, racism, culture, and racial/cultural identity and create a safe environment for supervisees to bring up concerns. The supervision space needs to be co-created to foster honest, open dialogue around emotionally-charged conversations around race and privilege. This is essential for supervisees and for the clients they serve, as the experience of the supervisee directly impacts the clients they serve. Supervisors need to be intentional about exploring racial and cultural identities of the supervisee and the client and how they impact work with client and the supervision relationship. Additionally, it is imperative for supervisors to include conversations of race, racism, culture, and racial/cultural identity in case conceptualization during individual or group supervision. This research indicated that there was often a failure of supervisors to adequately identify ways that race and cultural played a role in case conceptualization and treatment interventions.

Another area for future practice would be to establish best practices for online, videoconferencing supervision that occurs between cross-racial dyads or groups. Due to the complexities of cross-racial and videoconferencing dynamics within supervision and the likelihood for racial microaggressions to occur, it would be pertinent to identify best practices for improving the supervision relationship as well as improving client care. Supervisors need to increase their awareness of the complexities of this type of

supervision and knowledgeable about aspects to make explicit prior to embarking on online, cross-racial supervision. By engaging in an intentional dialogue around the cross-racial aspects in online supervision, there may be a decreased likelihood of racial microaggressions occurring and negatively impacting the supervision relationship and compromising client care.

An additional direction for future practice is for supervisors to model courageous conversations around the role racism, culture, and racial/cultural identity within client care in the online supervision format. Because of the inherent power differential with the evaluative capacity of the supervisor, role modeling becomes more essential for the practice of engaging in difficult conversations. Conversations around nonverbal communication, racism, culture, and racial/cultural identity within supervision, specifically in how it manifests in an online format with a lack of nonverbal cues is essential to have.

With regard to supervisors demonstrating courageous conversations, supervisor development through ongoing training and education is another area identified for a future practice direction. Since many supervisors may have completed educational programs at a time when the focus on multicultural competency was not in the forefront, it is incumbent on the supervisor to seek out and grow through education and training in multicultural competency and supervision practices.

Lastly, a future practice direction is for supervisors to initiate conversations about the parallel process between supervisor and supervisee, and counselor and client with regard to race and culture. Since one unintended consequence of a racial

microaggression in supervision was on client care, it is essential to explore the parallel process and unintentional bias that may be expressed toward clients from the supervisee.

### **Conclusions**

This research attempted to describe the experience of racial microaggressions within technology-assisted, cross-racial supervision when the supervisee identifies as a racial-cultural minority and the supervisor is a racial-cultural majority. The findings of this case study suggest that the effects of microaggressions are multi-layered and impact the supervisee, supervisor, the supervision relationship, and the way supervisees navigate work with clients. Results also indicate that unintentional bias expressed as a microaggression exists within supervision and its effects can be amplified within the condition of videoconferencing supervision. Moreover, as technology continues to advance, there is a likelihood for increased use of videoconference to augment clinical supervision, further compelling us as a profession to address the multifaceted needs of supervisees.

This study contributed to fill the gap in the literature by examining cross-racial and videoconferencing supervision from a critical theory and constructivist perspective, as a combined phenomenon within clinical supervision. Individual characteristics of the awareness of power differentials and resilience emerged within collective themes for participants. Commonalities shared between participants demonstrate the significance of this study and also point to specific areas of future research. Despite the limited sample size and methodological limitations, findings indicate more research is needed to mitigate the impact of racial microaggressions on supervisees and the clients they serve, and the supervision relationship. As supervisors train supervisees, it is imperative to be acutely

aware of the power differential and the manners in which it manifests in a cross-racial, videoconferencing relationship. It is incumbent upon supervisors to have intentional, honest, and courageous conversations about race, racial identity, and how it impacts the supervisory relationship and client care. As a profession, we can and must do better to mitigate risks involved in the potential misuse of power and the experience of microaggressions.

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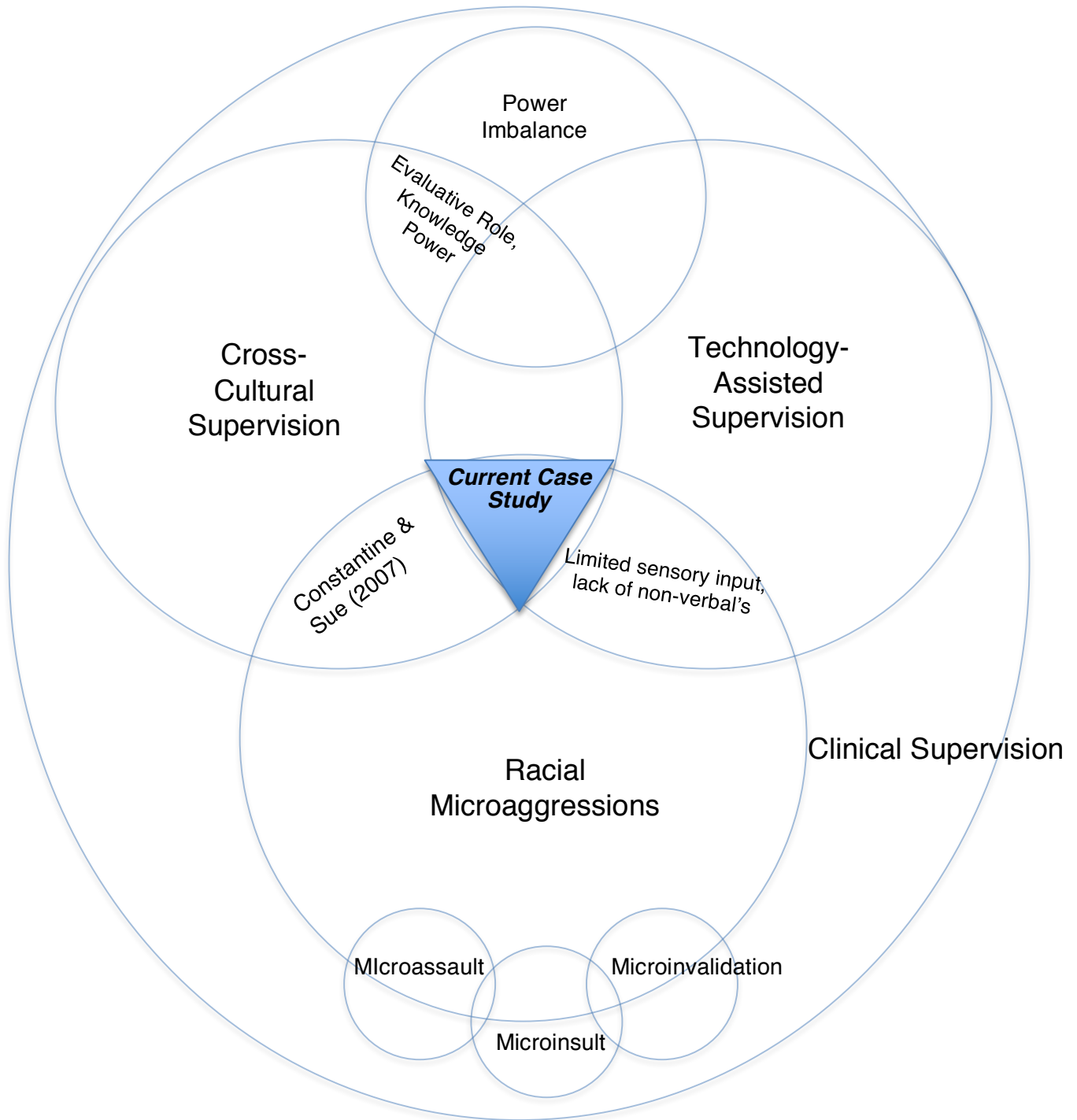
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## Appendix A

Propositions	Source
Cross-cultural supervisory relationships have the potential to exhibit racial microaggressions	Literature Baltrinic et al., 2016 Constantine & Sue, 2007
White supervisors' lack of racial– cultural awareness in cross-racial supervisory relationships could have undue effects on supervisees' perceptions of supervision, and it also could have harmful ramifications to the clients these trainees serve.	Literature Sue et al., 2007
White supervisors are more likely to commit subtle forms of racism because of the prevalence of White supervisors in these roles, and it is vital to discuss subtle racism within the context of cross-racial issues and dynamics in this relationship.	Literature Sue et al., 2007
Racism can manifest in supervision and have a detrimental impact on supervisees, supervisors, clients, and the supervisory relationship	Literature Constantine, 1997, 2003; Utsey et al., 2005
In technology-assisted supervision, because of limited sensory input, it is essential for supervisors to connect with supervisees regarding the overt and covert nature of interactions.	Literature Baltrinic et al., 2016
Microaggressions occur in the form of microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations	Literature Sue et al., 2007
Microaggressions pose four psychological dilemmas for the recipient of the microaggression	Literature Sue et al., 2007

Appendix B  
Constructs of Case Study Illustration



## Appendix C

## Racial Microaggressions in Supervision Checklist

The statements below are intended to represent some situations or events that may have transpired in supervision with your supervisor. Please read each item and place a check next to each item that you believe to be true with regard to your supervision relationship.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ My supervisor sometimes avoided discussing or addressing racial or cultural issues that I thought were important.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ At times, my supervisor was insensitive about my racial or cultural background(s).
3. \_\_\_\_\_ My supervisor sometimes denied or minimized having racial or cultural biases or stereotypes.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ My supervisor may have thought at times that I was overly sensitive about racial or cultural issues.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ My supervisor sometimes seemed unaware of the realities of race and racism.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ My supervisor sometimes seemed to have unconscious racial or cultural stereotypes about me.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ My supervisor sometimes seemed to have some unconscious racial or cultural stereotypes about my clients.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ I sometimes felt offended in supervision because of my supervisor's racial or cultural insensitivity.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ I believe that my supervisor sometimes focused on my clinical weaknesses in supervision because of my racial or cultural group membership(s).
10. \_\_\_\_\_ My supervisor sometimes minimized the importance of racial or cultural issues in our supervision meetings.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ My supervisor often was very knowledgeable about racial and cultural issues with regard to supervision and therapy.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ My supervisor at times seemed reluctant to discuss or process racial or cultural issues with me.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ My supervisor sometimes seemed hesitant to give me challenging feedback about my clinical work, possibly for fear of being seen as racist.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ My supervisor occasionally suggested culturally inappropriate treatment conceptualizations or strategies that may not have fully considered my clients' racial or cultural background(s).
15. \_\_\_\_\_ In general, I did not trust my supervisor because of his or her racial or cultural biases or insensitivities.

(Constantine & Sue, 2007)

## PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a study examining the experience of racial microaggressions within cross-racial, videoconferencing supervision. We are requesting your consent to participate in a research study to examine the role of power and the potential misuse of power, specifically the experience of microaggressions, which manifest within cross-racial videoconferencing supervision. You have the opportunity to participate in this study by meeting the following inclusion criteria for this study: (1) have received or are receiving videoconference supervision for clinical mental health counseling work with clients (this includes field experience (practicum or internship) during graduate education or post graduate; (2) receive videoconferencing supervision for 10% or more of your total supervision hours; (3) identify as a racial minority and receiving supervision from a White supervisor; and (4) the acknowledgment that subtle forms of racism exist; and (5) have personal experiences with racial microaggressions in videoconferencing supervision sessions. Your participation in this study is totally voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will also not affect your relationship to Minnesota State University, Mankato, nor will a refusal to participate involve a penalty or loss of benefits.

### **Overview of the Study**

This research project consists of gathering quantitative and qualitative information about your experience with racial microaggressions within cross-racial, videoconferencing supervision sessions. Previous research has explored cross-racial and videoconferencing supervision as separate constructs within clinical supervision. The purpose of this research project is to examine the role of power and the potential misuse of power, specifically the experience of microaggressions, which manifest within cross-racial videoconferencing supervision.

The research will be conducted by Jamie Hedin, a doctoral student researcher in the Department of Counseling and Student Personnel at Minnesota State University, Mankato, and supervised by Dr. Rick Auger, professor in the Department of Counseling and Student Personnel at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Ms. Hedin will be conducting all of the interviews (in-person and online) and data collection, and Dr. Auger will only have access to data collected with no names attached.

If you agree to participate, we will first ask you to fill out a demographic questionnaire, which will include the following items; race, ethnicity, gender, educational level, amount of clinical supervision experience, and geographic setting of clinical and supervision practice. Additionally, we will ask you to complete a Racial Microaggressions in Supervision Checklist (Constantine & Sue, 2007). Our primary data source will be an in-depth, recorded interview where we will ask you six open-ended questions about challenges you have faced as a racial or cultural minority with a white supervisor and the experiences you have had with racial microaggressions within supervision.



The interviews will occur in person or via videoconferencing technology (using a HIPAA-compliant web conferencing program) and recorded for future analysis and are expected to take approximately 60 minutes to complete. In order to accommodate your schedule, the interviews will be conducted in person at a private location of your choosing or at a convenient time for the videoconference meeting. Further, once the interviews have been transcribed and coded for themes and categories, you will be contacted via email to provide feedback on the accuracy of the student researcher to capture your experience in themes and categories. It is estimated the time commitment for this will be no greater than 60 additional minutes of participation in this research.

### **Potential Risks and Benefits**

We anticipate potential risks to include emotional or mental stress or discomfort in being asked to share personal experiences with subtle forms of racism, including racial microaggressions. You can choose to skip any interview questions if you feel uncomfortable answering the question. We anticipate potential benefits to participating to be an ability to share experiences of unintentional racism and racial microaggressions that you may not have been able to share before. We also anticipate potential benefits of this research for society of providing guidelines and best practices within cross-racial, videoconferencing supervision. It is hoped the current research will fill a gap in existing literature by (a) informing guidelines and best practices in cross-racial, videoconferencing supervision, and (b) providing direction for future research.

### **Incentives**

After completion of your participation in this study, you will receive a \$50.00 Amazon gift card. The gift card will be emailed to you.

### **Privacy and Confidentiality**

Your privacy and confidentiality will be guarded to the utmost extent possible. Due to the nature of this study, the participants will not be anonymous to Ms. Hedin, the student researcher. Your confidentiality will be protected in a number of ways. The interviews will take place in a private location where distractions and extraneous noise are less likely to occur. The location will be determined by preference of you, as the participant, in collaboration with the student researcher, Ms. Hedin. Also, using a private space for the interview will insure the privacy of the participant. If the interview occurs online using videoconference technology, a HIPAA-compliant web conferencing program will be used (Zoom). If the interviews occur in person, the interview will be digitally recorded. If the interview occurs using a web conferencing program (Zoom), the session will be recorded and saved on a password-protected computer. As soon as possible after the interview, the content stored on the digital recording device will be downloaded to a password-protected computer and all interviews will be transcribed. Participants will be de-identified through the transcription process. Following the transcription of the interviews, all recordings will be deleted by the student researcher, Ms. Hedin. The password-protected computer can only be accessed by Ms. Hedin. All information contained on

the demographic form and questionnaires will be transferred to a spreadsheet and de-identified by the student researcher. After transferring the information, it will be deleted by the student researcher, Ms. Hedin. Additionally, a copy of the interview transcriptions and spreadsheet containing demographic information and questionnaire data, for example, will be sent to and stored electronically on a password-protected computer of the principal investigator, Dr. Auger, in Armstrong Hall at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Your consent form for participation will be deleted after three years by the principal investigator, Dr. Auger. The interview transcriptions and spreadsheet will be deleted after five years by the principal investigator, Dr. Auger, and student researcher, Ms. Hedin. All identifying information discussed in the interview will be omitted or changed (using a pseudonym) in the transcript.

### **Your Rights as a Participant**

You are free to stop participating in the study at any time without consequence by informing Ms. Hedin by telephone, e-mail, or in writing. In addition, even if you agree to participate in the study you are free to not answer any question that you prefer not to.

Whenever one works with online technology there is always the risk of compromising privacy, confidentiality, and/or anonymity. If you would like more information about the specific privacy and anonymity risks posed by storing information electronically, please contact the Minnesota State University, Mankato Information and Technology Services Help Desk (507-389-6654) and ask to speak to the Information Security Manager.

If you have any questions prior to signing this consent form, please feel free to contact Dr. Auger (richard.auger@mnsu.edu; 507-389-2423) or Jamie Hedin (jamie.hedin@mnsu.edu; 651-331-8059). If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact Dr. Barry Ries, administrator of the Institutional Review Board at 507-389-1242.

Enclosed is a copy of this letter for you to keep. If you choose to participate in the study, please complete the section below on one copy of this letter and return the signed copy. Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, and that you have received a copy of this form. Thank you for your consideration.

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Demographic Questions

What is your age?

What is your gender?

In your own words, how would you describe your race or ethnicity?

What is the highest level of education completed:

How long have you been working in a clinical setting?

How would you describe the geographic setting of clinical experience (e.g. rural, urban, suburban, etc.)?

How would you describe the geographic setting of where your supervisor works from (e.g. rural, urban, suburban, etc.)?

What is the approximate age and level of training of your clinical supervisor?