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**An exploration of two supervisors' engagement in a transcultural supervision exercise
to support culturally responsive supervision with trainee educational psychologists
(TEPs)**

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Abstract

The paper explores the impact of an exercise used to promote culturally sensitive supervision on supervisors. It begins with an overview of the role of power dynamics and cultural awareness within supervision. Two supervisors' experiences of engaging in a transcultural supervision activity with their respective supervisees, trainee educational psychologists (TEPs), are then analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The two supervisors found engaging in the transcultural supervision exercise initially led to feelings of apprehension but overall was a positive experience. It had a constructive impact on the supervisory relationship; increasing supervisor's feelings of connection, developing a trusting relationship, and presenting an opportunity to share and understand each other's values. It also promoted an ethno-relative way of working, increased supervisors' cultural awareness, attended to power disparities within supervision, widened perspective taking, and had potential impact on wider practice.

Key words; supervision, transcultural supervision, culturally sensitive supervision, power, trainee educational psychologists.

Introduction

This paper explores how a transcultural supervision exercise supports supervisors addressing issues of power, particularly cultural and personal power, in supervision. Within the supervisor competency framework created by Dunsmuir and Leadbetter (2010) issues relating to power, culture, diversity and difference are identified. For instance, supervisors are expected to;

- [create] “a safe and trusting forum for discussion and recognising potential power imbalances” (2.1),
- [value] “difference and diversity” (2.10) and
- “work transculturally and with difference” (5.15) (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010, p. 15, 18).

Currently, guidelines (British Psychological Society, (BPS), 2019) for trainee educational psychologists (TEPs) completing doctoral training specify an entitlement of a minimum of 30 minutes supervision per day of placement. Effective supervision is considered key to TEPs’ development of professional learning, practice, and skills such as critical self-reflection (Hill et al., 2015).

Definitions and models of supervision

Whilst definitions of supervision vary across the literature and professions, Dunsmuir and Leadbetter (2010) describe supervision as a psychological process between supervisor and supervisee that enables reflection, personal and professional development. More specifically, (Woods et al., 2015, p. 86) define TEP supervision as

“A formal, but collaborative, relationship in which the supervisee offers an honest account of their work, and in which the supervisor offers guidance and consultation with the primary aim of facilitating the supervisee’s professional competencies; the

supervisor ensures that the supervisee's practice conforms to current ethical and professional standards.”

This highlights the centrality of a supervisory relationship. Beinart and Clohessy (2017) suggest this is key to supervisees' experience, satisfaction with supervision and development of knowledge and practice. For supervisees, key components of effective supervisee-supervisor relationships include a safe base, structure and reflective opportunities (Cliffe et al., 2016; Palomo et al., 2010). Similarly, Pearce et al. (2013) found supervisors believe a safe base alongside supervisee participation, supervisor commitment and investment, contribute to an effective supervisory relationship. Hill et al. (2015) emphasise that TEPs valued collaborative supervision as it enabled mutual learning, viewing supervision as a bi-directional process which should enable reflection, collaboration, learning, support and growth.

Power dynamics in supervision

Power dynamics refer to the distribution of power between supervisors and supervisees within the supervisory relationship (Wind et al., 2021). The supervisory relationship, particularly for TEPs, is hierarchical due to the evaluative role of supervisor, context and situation (Beinart, 2020) and therefore imbalances of power are inevitable.

Hawkins and Shohet (2012) identify three types of power; role power, cultural power, and personal power, present in supervision.

- Role power refers to the inherent power the supervisor holds and includes legitimate power, coercive and reward power, and resources power.
- Cultural power conveys the degree of power an individual holds depending on their social and ethnic group, with those in the dominant groups often holding the most power.

- Personal power refers to the individual power a person may hold and is impacted by an individual's expertise, presence and personality.

Within TEP supervision, in comparison to supervision of qualified EPs, supervisors unavoidably carry more role and personal power due to their EP qualification, experience and evaluative role. Additionally, supervisees are expected to openly discuss personal and professional concerns and to receive supervisors' feedback and opinions (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019), thereby creating an imbalance of power (Nelson et al., 2006). Cook et al (2018) highlight that this difference in power, in favour of supervisors, is not fundamentally problematic and may be appropriate. For example, supervisors with relative extensive experience and expertise are viewed as advantageous to supervisees' professional development (De Stefano et al., 2017; Murphy & Wright, 2005).

Hawkins and Shohet (2012) emphasise the need for supervisors to remain sensitive to the power dynamics within the supervisory relationship, as Ellis et al. (2014) suggest that ineffective supervision can take place if this is left unattended. Indeed, Ellis (2017) found a steep power imbalance within the supervisory relationship to be a key theme in supervisee narratives who had experienced harmful supervision, where the supervisor's actions or inactions led to psychological, emotional or physical harm to the supervisee. Conversely, Green and Dekkers (2010) found supervisors perceived there was no significant impact of attending to power and diversity on supervisee learning outcomes and their own satisfaction with supervision, inferring power to be a more salient factor for supervisees.

Cultural awareness, sensitivity and responsiveness in supervision

Culture is difficult to define as it varies greatly (Jahoda, 2012) and encompasses internal factors such as values and external factors such as behaviours and interactions. However, within the current paper, culture is defined as the

“...sum total of the learned behaviours of a group of people who share patterns of values, beliefs, languages, ritual and customs, behaviours and interactions, cognitive constructs, and affective understanding through process of socialisation in the community and society” (Tsui et al., 2014, p. 239).

Tsui et al (2014) highlight that much research in the helping professions views ‘culture’ as synonymous with ‘ethnicity’. However, culture includes aspects such as values, behaviours, customs, cognitive constructs and, whilst ethnicity influences these areas, this is not in isolation. For example, religion (Saroglou & Cohen, 2011) and social class (Kraus et al., 2011) can also play a key role impacting on values and behaviours.

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Brinkmann & Weerdenberg, 1999, as cited in Hawkins & Shoheit, 2012) illustrates the process by which an individual becomes more culturally responsive. This model includes six stages:

- (1) Denial: viewing own culture as the real one
- (2) Defence: viewing own culture as the good one and does not believe in cultural differences
- (3) Minimisation: viewing parts of own culture as universal
- (4) Acceptance: recognising that own culture is one of many cultures
- (5) Cognitive Adaptation: being able to see the world through the lens of another
- (6) Behavioural Adaption: being able to adapt behaviour to other cultures

The model notes that the first two stages, that is denial and defence, are ethno-centric and the later stages are considered ethno-relative, and when applied to supervision can lead to

culturally responsive supervision. Therefore, within a supervisory relationship, discussions about cultural similarities and differences enable this, as the supervisor acknowledges and shows interest in a supervisee's cultural experience and learns from this (Burkard et al., 2006). Tsui et al. (2014) explain that it is important for the supervisor and supervisee to be aware of how their own background and culture influences the supervision process and their practice. This recognition and reflection of conscious and unconscious assumptions or biases, includes reactions and emotional responses, and how these may impact on supervision.

Tohidian and Quek (2017) conducted a meta-analysis focused on multi-cultural clinical supervision and found supervision was deemed culturally responsive by supervisees when supervisors appreciated difference and diversity and openly discussed racial identities. This, in turn, helped supervisees to identify their cultural strengths and increased understanding of the significance of culture within their profession. Hird et al. (2001) found that when supervisors were willing to share and reflect on their own culture and biases, supervisees also felt comfortable in sharing. In addition, Burkard et al., (2006) found that when supervisees from the dominant group received culturally responsive supervision, they felt less fear when talking about cultural issues, and supervisees from ethnic minority groups felt validated and supported. Dressel et al (2007) found that a supportive environment accepts multiple perspectives and holds the uncomfortable feelings that a supervisee may experience when discussing culture. This illustrates that how the supervisory space is perceived and presented is key because it determines whether the supervisee feels safe, secure and respected.

Soheilian et al. (2014) found that certain cultural topics were more commonly discussed, such as ethnicity and gender, in supervision. In comparison, other topics such as socioeconomic status and sexual orientation were not often discussed within supervision and so may be deemed as invisible or unvoiced in comparison to ethnicity or gender. Consequently, the SOCIAL GRRRAACCEESSS framework (Burnham, 2012) offers a useful tool and

prompt to reflect on the different facets of culture but should not be considered all-encompassing. This framework identifies different aspects of culture and includes gender, geography, race, religion, age, ability, appearance, class, culture, ethnicity, education, employment, sexuality, sexual orientation and spirituality.

Burkard et al. (2006) found that culturally responsive supervision also had a positive impact on the supervisee's to work with service users. Therefore, recognising the dimension of culture within supervision not only impacts the immediate supervisee and supervisor, but can have an indirect impact on work with clients.

A transcultural exercise to promote culturally sensitive and responsive supervision

Hawkins and Shohet (2012) describe an exercise, shown below, to encourage supervisors and supervisees to become conscious of the impact of culture and power within their supervisory relationship. It is intended to help reflection on what is central in terms of culture, influences on views, values and beliefs and in turn habitual ways of thinking that may arise from cultural assumptions. Culture is considered in its widest sense, including aspects such as race, ethnicity and gender as well as those less commonly discussed such as socioeconomic status, place in family or educational background, amongst others.

1. Person A explains to Person B about their culture. Culture is interpreted as any aspects of a person's life that they think are relevant.
2. After listening carefully, Person B recounts what has been heard.
3. Person A clarifies any misunderstandings and can add further information.
4. Person B then shares and reflect how this will relate to supervision and the supervisory relationship.
5. The roles are reversed whereby Person B shares their culture with Person A and the above steps are repeated.

6. Finally, differences and similarities between cultures are considered and discussed and the impact on the supervisory relationship, supervision and practice.

Rationale and Research Questions

Dunsmuir and Leadbetter (2010) highlight key supervision competencies relating to diversity, difference and power, and the literature focussing on power dynamics within the supervisory relationship emphasises the need for power dynamics to be attended to and addressed (Ellis et al., 2014; Hawkins & Shohet, 2012). In addition, very few studies have explored culturally responsive supervision (Burkard et al., 2006; Hird et al, 2001; Tohidian & Quek, 2017), with most focused on the experience of supervisees and none noted within the profession of educational psychology. Therefore, this research explores how a transcultural supervision exercise impacts on the power dynamics and cultural awareness within a TEP supervisory relationship from the supervisors' perspective. The research questions explored in this project are:

1. What is the supervisor's experience of the transcultural supervision exercise?
2. How did the transcultural supervision exercise impact the power dynamics within the supervisory relationship?
3. What is the impact of the transcultural supervision exercise on the supervisor's cultural awareness?

Methodology

The research adopts a relativist ontology, based on the belief that reality is a subjective experience, therefore there are multiple realities (Levers, 2013). This lends itself to an interpretivist epistemological stance which assumes that the social world and knowledge is

subjective and constructed by people; therefore, to understand social phenomena researchers aim to understand how individuals interpret or place meaning (Cohen et al., 2018).

In line with the epistemological and ontological assumptions, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to explore and examine the experience of supervisors and the meaning which they make of undertaking a transcultural supervision exercise (Smith et al., 2009). The theoretical underpinnings of IPA are derived from phenomenology (the study of experience), hermeneutics (the theory of interpretation) and ideography (understanding that particular individuals will have a particular interpretation of a phenomenon) (Shinebourne, 2011). The approach acknowledges that the researcher takes an active role in the process to try to understand the individual's world, thus, there is a double hermeneutics process. Each of the authors had engaged in the transcultural supervision exercise in other contexts and so acknowledge all held personal views which may be used to understand the participants' world.

Participants

The research was conducted with two placement supervisors, educational psychologists, who have engaged in the transcultural supervision exercise with their TEP supervisees. They were introduced to the exercise by their supervisees who had previously engaged in it. Both supervisors were women, had qualified within the last seven years and had supervised between one and four TEPs.

Ethical Considerations

Both participants were given pseudonyms (May and Zoe) to prevent identification, provided with an information sheet and gave informed consent to take part in the research (BERA, 2018). They were able to withdraw from the research up until two weeks after data collection. Additional ethical issues of respect, responsibility and integrity (BPS, 2018) were adhered to

when undertaking the transcultural supervision exercise, by identifying clearly that participants should only share as much as they safely wish to without any adverse consequences.

Procedure

The two supervisors were introduced to the transcultural supervision activity either through attending a university based supervision course and/or discussion with the TEP they supervise. There was also a blog explaining how the activity was conducted (Fong et al, 2020). They were then invited to be part of the research and semi-structured interviews were conducted within 2 months.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions on the experiences of engaging in the transcultural supervision activity, the impact on their awareness of culture and power dynamics were conducted (see Appendix A). This allowed for structure and flexibility for participants to recount their experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The semi-structured interviews were conducted via an online video platform and recorded and stored securely prior to transcription.

Data Analysis

With IPA, data analysis aims to understand the meaning of what has been shared by the participants and an ideographic approach to analysis was taken, where each case was analysed first individually, then general categorisations were made across the cases. Whilst Smith and Osborn (2008) note there is no prescriptive method to analysing the data, the following steps were followed;

1. Reading and re-reading - immersion in the transcripts through transcribing the interviews verbatim, reading and re-reading the data, noting recollections of the interview experience to bracket these thoughts off to keep the focus on the data.
2. Initial noting – annotation of the initial descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments, interpreting the semantic content and language
3. Developing emergent themes – drawing on the initial notes to develop emergent theme titles
4. Searching for connections amongst the emergent themes – reviewing the emergent themes, looking for connections and removal of any if needed
5. Moving to the next case –analysis of the second transcript separately following the four preceding steps
6. Looking for patterns across cases – themes were analysed across the two cases alongside quotes to support each theme.

In order to demonstrate trustworthiness within this research, issues of transparency and rigour were attended to through reflection and peer validation. Specifically for IPA, it was important to ‘bracket’ preconceptions and reflect how previous experiences or assumptions may have impacted at data collection, analysis or interpretation stage (Rodham et al, 2015). In addition, themes were discussed across researchers to enable peer validation (Larkin & Thompson, 2012).

Findings and Discussion

The findings from the data collection and relevant discussion are reported in relation to each research question and include a thematic map of the superordinate and subordinate themes.

Research Question 1: What are the supervisors' experiences of the transcultural supervision exercise?

INSERT Figure 1: Thematic map showing themes from supervisors' experiences of the transcultural supervision exercise

Superordinate Theme: Thoughts and feelings

Both participants spoke about their feelings and thoughts before, during and after engaging in the transcultural supervision exercise. Therefore 'Thoughts and feelings' about the transcultural supervision activity forms the superordinate theme, which are then reflected in the subordinate themes: 'Apprehension' which was felt before the exercise and 'Positive experiences' as the reflection afterwards.

Subordinate theme: Apprehension.

As transcultural supervision was different and new, both participants were uncertain as to what to expect and were apprehensive about the process. May explained her apprehension, sharing she was initially nervous about offending the supervisee and sharing personal information:

"I think at first (.) I was a little bit (.) nervous I think. I was a little bit nervous before we started in terms of (.) I guess maybe saying the wrong thing or not saying enough information or um (.) yes, knowing about what (.) level of information to share I guess because I've never done supervision in that way before." (May)

May described feeling 'nervous' about engaging in the exercise and this was also reflected in her speech during the interview as she paused many times and included pause fillers such as 'um' and 'I guess'. Since she had not engaged in this process before, her feelings of apprehension and uncertainty revolved around doing supervision incorrectly and not knowing

how much information to share with the supervisee. Zoe described how to feel more comfortable whilst having these conversations:

“But, I go back to, in a safe way in a way that we're sharing what we feel we want to share, and that we feel able to share, not forcing each other to share other things that we don't want to talk about” (Zoe)

Zoe explained how having a safe space where they were respectful of each other and were able to share as much or as little as they wanted had helped, thereby reducing pressure.

If discussing about culture and backgrounds is not a common aspect of supervisory relationships, it can lead to uncomfortable feelings such as nervousness and vulnerability. Dressel et al. (2007) noted that supervisees can feel uncomfortable talking about culture, possibly worried about saying something ‘inappropriate’ or ‘incorrect’. Zoe noted the importance of having a safe space and environment to help individuals feel comfortable to share despite having these initial apprehensive thoughts. This aligns with research by Burkard et al (2006) and Hird et al. (2001) which suggests that a safe space allowed supervisees to share comfortably, especially if the supervisor is open to sharing first.

Therefore, this research suggests it is important to recognise these feelings of apprehension, particularly if this is a new type of exercise, and creating a safe space is important to alleviate these concerns. It indicates it is important for individuals to be fully informed with the process, decide whether to take part and what to share. If they do not wish to, this should be fully accepted as not only is this ethical but will further help supervisees to feel safe.

Subordinate theme: Positive experiences

Although there were initial feelings of apprehension, both participants shared that the transcultural supervision exercise was subsequently a positive experience for them. For Zoe, she noted that the exercise was:

“Really interesting, and so, yeah, I really enjoyed the process [...] I found it really useful to hear [supervisee’s] perceptions and experiences.” (Zoe)

For May, there was a stark contrast between her initial feelings and what she felt she gained from the transcultural supervision activity as highlighted by her use of ‘But actually’:

“But actually, when I, when we kind of did the supervision, it felt really good, it felt very kind of freeing actually to be able to just share information about erm (.) who we both were” (May)

May’s positive experience about the exercise is clear, as she noted it made her feel good and was ‘freeing’. This may be because it gave her an opportunity to talk about something she didn’t know how to discuss. This is echoed by Burkard et al. (2006) who found that when supervision was culturally responsive supervisees felt less fear when talking about culture and had increased confidence to ask for feedback. Therefore, supervisees also experienced initial negative emotions, but this changed. The prospect of talking about culture can lead to initial negative thoughts, but this may be alleviated following the process of engaging.

Superordinate Theme: Feeling connected

‘Feeling connected’ was seen across both participants’ accounts, with their experiences of the transcultural supervision exercise, whilst developing these connections reflected in the subordinate themes of ‘Developing a trusting relationship’ and ‘Sharing and understanding each other’s values’

Subordinate theme: Developing a trusting relationship

The participants shared how the transcultural supervision activity developed further their relationship with their respective supervisee through increased trust within the supervisory relationship. For example, May felt that the exercise changed their relationship:

“And I think because we knew each other before and we had already had some supervision and started to build that trusting relationship and learn about how each other thinks about things I think really helped. Um, but I think that [transcultural] supervision kind of enhanced that.” (May)

It seemed that May did not anticipate the transcultural supervision exercise would improve the supervisory relationship, but she ‘felt after’ that it ‘enhanced’ the relationship. The increased levels of trust came about through understanding each other’s ‘culture’ and knowing more about each other.

Zoe further expanded on this and explored how it changed what her supervisee felt comfortable sharing during supervision. Zoe shared how her supervisee talked more about her feelings towards certain pieces of case work:

“So yes, I definitely think it's allowed [supervisee] to open up more in supervision and to feel safer, perhaps. ...So even at the end of that initial transcultural supervision session, [supervisee] was able to talk more about her feelings towards upcoming pieces of work that she hasn't before shared, so that felt quite erm an immediate shift...” (Zoe)

Zoe’s supervisee was able to ‘open up more’ which shows that there was a change in the relationship, to being more open to share her feelings. This augments Tohidian and Quek’s meta-analysis (2017) finding that when supervisees were able to talk about their culture, they felt supported and more open.

Subordinate theme: Sharing and understanding each other’s values

Both participants talked about how the transcultural supervision exercise allowed them to share values and beliefs with their supervisees and provided insight into the TEPs’ values and beliefs. May talked about how it allowed for sharing of information about each other:

“So kind of knowing about what er (.) influences and what factors inform our thinking and guides our thinking, what experiences guide our thinking.” (May)

May explained that the exercise allowed for a deeper understanding of the factors and experiences that influence and guide their thinking and values. Zoe described understanding her supervisee’s values through more informal discussions:

“So I think actually [the transcultural supervision activity] opened up quite a few more discussions of us then being able to talk about what we're doing at the weekend because I know the sort of things that [supervisee] is interested in, and vice versa.”
(Zoe)

Due to remote working practices, Zoe and her supervisee were unable to have informal conversations in person and supervision was conducted online, however the transcultural supervision exercise enabled them to ‘chat’. Zoe described how conversations about interests and what they do in their free time in turn develops understanding of each other’s values. This aligns with Tohidian & Quek’s (2017) finding that culturally responsive supervision recognises differences and allows people to talk about their values. Likewise, the transcultural supervision exercise seems to have a similar effect, immediately and later on, whereby both parties were enabled to talk about their interests and in turn values in formal and informal discussions.

Research Question Two: How did the transcultural supervision exercise impact the power dynamics within the supervisory relationship?

INSERT Figure 2: Thematic map showing how the transcultural supervision exercise impacted on the power dynamics within the supervisory relationship.

Superordinate theme: Mechanism of reducing power differential

Both supervisors spoke about the transcultural supervision exercise increasing their awareness of the power differential within the supervisory relationship and in turn reducing it.

“I think it did make it even more equal in terms of the power balance in terms of what each other has to bring and the wider breadth of what we can both bring to the supervision...” (May)

“I guess in terms of that power dynamic. I, possibly didn't feel the power dynamic as much as I'm aware that [supervisee] probably did... But I guess I perhaps wasn't as aware of that ...I do think it's really useful in terms of reducing that power differential.” (Zoe)

Supervisors indicated that prior to engaging in the transcultural supervision exercise they viewed the power differential to be equal or were not aware of it, possibly due to the inherent role power they possess (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012). This aligns with Green and Dekkers's (2010) finding that supervisors, in comparison to supervisees, do not perceive the need to attend to the power dynamics in the supervisory relationship. This research indicates the transcultural supervision exercise enabled supervisors' awareness of the power dynamics within the supervisory relationship, as recommended by Hawkins and Shohet (2012), which in turn should enhance supervision. This is because Green and Dekkers (2010) highlight the supervisee's view that attending to power within the supervisory relationship is significant for effective supervision.

Subordinate theme: widening perspective taking

Engaging in the transcultural supervision exercise reduced the power differential by providing the opportunity to openly share values and experiences and supervisors indicated this widened their perspective in terms of the TEPs' skills they bring to supervision.

“I guess it broadened my thinking in terms of bringing our different experiences into supervision.” (Zoe)

May recalled how they now incorporate shared experiences into supervision which promotes discussions around casework:

“And actually, I find, we do tap into each other's experiences of our own experiences of education, for example, if we think “oh that it's quite similar to how I experience things or how you experience things” (May)

This could be interpreted as supervisors recognising that in certain situations the TEP may hold more personal power (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012), for example, having greater experience of working with a certain population of children.

Subordinate theme: increased feelings of safety

Both participants indicated that the transcultural supervision exercise enabled increased feeling of safety for discussions. Interestingly, both participants spoke about this in relation to their TEPs' feelings of safety increasing rather than their own feeling:

“Erm and kind of reminds you in terms of that power (.), potential power imbalance, how actually I think by (...) providing that safe space for a trainee to talk about their experiences, almost (.) I hope would enable the trainee to feel that you're valuing, valuing their experiences as equally as your own.” (May)

One supervisor mentioned how after engaging in the exercise they noticed a change in their TEP's willingness and openness to share their views.

“I definitely think it's allowed [supervisee] to open up more in supervision and to feel safer, perhaps. So, in talking about perhaps her feelings towards certain aspects of work... I suppose, in terms of how she felt able to ermm(...), about how that

relationship had changed, and then that's continued I would say moving forward so that definitely has been that shift" (Zoe)

A feature of an effective supervisory relationship is a safe base (Cliffe et al., 2016; Pearce et al., 2013), which in turn has been shown to contribute to impactful supervision (Beinart & Clohessy, 2017) and for supervisees to share more openly (Burkard et al., 2006). Within this research, supervisors perceived the increased feelings of connection and trust led to TEPs' feelings of safety, indicating that the transcultural supervision exercise can be used as a tool to strengthen the supervisory relationship.

Superordinate theme: Impact on re-application

Throughout both interviews, participants spoke about how they would incorporate the transcultural supervision exercise within their practice, with one participant sharing how they believed it should be embedded within their educational psychology service's policy.

Subordinate theme: practice

Participants spoke about how they would incorporate the exercise into their professional practice including in future supervisions with TEPs, to help reduce the power differential and when working closely with staff where there is a complex dynamic to attempt to understand their perspective:

"So I guess in terms of transcultural supervision (,) it's definitely something that I would take forward if I were to supervise again in the future, because I do think it's really useful in terms of reducing that power differential." (Zoe)

Subordinate theme: policy

Zoe mentioned the potential for the transcultural supervision exercise to be incorporated in service policy in order to enhance the relationships between supervisors and supervisees:

“... I think that we as a service we should be incorporating [the exercise] into our supervision policy(.)...whenever we have a new starter that should be something that is carried out between line manager and supervisee. Because it is, I just found it really useful and supportive....” (Zoe)

When applying Hawkins and Shohet’s (2012) model of power to the findings, it seems that engaging in the transcultural supervision exercise enabled reflection around cultural and personal power within the supervisory relationship and could be used in future supervision relationships. Personal power was attended to as supervisors widened their perspectives of the TEP in terms of explicitly discussing their past experiences and skills they bring to the role and supervision. A way of ensuring that transcultural supervision exercise explicitly attends to the power dynamics within the supervisory relationship is by using it alongside the power model (Hawkins & Shohet 2012) to encourage specific discussion about each feature alongside developing the more formal supervision contract.

Research Question 3: What is the impact of the transcultural supervision exercise on the supervisor’s cultural awareness?

INSERT Figure 3: Thematic map exploring how the transcultural supervision exercise impacted on the supervisor’s cultural awareness

Superordinate Theme: Promoting ethno-relative working

Through the participants’ sharing, they alluded to a more ethno-relative way of working which are reflected in the subordinate themes of ‘Greater awareness of other cultures’ and ‘Impact on casework’.

Subordinate theme: Greater awareness of other cultures

Through sharing about the experiences of the activity, the participants reflected that they

were able to learn more about different cultures. For example, May described how she gained a better understanding of her supervisee's culture and vice versa:

“I think it has meant that we can have that open safe space, where we can share our own kind of, life experiences, cultural experiences and show how they'll kind of offer a different perspective” (May)

For May, she felt that the transcultural supervision exercise provided a safe environment to explore each other's cultures and experiences in life. When May shared her perception of her culture, she included her life experiences, which reflects Soheilian et al., (2014)'s work that to understand an individual's culture, it is important to explore broader areas, such as social class and sexual orientation. May described her feelings:

“Feels like a bit of a leap of faith to be gently curious but then I think I'm very aware that kind of keeps me in the bubble that I don't want to be in. I want to be building that kind of awareness” (May)

May described how talking about culture is a 'leap of faith' indicating this is unfamiliar territory. However, she does not want to be in her 'bubble' and recognised that she wants to talk more about culture so that she is more aware. This shows that she values the discussions around culture and wants to build greater awareness. Zoe also described her feelings of the process:

“I feel really privileged that I've had the opportunity to have that discussion with her because I think it's really... and it opened my eyes to a greater variety of different cultural experiences” (Zoe)

Like May, Zoe felt that through the exercise, she was able to understand a wider range of cultural experiences. Zoe further described her experience by saying that 'it opened [her] eyes' suggesting different cultural experiences became available which she may have

previously been unaware of. For Zoe, getting the chance to hear about different cultures was a ‘privilege’ indicating how she valued it.

Therefore, based upon the experiences of the two participants, the transcultural supervision exercise helped them gain a greater understanding and awareness of other cultures, and arguably moved towards a more ethno-relative way of working as described in the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (Brinkmann & Weerdenberg, 1999, as cited in Hawkins & Shohet, 2012).

Subordinate theme: Impact on casework

Both participants shared how the exercise impacted on their understanding of culture within casework. Zoe shared how it helped her to understand the experiences that some families or CYP may have:

“Being able to have these really open discussions about how people's culture might impact on their identity moving forward, or what we talked about the other day in terms of [...] transgender and Asian families, and how that might impact in terms of stigma from the community. And so we've been able to have some really open discussions following transcultural supervision” (Zoe)

Zoe explained that after taking part in the activity, she and the supervisee were able to have discussions about the wider community that they work with and how this may have increased her understanding of culture and identity. May had a similar experience:

“And, you know, if we're working with parents that have either similar experience to me or similar cultural background to my trainee, that's really useful because we can kind of share that wider cultural awareness” (May)

May described how learning about the supervisee’s background can help her to understand parents who may have similar experiences which in turn could impact on May’s practice.

This reflects research by Burkard et al. (2006) who found that when supervisees received culturally responsive supervision, they felt empowered to talk about the dimension of culture within supervision. In doing so, this promotes a more ethno-relative way of working with (Brinkmann & Weerdenberg, 1999, as cited in Hawkins & Shohet, 2012). Additionally, it highlights the nature of supervision as a interactive, collaborative process where the supervisor can also learn from the supervisee (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012; Hill et al, 2015).

Limitations

Although this research offers a distinctive contribution to the supervisory literature by exploring supervisors' views of engaging in a transcultural supervision exercise, there are some limitations. Firstly, the study had a small sample size which meant detailed analysis of each participant's experience but may have impacted on development of meaningful points of similarity and differences between the supervisors' experiences of engaging in the exercise. Smith et al. (2009) suggest that between three to six participants is an optimum number for research using IPA for analysis, so it would have been more robust to have recruited further participants. In addition, IPA is reliant on participants' use of language and being able to express the nuances of their experiences, responses and feelings.

The supervisory dyad consists of the supervisor and supervisee, and this research focused on the supervisors' experiences of engaging in the transcultural supervision exercise. Therefore, it would be useful to explore supervisees' experiences of engaging in the exercise and where it impacted on the power dynamics, including feelings of safety, and cultural awareness within the supervisory relationship.

Conclusion and implications for practice

Whilst this is a small-scale project and IPA does not seek to generalise, this indicates the value of educational psychologists, as well as TEPs, undertaking exercises such as the one described. Whilst it supports the supervisory competencies (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010) of valuing diversity, being aware of power and working transculturally, it also develops a trusting and safe supervisory relationship. This can be applied to interprofessional supervision as well as supervision of T/EPs. It supports individuals to work more ethno-relatively, through being aware of other cultures. (Brinkmann & Weerdenberg, 1999, as cited in Hawkins & Shoheit, 2012) which in turn can have a positive impact on wider practice. For example, it may include an aspect of a child's culture being an explicit aspect of formulation in casework. Whilst there may be some apprehension in talking about culture, creating a safe space helps individuals to feel more comfortable. This is aided by making sure that individuals are providing informed consent (BPS, 2018), have time to prepare and enabling them to share as much they want or feel able to.

In conclusion, this study identified that supervisors found the transcultural supervision exercise a useful tool to promote cultural awareness, attend to power dynamics, particularly personal and cultural power, and develop the supervisory relationship with the TEPs they supervise and that they would use it in the future. There can also be an indirect impact on wider practice beyond supervision as, importantly, discussions of culture and power have been further acknowledged as important areas impacting on practice.

Relevant financial and other competing interests

There are no relevant financial or non-financial competing interests to report.

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Appendix A – Interview schedule

Issue / topic	Question	Possible follow-up questions [Prompt]	Probes
Experience	How did you find engaging in the transcultural supervision exercise?	What did you like/find useful? What didn't you like/find useful?	Can you tell me a bit more about...
Power	Thinking about your current supervisory relationship, do you think there has been an impact on the power dynamic between yourself and the trainee after engaging in the transcultural supervision exercise? Has the transcultural supervision exercise increased your awareness of power dynamics in supervision? Do you think an awareness of power dynamics will impact on your future professional practice as a supervisor?	If so, how? If not, why? How? Or, why/how not? If yes, how? If no, why?	Can you expand on...
Cultural awareness	Thinking about your current supervisory relationship, do you think there has been an impact on cultural awareness between yourself and the trainee after engaging in the transcultural supervision exercise? Has it increased your awareness of the importance of understanding other's culture within supervision? Do you think having an awareness of importance of understanding culture will impact on your future professional practice as a supervisor?	If so, how? If not, why? How? Or, why not?	Can you tell me a bit more about...