

## Cultural Collaboration in an Inter-Ethnic Supervisory Relationship:

### Where West meets East in Harmony

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### The Journey of West meeting East

The call to cultural competence in supervision in this post-colonial era ushers us to a **global** dialogue and cultural discovery. This global conversation requires of us curiosity on one hand and courage on the other. "Competence" in theological and clinical supervision may no longer be defined and dominated by western standards. Growing ethnic theologies engendered by very different worldviews and cultures are redefining "competence" for global humankind and cultural diversity.

As a consultant and supervisor to trainees and/or supervisors-in-training, I often hear the hopes of trainees from various ethnic backgrounds to be known as persons with worldviews that are uniquely theirs and cultures vastly different from the immediate contexts in which they are being supervised. In inter-ethnic supervision, the question of "integration" by whose standards now, must be asked. This concern comes about especially when trainees yield to the dominant, adopt the prevailing Western-centric model that has defined for them "growth" and "integration" in order to be "blessed" and to "make it" in the certification process. In this instance, there is a dichotomy between the outward **adopted self** and the inward **indigenous self** that often presents a **gap** that invokes quiet but profound disharmony in the soul and being of the one being supervised. My former White CPE supervisor wrote this in 1997, "I saw and encouraged Yoke Lye's independent voice and clear articulation of her goals. This I understand now to be the encouragement of her "western" side. What took me longer to understand and, *now only partially, was how difficult this was for her "eastern Asian" side. Her eastern self...went largely unsupported this year.* " To his credit, my former supervisor named the "gap", i.e. the disharmony he sensed intuitively in our supervisory relationship. Curious inquiry and the extension of hospitality for an ethnic and indigenous human story and the courageous suspension of our western theoretical models will narrow the gap of disharmony for a supervisee (from an eastern ethnic origin), hence, nurturing genuine "integration" in her/his theological and clinical training. It calls for the supervisor's willingness, intentionality and mindfulness to embark on a new path of supervision. Such intentionality, willingness and mindfulness demonstrates **ethical accountability** that is held with compassion. I call this accountability "**compassionate relationality**" supervision. "Compassionate relationality" supervision beckons the supervisor to a significant reorientation toward a lesser Western-centric model and toward a greater intentional and mindful inter-ethnic supervisory approach. Such movement empowers a supervisee in entering the ethnic-cultural worldview of her/his patient/ client --- hence, a parallel process of care through compassionate relationality. Healing care is been experienced. It is no longer just an intellectual and conceptual idea/ theory.

Clinical Pastoral Education invites trainees to "provide pastoral ministry to **diverse** people, taking into consideration multiple elements of **cultural and ethnic differences, social conditions, systems, and justice issues without imposing their own perspectives**" [ACPE Standards 312.2]. Cultural and ethnic identity are integral and foundational for understanding personality development and the educational process in CPE. In this workshop, we will engage ourselves:

1. What is inter-ethnic and inter-cultural supervision?
2. What is the relationship between Ethics and Inter-Ethnic supervision?
3. Conscious and unconscious impasses present in an inter-ethnic supervisory relationship and what are the contributing factors?
4. Explore the use of a cultural broker/ consultant in a supervisory /counseling relationship, an eastern model.

Trainees who engage in Clinical Pastoral Education are to “articulate the central themes of their religious heritage and their theological understandings that inform their ministry” [ACPE Standards 311.1]. Western Christianity claims persons are saved by the execution of Jesus. The violence and terror in Jesus’ death is a claim of God’s great love for humanity. Asian feminist theologian Rita Nakashima Brock questions this violence as indeed the love of God for humanity? She states, “This claim isolates Jesus as violence isolates its victims. When the victims of violence are made singular, solitary, unprecedented in their pain, the power of violence remains. Jesus’ death was not unique. The torture inflicted on Jesus had been visited on many. Jesus’ resurrection and the continuation of his movement are not triumphs, but a glimpse of the power of survival, of the embers that survive the deluge. Salvation begins with the courage of witnesses whose gaze is steady. Steady witnesses neither flee in horror to hide their eyes, nor console with sweet words. Violence is illuminated by insistent exposure...by bringing it to public attention” [Brocks and Parker, 2001:249-250]. Given this **Christological gap** -- the violent death of Jesus as love versus the courage of witnesses exposing the violence, how do we recognize and name such violence as racism, sexism, classism and other forms of "isms" in supervisory relationships? Such violence is the abuse of supervisory power over the one being supervised. In an inter-ethnic supervisory relationship, such abuse of power can be reversed. [Francesca Nuzzolese, *Journal of Pastoral Theology Fall 2007*:131]

Clinical Pastoral Education requires trainees to assess the strengths and needs of those served grounded in theology and an understanding of the **behavioral sciences** [ACPE Standards 312.4]. Western psychology endorses the universality of human nature (Alan Roland, 1989). However, there are profound psychological differences between the Western individualized self and the familial self that is so central to Eastern culture. Failure to recognize such differences leads to misapplications of personality and group theories in supervision. The result is faulty analysis, distortion and harmful judgment in inter-ethnic supervisory relationships. **Multicultural psychology**, an emerging field will be helpful in addressing issues of ethics and justice in inter-ethnic supervision. Parallel with **multicultural theology**, both disciplines will enhance our ability and sensitivity in engaging discernment and courageous dialogue in journeying with a supervisee in actualizing the use of an authentic, harmonious self in her/his ministry. Therefore, developing **ethnically and culturally relevant** personality and group theories in supervision is no longer a secondary task. It is an ethical urgent pursuit.

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