The Role of Intercultural Competence on Graduate Supervisor-Supervisee Relationship and Well-Being

ERICA AMERY, KIM KOH,
ZULAY DIAZ-CACERES, & BRIT M. PARIS
University of Calgary

ABSTRACT: In light of the increasing trend toward internationalization, developing intercultural competence (ICC) in graduate supervisors and supervisees by providing professional learning opportunities has become progressively more important in higher education institutions. ICC improves the supervisor-supervisee relationship, which, in turn, contributes to individual and collective well-being. We begin this article by reviewing the definitions of ICC. Based on our document analysis of graduate supervision handbooks in Canadian research-intensive universities, we present the current availability of professional learning opportunities for graduate supervisors and supervisees to develop their ICC. We also report on the thematic analysis of our written self-reflections on the role of ICC in supervisor-supervisee relationship and well-being. We conclude the article by making recommendations for a range of professional learning opportunities.

Résumé: À la lumière de la tendance à l'internationalisation, le développement professionnel de la compétence interculturelle (ICC) chez les superviseurs et les étudiants est devenu progressivement plus important dans les établissements d'enseignement supérieur. ICC améliore la relation superviseur supervisé qui, à son tour, contribue au bien-être individuel et collectif. Nous débutons cet article en passant en revue les définitions de l'ICC. À partir de notre analyse documentaire des manuels de supervision des diplômés dans les universités canadiennes à forte intensité de recherche, nous présentons les possibilités d'apprentissage professionnel disponible pour les superviseurs et les étudiants afin de développer leur ICC. Nous rendons également compte de l'analyse thématique de nos

Journal of Educational Thought
Vol.53, No. 2, 2020, 125-154

autoréflexions écrites sur le rôle de l'ICC dans les relations superviseurs supervisés et le bien-être. Nous concluons l'article en offrant des recommandations de suggestions de développement professionnel.

The Role of Intercultural Competence on Graduate Supervisor-Supervisee Relationship and Well-Being

In an increasingly competitive globalized economy, higher education institutions around the world—especially those in developed English-speaking Western countries (e.g., United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand) have strived to make internationalization a key priority in the effort of raising their international profiles. The most commonly used strategy for internationalization is to attract and recruit international students and academics. As such, many higher education institutions including those in Canada, have seen an influx of international students and the recruitment of academics who come from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds is also on the rise. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2013), the number of foreign students enrolled in postsecondary education outside their country of origin increased from 1.3 million in 1990 to 4.5 million in 2013.

In Canada, the number of international students in postsecondary education increases at a rate of 15% per year (Global Affairs Canada, 2016), while 40% of faculty at Canadian universities have at least one international degree (Statistics Canada, University and College Academic Staff System, 2010–2011). From 2018 to 2019, there was a 14.5% increase in international students in Canadian post-secondary educational institutions (Canada Bureau for International Education, 2020). Canada has now become the world's third-leading study abroad destination for international students, surpassing the United Kingdom, and trailing behind the United States and Australia (El-Assal, 2020). Additionally, over the past two decades, an increasing number of foreign academics including Canada Research Chairs have been recruited from all parts of the world to contribute to research excellence and innovation in Canadian post-secondary educational institutions. For example, the Government of Canada (2019) invests around $295 million per year to attract and retain some of the world's most accomplished academics in Canadian research-intensive universities. Taken together, these statistics

indicate increased student and faculty diversity on Canadian campuses.

In graduate supervision, the increased heterogeneity of student and faculty populations in Canadian higher education institutions suggests that there is a high probability that 1) international graduate students will be paired with Canadian supervisors who are native English speakers, 2) domestic graduate students will be paired with supervisors who speak English as a second language (ESL) or foreign language (EFL), or 3) international graduate students will be paired with supervisors who themselves are ESL/EFL speakers, and therefore, both come from a different sociocultural context. Linguistic and cultural differences between a graduate student and their supervisor can pose many challenges such as different personalities and working styles, communication breakdown, cultural differences in dealing with hierarchy, imbalance in power, inequality caused by inherited identities, stereotypes, different expectations for academic excellence and dissertation timeline, and preferred ways of critiquing others' ideas and receiving feedback (Brown, 2007; Dimitrov et al., 2014; Shi-Xu, 2001; Winchester-Seeto et al., 2014). Such challenges can result in tensions between the supervisor and the supervisee; if not addressed properly, their respective academic progress and research productivity as well as their personal well-being could be compromised; this could also lead to mental health issues in the future. Hence, it is important for graduate supervisors and their supervisees to develop high levels of intercultural competence (ICC) and be able to use it to interact with each other in a healthy and productive way throughout the supervision and mentoring process.

ICC is defined as "the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Deardorff, 2006, p. 247). It is considered one of the important graduate attributes sought by potential employers and a professional competence needed for success in the 21st-century globalized marketplace (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2011). Additionally, graduate students who possess a high level of ICC are deemed to be more likely to succeed in their academic pursuits and research endeavors while navigating graduate school (Dimitrov et al., 2014). Some suggest that ICC is an automatic outcome of internationalization, in particular students' experiences in study abroad and exchange programs (Leask, 2015) and domestic students' interactions with international students in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms (i.e., internationalization at home). However, research has shown that many international

undergraduate and graduate students face challenges in integrating into their host institutions' academic environments due to language barriers and their own lack of understanding of the new culture, as well as their professors' and supervisors' lack of intercultural understanding and cross-cultural communication competence (e.g., Guo & Chase, 2011; Guo & Guo, 2017; Myles & Cheng, 2003; Winchester-Seeto et al., 2014). To date, extant research tends to focus on international students' experiences in foreign higher education institutions, and a deficit model is often used to describe international students' challenges in adapting to their new cultural environment. Additionally, little is known about what interventional approaches or professional learning opportunities are made available to support international graduate students to foster a better working relationship with their supervisors. Given an accelerated pace of internationalization and an increasingly diverse graduate student and faculty population on Canadian campuses, we posit that there is an urgent need for graduate programs at Canadian higher education institutions to deliberately incorporate professional learning opportunities to promote ICC among graduate students and their supervisors.

We begin this article by reviewing the definitions of ICC, especially in the context of higher education. Based on our document analysis of graduate supervision handbooks posted online by Canadian research-intensive universities, we investigate the nature of professional learning opportunities currently available for graduate supervisors and supervisees to develop their ICC. While a substantial body of research has focused on international students' experiences and ICC in foreign higher education institutions, many did not consider the experiences and ICC of domestic students and foreign supervisors in the same study. The role of ICC in fostering a strong graduate supervisor-supervisee relationship in cross-cultural graduate supervision (when supervisor and supervisee come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds) remains under-investigated. Therefore, in this article, we also report on the thematic analysis of our written self-reflections on how ICC plays an important role in fostering our cross-cultural supervisor-supervisee relationship and its impact on our well-being. Findings derived from both the document analysis and the analysis of our self-reflections help us ascertain whether the current professional learning opportunities offered to graduate students and supervisors in Canadian higher education institutions are adequate to support their development of ICC.

Intercultural Competence

To conduct a comprehensive review of the definitions of ICC, we searched the Academic Search Premier and Google Scholar databases using the following terms: "intercultural competence," "intercultural competence and graduate supervision," "graduate supervisor-supervisee relationship," and "well-being." Our review reveals that a common rationale for the study of ICC has been the rise of globalization, which requires people to be able to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural contexts (Byram & Garcia, 2011; Deardorff, 2015; Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006; Garrett-Rucks, 2016; Nash, 2012). ICC is also recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2013) as an essential professional competence in the 21st century. According to Leask (2015), ICC is a complex construct and has been defined and investigated by "researchers in fields such as linguistics, cultural studies, and communication studies over many years" (p. 62). More recently, ICC has gained traction in higher education studies due to an accelerated pace of internationalization in postsecondary educational institutions worldwide.

From the lens of applied linguistics and foreign language learning, Byram (1997) first coined the term ICC as "Knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others' values, beliefs, and behaviors; and relativizing one's self. Linguistic competence plays a key role" (p. 34). In 2011, he added an important element to his definition: "A better understanding of intercultural competence will provide a better understanding of human beings and their potential" (p. 20). Communicative competence plays a key role in understanding intercultural differences. For example, Fantini and Tirmizi (2006) have defined ICC as "a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself" (p. 12). Among these abilities, the importance of communicative competence, which enables individuals to not only comprehend different cultural meanings, but also use effective communication strategies for recognizing the identities of the actors in their intercultural interactions, is emphasized. Garrett-Rucks (2016) defines ICC as "the ability to step beyond one's own culture and function with other individuals from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds" (p. 43). These authors seem to define ICC as an innate ability, which is you either have it or you don't.

In the context of higher education, ICC has gained relevance as a response to the internationalization of universities (Deardorff, 2006; Dimitrov et al., 2014; Garrett-Rucks, 2016; Griffith et al., 2016; Leask, 2015; Nash, 2012). Based on a Delphi study (Deardorff, 2006), a panel of leading intercultural scholars and higher education administrators reached a consensus on the definition of ICC: "the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 194). The Delphi study supports Deardorff's (2004) pyramid model of ICC, which has guided our study. According to the model, ICC constitutes personal attitudes (i.e., respect for or valuing other cultures and diversity, openness to intercultural learning and to people from other cultures, and curiosity and discovery—including tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty), knowledge and comprehension (i.e., cultural self-awareness and a deep understanding and knowledge of culture, including the contexts, role, and impact of culture and others' worldviews), and skills (i.e., to listen, observe, and interpret; to analyze, evaluate, and relate). An individual's level of ICC depends on their acquired level of these underlying elements (knowledge, skills, and attitudes). Additionally, the development of ICC can lead to both internal and external outcomes. The internal outcome of ICC is a shift in frame of reference or worldview, which can enhance the external outcome of ICC, which is communicating and behaving appropriately and effectively in intercultural situations (Deardorff, 2004, 2006).

According to Deardorff (2009), ICC is a process in which an individual acquires the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes, accompanied with continuous reflection, to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural interactions. Other intercultural scholars are in agreement with Deardorff that ICC should include three essential components: knowledge, skills, and attitudes, however, they also deem that ICC development is ongoing and is a lifelong process that must be intentionally addressed and developed (e.g., Leask, 2015). Leask (2015) notes that "In this regard, intercultural competence is a state of becoming" (p. 63). This implies that higher education institutions that intend to support graduate students' and supervisors' development of ICC need to provide ongoing, sustained professional learning opportunities and design ICC workshops and intercultural activities that intentionally engage students and faculty members in active reflections on each component of the ICC.

In essence, ICC is the ability to communicate and behave appropriately and effectively in intercultural situations. It emphasizes the need for genuine mutual respect and value, as well

as bridging linguistic and cultural differences through building a productive working relationship (Deardorff, 2009). When the graduate supervisor and supervisee each possesses a higher level of ICC, they are more likely to have a productive working relationship, which, in turn, can boost their well-being and success in a graduate program.

Graduate Supervisor-Supervisee Relationship

In the context of understanding the societal and economic importance of higher education institutions, the need to address graduate supervisor-supervisee relationship in an increasingly linguistic and culturally diverse graduate program becomes obvious. Bok (2013) contends that the role of higher education institutions has become more important than ever in the knowledge-based society and economy because they are the main sources of innovation, essential expert knowledge, and professional and career skills training for adults. They provide qualified people to fill the most challenging jobs in the economy, as well as the leaders needed to sustain democracies, create new industries, manage public health, and preserve and enrich culture. Grix (2001) characterizes the graduate supervisor-supervisee working relationship a determinant for success in postgraduate research. He also, however, describes it as a difficult relationship since it involves individuals who may disagree in many areas, including ideas, attitudes, preferences, expectations, and ways of addressing challenging situations. He states that:

> Supervisory skills are of both a professional and a personal nature. A good supervisor not only needs to know what constitutes a professional piece of research, including being familiar with the "nuts and bolts" of the process … but they also need to have certain interpersonal skills to be able to offer advice and a listening ear to matters that go beyond the thesis. (p. 99)

Graduate supervision, especially at the PhD and the EdD levels, is sometimes seen as risky and challenging due to the need for the supervisor to possess a wide range of supervisory skills. It may also expose the supervisor to constant criticism, with limited chances of both supervisor and supervisee "reading from the same page at the same time" (Peelo, 2010, p. 23). Bartlett and Mercer's (2001) list of supervisor's duties includes:

> … confidante, source of intellectual inspiration, resource manager, grant application writer, navigator of institutional tangles, manager of change, personal motivator, writing teacher, editor, career mentor, and networker – and those were just some of the most readily identified roles. Given the broad parameters of the relationship then, it's not surprising that the field is littered with grim tales of disappointing supervision experiences. (p. 4)

International graduate students also face their own difficulties or challenges, including leaving their home countries and loved ones, giving up their full-time jobs, paying much higher tuition fees, and trying to compete for limited graduate scholarships or teaching assistantships, all without guarantee of success. Additionally, crises may arise during the supervision process due to research difficulties, confusion over roles, and meeting expectations for the dissertation. Even though there is no way to predict the supervisees' success, supervisors are expected to display adequate personal, academic, and professional skills (Peelo, 2010). The role of supervisor becomes even more complex and demanding in the context of cross-cultural supervision.

Well-Being

Higher education institutions play a pivotal role in promoting the well-being of graduate students and supervisors as a strategy to achieve institutional success. The current literature does not provide a consistent definition of well-being. According to Ryan and Deci (2001), well-being is a complex construct that relates to "optimal psychological functioning and experience" (p. 142). Dodge et al. (2012), however, define well-being as "a state of equilibrium or balance that can be affected by life events or challenges" (p. 222). Michaelson et al. (2012) state that "well-being can be understood as how people feel and how they function, both on a personal and a social level, and how they evaluate their lives as a whole" (p. 8). Well-being is sometimes associated with terms such as quality of life, life satisfaction, utility, happiness, and welfare (Easterlin, 2003). McAllister (2005) mentions five elements that make up well-being:

> … physical wellbeing; material wellbeing; social wellbeing; development and activity; emotional wellbeing. The elements can be paraphrased as physical health, income and wealth, relationships, meaningful work and leisure, personal stability, and (lack of)

> depression. Mental health is increasingly seen as fundamental to overall health and well-being. These elements are sometimes viewed as "drivers" of wellbeing. (p. 6).

For most philosophers, well-being has universal application (e.g., Griffin, 1986; Nussbaum, 2000; Sumner, 1996; Tiberius 2004). According to them, a person's well-being is dependent on his or her attitude. Tiberius (2004) has summed up:

> Nothing can count as contributing to a person's well-being unless that person has, or would have under certain appropriate conditions, some attitude such as a desire or a feeling toward it. (p. 307).

This statement suggests that intentional strategies can be taken to promote a person's well-being through changing his or her attitude. Gregersen (2019) notes that "Wellbeing involves being able to find supportive social connections and a sense of purpose. It also entails awareness of and engagement in positive physical and mental health practices." (p.1). She further suggests that emotional self-regulation is key to maintaining well-being and individuals who are interculturally competent have the ability to regulate their own emotions as well as to recognize and work with the emotions of diverse others (e.g., decoding and encoding nonverbal behaviors).

Intercultural Competence in Graduate Supervision

ICC in graduate supervision refers to the ability to understand cultural and disciplinary differences in communication and interaction. According to Dimitrov et al. (2014), ICC in academic contexts "may include the ability to present research or facilitate learning across cultures, speak with confidence to a variety of audiences, explain complex concepts clearly, and negotiate working relationships across cultural, social, professional, and disciplinary boundaries" (p. 87). It is often assumed that students can develop or acquire ICC through experience, but it is more beneficial if it is intentional (Bennett, 2015, Deardorff, 2015; Leask, 2015). As Dimitrov et al. (2014) have aptly pointed out, although ICC is an important learning outcome and graduate attribute, it is seldom explicitly taught in higher education institutions. Administrators at graduate schools should therefore ensure that graduate students and supervisors are provided with adequate support and

professional learning opportunities that will foster ICC. This will, in turn, contribute to their overall well-being. As graduate supervisors and their students engage in meaningful interactions and continuous reflections, they will build a strong working relationship with one another. It is anticipated that as this relationship grows, mutual trust and respect will be developed, which can improve their collective well-being and their overall experience in the supervision journey.

Empirical studies provide insight into the significance of the emotional component of ICC (Hammer, 2011; Leung et al., 2014). For instance, in a study conducted by Hammer (2011), an intercultural development tool was used to measure individual or group level of ICC across the development continuum, finding that students' levels of ICC determined their levels of anxiety in intercultural situations. He also found that students who had higher levels of ICC were more satisfied in their study-abroad contexts. Using the Cultural Intelligence Scale as a measure of ICC, Leung et al.'s (2014) study demonstrated that well-being is associated with a high level of ICC. Taken together, these study findings indicate that a high level of ICC can lead to an increased sense of well-being.

The demands of graduate school are often associated with higher stress and a decrease in well-being for both the graduate student and supervisor if the relationship is not intentionally nurtured. As pointed out by The Chronicle of Higher Education (2015), a graduate student's relationship with their supervisor has the most influence on their mental health during their graduate studies. Thus, when graduate students and their supervisors are from different cultures, they may have to draw on their intercultural skills, knowledge, and attitudes (i.e., ICC) to build a healthy working relationship. In our study, we posit that ICC is a catalyst for promoting the well-being of graduate supervisors and supervisees who come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and therefore, graduate programs should intentionally create and provide high-quality professional learning opportunities to foster ICC in graduate supervisors and supervisees.

The Current Study

To date, most research on ICC has been conducted with international graduate students who are enrolled in foreign higher education institutions or study abroad programs. There is a lack of empirical evidence on ICC in graduate supervisors and supervisees, especially in the case that both the supervisor and the supervisee

are from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Clearly, over the past decade, internationalization has become a key priority in many higher education institutions across the globe. To compete in the rankings of the best global universities, many research-intensive universities seek to attract talented graduate students and prestigious academics (Stromquist, 2007), regardless of their cultural background and country of origin. The faculty and student populations at North American higher education institutions are more linguistically and culturally diverse than ever, and therefore, increased ICC in graduate supervisors and supervisees—especially for those who come from different cultural backgrounds—is necessary to enhance the quality of supervision and mentorship. This will contribute to graduate students' success in their research and future careers, as well as improving graduate supervisors' and supervisees' well-being in the long run. As such, it is of paramount importance to understand how graduate programs in higher education institutions can support graduate supervisors and supervisees in their development of ICC. It is also essential to gain a better understanding of the role of ICC in building the graduate supervisor-supervisee relationship, which may contribute to their well-being. The following research questions were addressed in our study:

1. What are the professional learning opportunities in ICC for graduate supervisors and supervisees in Canadian research-intensive universities?
2. How do graduate supervisors and supervisees perceive the role of ICC in their relationship when they are from different cultural backgrounds?
3. How does ICC contribute to the well-being of graduate supervisors and supervisees?

Method

Our qualitative research involved document analysis and authors' (first to third) written self-reflections. The written reflections were used to corroborate findings derived from our document analysis of the availability and nature of professional learning opportunities for ICC in graduate programs. The participant reflections were written by a graduate supervisor and two of her doctoral supervisees (the first three co-authors). They were asked to write individual reflections on how ICC can be fostered in graduate supervisors and supervisees, and on the role ICC plays in enhancing their working relationship and well-being. The reflections were then analysed

independently by the fourth author, with the resulting themes then shared with the three participants as a means of member-checking. The participants were also afforded the opportunity to read the analysis and provide additional clarity as needed.

The three participants came from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The supervisor, originally from Asia, obtained her doctorate from a Canadian research-intensive university; she had successfully supervised numerous graduate students to completion. The first supervisee was a Canadian graduate student (Supervisee A) and the second supervisee was an international graduate student originally from South America (Supervisee B). As such, their reflections provided rich data for a thematic analysis of their views of the role of ICC in graduate supervision and well-being.

The questions posed to guide their written reflections included: 1) What are your expectations as a graduate student/supervisor? 2) How do you think your intercultural competence affects the supervisor/supervisee working relationship? 3) How does this affect your well-being and success? 4) How can intercultural competence be developed by the provision of professional learning opportunities? and 5) What role should a graduate program play in fostering intercultural competence?

Several themes were initially identified: the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and internal and external outcomes of ICC (Deardorff, 2006, 2015); the graduate supervisor-supervisee relationship, and the elements of well-being. Each reflection was read and coded for the above themes and shared with the participants for input. The results of each coded theme were then brought together to develop a narrative.

For the document analysis, the first author of this article selected and analyzed the websites of seven research-intensive universities in Eastern and Western Canada. These universities were selected because they were the seven top research-intensive universities in Canada. Additionally, they have high numbers of international graduate students and foreign faculty members, indicating the likelihood of cross-cultural graduate supervision was high. The analysis was conducted using a summative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). First, an analysis of the websites on graduate supervision of the seven universities was conducted in relation to the constructs from the literature review: supervisor-supervisee relationship, well-being, ICC, and professional development in ICC for supervisors and graduate students. Second, to minimize biases, the third author of this article also analyzed the

same websites independently. Finally, their analyses were compared for intercoder reliability (Miles et al., 2020). The percentage of exact agreement of their independent codings was above 90%.

Findings

In this section, we first present our review and analysis of the graduate supervision handbooks posted online by Canadian research-intensive universities. This is followed by the findings derived from our thematic analysis of the participants' written reflections.

Graduate Supervision Handbooks and Intercultural Competence

The Guiding Principles for Graduate Student Supervision handbook, published by the Canadian Association of Graduate Studies (2008), acknowledges the relevance of higher education graduate studies in the social and economic well-being of Canadians. Hence, it perceives the supervisor-supervisee relationship as a fundamental element in graduate students' success. Although it includes basic principles to guide the supervision process, the development of ICC in the context of the graduate supervisor-supervisee relationship was not addressed. For this research, documents on graduate supervision extracted from the websites of the seven top Canadian research-intensive universities were reviewed and analyzed for the availability of professional learning opportunities for developing ICC in graduate supervisors and supervisees. The universities included the University of Calgary, University of Alberta, University of British Columbia, University of Toronto, McGill University, Western University, and McMaster University. In addition to these universities being the leading research-intensive high education institutions in Canada, they also have the highest number of international students and foreign faculty members including Canada's Research Chairs. For example, the University of British Colombia has a high number of international students: 16, 200 international students, and 25% of the student population at McGill University are international students.

Table 1 presents the content related to ICC, supervisor-supervisee relationship, well-being, and professional learning opportunities outlined by the universities' graduate supervision

handbooks. Quotes and examples from the online documents are included in Appendix A.

Table 1

Professional Learning Opportunities in ICC at Canadian Research-Intensive Universities

	Content in graduate supervision handbook			
Higher education institution	Supervisor-supervisee relationship	Well-being	Elements of ICC	Professional development in ICC for supervisors and graduate students
University of Calgary	✓	✓	✓ (Western Guidebook)	✓ Online tools; Face-to-face workshops on resolving intercultural conflicts
University of Alberta	✓	✓	✓ Cross-cultural miscommunication	✓ Online tools; Face-to-face workshops on academic mentorship
University of British Colombia	✓	✓	✓ Intercultural understanding	✓ Online tools; Supervisor: Face-to-face workshops excellent supervision; Supervisors and Students: Symposium on intercultural fluency
University of Toronto	✓	✓	✓ Racial equity, diversity, and inclusion	✓ Online tools; Supervisors and students: Face-to-face workshops on key strategies for racial equity, diversity, and inclusion
McGill University	✓	✓	✓ Cross-cultural understanding	✓ Online tools; Supervisor: Face-to-face workshops on supervision
Western University	✓	✓	✓ Cross-cultural communication competence	✓ Online tools; Supervisors: Face-to-face workshops on resolving conflicts and supervising cross cultures; Students: Face-to-face workshops on getting mentored and building a productive relationship
McMaster University	✓	✓	✓ Cross-cultural supervision	✓ Online tools

All of the documents shared a common theme in their focus on the relationship between the supervisee and the graduate supervisor and the effect of that relationship on both the supervisor's and the supervisee's research productivity, motivation, and well-being. The graduate supervisor-supervisee relationship has been compared to marriage (Galt, 2013), and Corman (2012) indicates that graduate

supervisor-supervisee relationship needs to be nurtured and maintained with great care. This is because the relationship is a key factor in determining a successful and satisfying apprenticeship; for instance, the University of British Columbia's graduate studies website states that "the graduate student-supervisor relationship is central to students' academic progress, their student experience, their potential as future scholars, and their wellbeing" (University of British Columbia, 2018, para 1).

It is also evident that well-being is recognized by all seven of the universities in this study. There is a section on well-being in each of their handbooks, all of which provide supervisors and supervisees with recommendations and refer them to campus resources, such as the wellness centre on campus. Furthermore, most of the graduate supervision documents refer to the likelihood of conflicts due to personality, expectations, working style, and cultural differences, and indicate that these can have an impact on the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee, particularly if these issues and misunderstandings are not taken seriously and addressed from the beginning. Moreover, all seven university documents highlighted the shared responsibility (of both the supervisor and supervisee) of maintaining the relationship.

With regard to ICC, all graduate supervision handbooks discussed being aware of cultural differences and the potential for conflicts due to these differences. While they do not explicitly discuss the concept of ICC, the majority of the documents provide an overview of how to deal with cultural differences between the supervisor and the supervisee if they are in cross-cultural relationships, as well as how to help a student overcome culture shock. For example, in the Western Guidebook to Graduate Supervision (Skarakis-Doyle & McIntyre, 2008), there is an extensive section on cultural differences and how to address intercultural conflicts. Hence, aspects of ICC, such as increasing awareness of the cultural background of the student, and attitudinal dimensions, such as open-mindedness and respect, are addressed. However, the document is mainly directed towards supervisors and not supervisees.

In terms of professional learning opportunities, all of the universities provided graduate supervisors and supervisees with the tools to develop their ICC so that challenges related to cross-cultural differences can be addressed properly and students and supervisors can both thrive in their respective roles. Additionally, all of the universities' graduate studies websites offer online

resources that can be accessed by both supervisors and supervisees to develop their ICC. Some of the resources also included case studies with real-world scenarios of graduate supervision and explanations of possible solutions. As these resources are only provided as reference material that can be accessed on an independent level, however, supervisors and supervisees may only refer to these online resources once a conflict has escalated.

A review of online graduate supervision websites posted by the universities reveals that almost all of them offer face-to-face workshops for graduate supervisors and supervisees to build skills such as supervision and mentoring, receiving supervision, resolving conflicts, and building a productive working relationship. About half of the universities had developed and offered workshops that intentionally created professional learning opportunities for graduate supervisors and supervisees to improve their intercultural understanding. For example, the graduate studies website at the University of Calgary has a link to their workshops on addressing intercultural conflicts. Likewise, in every spring semester, the University of British Colombia provides faculty, staff, and graduate students with a half-day symposium "Intercultural Fluency Project," which is designed to engender a better understanding of the role of intercultural differences on an increasingly global and diverse campus, as well as the role of intercultural understanding in the graduate supervisor-supervisee relationship.

As chances are increasing that graduate students and supervisors in Canadian universities will come from different cultural backgrounds, we suggest that the role of ICC should be addressed both formally and informally; it should be integrated into academic programming and be explicitly discussed in graduate supervisor-supervisee handbooks. Our review of the graduate supervision documents indicates that there are sections written with the purpose of raising intercultural awareness in graduate students and supervisors, but most of the professional learning opportunities for fostering ICC in graduate students and supervisors are only offered online and require self-directed study. Even though some universities also provide face-to-face workshops on intercultural understanding, most of the workshops are designed as one-time, ad hoc sessions. Hence, it is imperative that graduate schools in Canada include professional learning opportunities in ICC as ongoing and regular parts of the graduate studies program. In addition to workshops, graduate administrators may consider promoting graduate supervisors' and students' intercultural engagement through new graduate student orientations, cultural

activities, events, symposia, talking circles, and cultural competency training.

The findings derived from our thematic analysis of the participants' written reflections are organized according to the following themes: graduate programs addressing the development of ICC, ICC and graduate supervisor-supervisee relationship, graduate supervisor-supervisee relationship and well-being.

Graduate Programs Addressing the Development of ICC

While graduate supervision handbooks did include some elements of intercultural understanding and professional learning opportunities for supporting the development of ICC in graduate supervisors and supervisees, the implementation was not evident. One of the graduate student participants commented that

> Before my arrival, the university offered an online orientation for international students. It mostly included general information about the university and the different procedures I needed to get familiar with. The topic of supervision was directly connected with regulation. I do not remember intercultural competence being explicitly mentioned in that session. (Supervisee B)

The impetus for the development of ICC, then, becomes the responsibility of the individual students and supervisors. However, students and supervisors might have their own idiosyncratic ways of interpreting ICC. For example, as the supervisor participant reflected: "I appreciated the cultural understanding of my professors and doctoral supervisor. They demonstrated the kind of care, respect, and unceasing support I needed to provide my own supervisees when I began my formal faculty appointment." One of the graduate students had the false impression that ICC could be fostered by having regular contact hours with her supervisor, which, in turn, would contribute to a good supervisor-supervisee relationship. She noted that "if one does not have regular contact through regular meetings, ongoing constructive feedback, and open communication with their supervisor, these intercultural competencies may not be fostered as much as they could." (Supervisee A)

Additionally, the participants of the study felt that there was a need to address and develop ICC outside of the supervisor-supervisee relationship, as pointed out by Supervisee B:

> Students, teachers, and administrative staff should be involved in intercultural competence training, it should be part of the university policy to promote and value diversity and mutual understanding. Every single course offered by the university should include and live the development and maintenance of intercultural competence as a strategy to enhance well-being. (Supervisee B)

ICC and Graduate Supervisor-Supervisee Relationship

The possession of ICC indicates that one has acquired the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural interactions. As indicated by Supervisee B, "considering I understand intercultural competence as the ability a person has to interact effectively with people from a different cultural background, I find it key in a sustainable and effective supervisor-supervisee relationship at the Ph.D. level." ICC is of paramount importance in addressing misunderstandings due to language and cultural differences between the supervisor and the supervisee. For example, the same student commented in reference to both her supervisor and herself being EFL speakers:

> Being interculturally competent can also be beneficial in supervisor/supervisee relationships by valuing the great contributions different perspectives can add to find solutions to different situations. It can generate spaces for seeing different points of view and making the best decisions. (Supervisee B)

In addition, Supervisee A reported that a lack of ICC would result in conflicts between the supervisor and supervisee, which would affect their respective well-being. The working relationship between graduate supervisor and supervisee is dependent on their respective levels of ICC—as the supervisor participant described, "ICC enables us to understand each other's working style and challenges in life. It will also enable us to develop empathy, understand different perspectives, and enhance our graduate supervisor-supervisee relationship." (Supervisor)

Graduate students rely on their supervisors for their future success, which means there is often a power dynamic at play. As one of the graduate student participants described, she relied on her supervisor for reference letters for awards and job applications, and that many decisions were made based on the advice and input of her supervisor (Supervisee B). This could result in a clear power imbalance, given the one-way dependency. However, because she had developed a positive relationship with her supervisor, much of it grounded in ICC, this power imbalance was not a source of conflict. Supervisee A discussed how she felt that she was supported and encouraged by her supervisor and did not raise power imbalance as an issue or concern.

Graduate Supervisor-Supervisee Relationship and Well-Being

If the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee is one that has been improved or sustained through ICC, it can lead to a greater sense of well-being for both. Supervisee B remarked that "overall, I feel my success is part of her success, so she really cares for my welfare as well as my achievements." The relationship contributes to the well-being and mutual success of the supervisor and supervisee. Supervisee B, who reported a good relationship with the supervisor, found herself to be "more productive and happier overall," while the other student seemed to be highly stressed, commenting in her reflection that "I just want to complete my dissertation." A strong relationship built upon the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of interacting with people who come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds can be a doorway for the supervisee. The supervisor noted that, "to ensure that my supervisees are not feeling lonely I initiated social events for my students such as lunch/dinner and gatherings so that my supervisees can gain support from their peers." These sorts of initiatives open the door for deepening intercultural understanding, and the relationship itself, in a nurturing environment.

The participants also discussed conflict, or the lack thereof, as a contributing factor to well-being, which might have consequences for both mental and physical health. Supervisee B reported an example of how the relationship between supervisor and supervisee can contribute to well-being: if the supervisor and supervisee have different first languages and cultures and they rely on English as a lingua-franca, it could result in feelings of frustration or confusion; however, she also stated that

> Being interculturally competent can also be beneficial in supervisor/supervisee relationships by valuing the great contributions different perspectives can add to find solutions to different situations. It can also help [in] avoiding conflicts due to the differences. It can generate spaces for seeing different points of view and making the best decisions. It helps develop an attitude of respect and cooperation through the interaction.

The graduate student experience is a varied one, and each student brings their own expectations for their supervisor-supervisee relationship; these expectations can be influenced by the student's culture. As noted by Supervisee B:

> When I met my supervisor for the first time, I addressed her using her Ph.D. title. Later, she asked me to call her by her first name. I mention this to highlight how cultural differences will arise as soon as you start interacting with someone from a different culture and people need to be able to cope with unexpected events to avoid misunderstandings.

Here, the participant reflected on her expectations and highlighted the need for ICC in these relationships in order to avoid conflict, and instead, intentionally nurture the relationship so that it contributes to the well-being and success of both parties.

Discussion and Conclusion

It is evident from the literature review, online graduate supervision handbooks, and the authors' written self-reflections, that the development of ICC in graduate supervisors and supervisees is key to promoting a healthy and productive graduate supervisor-supervisee relationship, which, in turn, contributes to the well-being of both graduate supervisors and supervisees. Therefore, there is an urgent need for graduate programs in Canadian research-intensive universities to create professional learning opportunities for graduate students and their supervisors to develop their ICC (Dimitrov et al., 2014). In light of the accelerated pace of internationalization, higher education institutions around the globe will continue to open their doors to international graduate students and faculty, and it is increasingly likely that dyads of graduate supervisors and supervisees will be from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This means that conflicts and tensions may

arise due to a lack of ICC. Hence, it is imperative for graduate program administrators to intentionally promote professional learning opportunities for graduate supervisors and supervisees who come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Oftentimes, a deficit model is used to describe the challenges faced by international students in adjusting to the Canadian academic environment. In addition to the professional learning opportunities offered at the faculty and institutional levels, graduate supervisors need to take a more proactive approach to reaching out to international graduate students.

Professional learning opportunities for ICC should not be limited to one-week orientation programs, one-time and ad hoc workshops, or online self-study tools. Rather, professional development needs to be more explicit, intentional, and sustainable to ensure that the ICC of graduate supervisors and supervisees can be fostered over time. Professional learning opportunities could range from periodic workshops, to graduate seminars, summer institutes, and teaching development programs, and it is important that they be deliberately promoted by graduate program offices and teaching and learning centres. Graduate students who come from a foreign country could also be involved in international research team or research projects that provide them with more exposure to working collaboratively with researchers and peers who are more familiar with the Canadian education system and who are willing to mentor them during their adaptation and transition to the Canadian academic setting (Dimitrov et al., 2014). Teaching development programs such as the International Teaching Assistants program and Teaching Across Borders can be offered to graduate students to develop their ICC. Some ICC activities such as cross-cultural events, dramas (Byram & Fleming, 1998), stories or narrative inquires (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), and support groups can take place beyond formal learning environments. Such professional learning opportunities are of paramount importance for new graduate supervisors and students. For instance, the Quality Assurance for Higher Education authorities in the United Kingdom and Australia directs new graduate supervisors to engage in continuing professional development through active participation in a range of activities (Galt, 2013). In the graduate supervision handbooks that we reviewed, we found that while there were acknowledgments of cultural differences, more intentional efforts for promoting the development of ICC in graduate supervisors and supervisees are necessary. According to Dimitrov (2009), ICC

development should incorporate intercultural communicative competence as the key component. His view aligns with Byram and Garcia (2011), Deardorff (2004, 2006), and Fantini and Tirmizi (2006). Intercultural communicative competence includes understanding of communication styles and giving feedback across cultures, which are important ICC skills for graduate supervisors. Additionally, graduate supervisors and supervisees can be encouraged to engage in continuous reflections on their intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes. As ICC development is an ongoing process, self-reflections using Deardorff's (2004, 2006) pyramid model of ICC serve as an intentional strategy to improve one's ICC. Graduate programs may also consider developing self-reflections tools to serve as formative assessment in the annual progress report for graduate supervision. Graduate supervisors and their supervisees can then use their reflections to ascertain the need for continuing professional development to enhance their ICC.

In conclusion, the findings from this study shed light on the challenges and opportunities for graduate supervisors and supervisees from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds to develop their ICC, which is key to establishing and maintaining a healthy and productive working relationship and general well-being. Graduate program administrators need to re-examine the content of graduate supervision handbooks and the provision of professional learning opportunities for the development of ICC in their graduate students and supervisors.

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Appendix A.

Quotes and Examples from the Online Handbooks by Canadian Research-Intensive Universities

Higher education institution	Supervisor-supervisee relationship	Well-being	Elements of ICC	Professional development in ICC for supervisors and graduate students
University of Calgary	"Maintaining a positive working relationship with your supervisor is important as you research and write." (University of Calgary, 2020f, para. 1).	"Focusing on self-care and well-being allows your academic, personal and professional life to flourish." (University of Calgary, 2020d, para. 1). "As a wellness advocate, you can help students access the resources that they may need with early intervention providing them the best opportunity to improve their wellness and be successful in their graduate education." (University of Calgary, 2020a, para. 4). The Faculty of Graduate Studies provides students and supervisors with the guide to service on campus, including professional development and living well (University of Calgary, 2020e).	"As an institution, we are committed to building culturally inclusive environments that foster safety and bravery inside and outside the university." University of Calgary, Intercultural capacity framework, 2020c, p. 11).	"My GradSkills is your source of academic support and career development. We connect you with workshops and resources to help you navigate grad school, internships, entrepreneurial training and opportunities for personal growth to help you prepare for life after grad school." (University of Calgary, 2020b, para. 1).

University of Alberta	"The relationship between students and supervisors is arguably the most important relationship you will develop in graduate school." (University of Alberta, 2020b, p.1).	Staff and faculty have access to the University Health Centre...and a variety of supports from counselling to coaching to coaching to financial planning assistance (University of Alberta, 2020a).	Support a diverse graduate student population).	"The University of Alberta's principles and actions are underpinned by respect for the dignity, rights, and full participation of all those who live, work, and learn within the university." (University of Alberta, 2020c, para.1). "Inclusive teaching and learning refers to intentional approaches to curriculum, course design, teaching practice, and assessment that create a learning environment where all students feel that their differences are valued and respected, have equitable access to learning and other educational opportunities, and are supported to learn to their full potential" (University of Alberta, 2020d, para. 1).
University of British Columbia	"The graduate student supervisor relationship is central to students' academic progress, their student experience, their potential as future scholars, and their wellbeing" (The University of British Columbia, 2020b, para. 1).	"G+PS is committed to…, and a culture that fosters healthy minds and a sense of community and wellbeing among graduate students." (The University of British Columbia, 2020c, para. 1).	"One integral approach to that end is to ensure academic policies and procedures are sensitive to the cultural diversity that exists at UBC, and sufficiently flexible to enable the flourishing of all students." (The University of British Columbia, 2020a, para. 1).	"We are pleased to announce a new joint pilot initiative with Counselling Services, Wellbeing and Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies designed to offer additional mental health and wellbeing support geared specifically towards graduate students and centered around known stressors many graduate students are faced with." (The University of British Columbia, 2020e, para. 1). Intercultural Fluency Project: On May 10th, 2018, approximately 65 UBC faculty, staff and graduate students came together for a half-day symposium to explore the role of intercultural difference on an increasingly global and diverse campus.

				(University of British Columbia, 2020d, para. 1).
University of Toronto	"Establishing a positive student-supervisor relationship needs to start on day one." (University of Toronto, 2017a, p. 14). "The student-supervisor relationship is a key factor in determining a successful and satisfying graduate experience." (University of Toronto, 2017a, pg. 14; University of Toronto, 2017b, p. 6).	Link to health and wellness centre (University of Toronto, 2017a; 2917b). Mental Health and Well-Being Supervisors should play an active role in providing support for their students' well-being and mental health (University of Toronto, 2017a)	"Supervisors must understand culturally appropriate ways to work with racialized students or they are less likely to be successful in graduate school and future careers." (University of Toronto, 2017a, p. 24).	Link to Anti-Racism and cultural diversity office Workshops, programs and resources (University of Toronto, 2017a, p. 42; 2017b, p.28). Provides graduate professional development opportunities.
McGill University	"As a supervisor, try to develop a relationship with your supervisee based on clear expectations and mutual respect from your first meeting onward (McGill, 2020b, para 1).	Link to workshops on health, well-being and other support (McGill, 2020a).	"The relationship can also be influenced by differences in cultural backgrounds between the student and the supervisor." (McGill 2020b, para 4).	Link to workshops (McGill, 2020a). Online resources: Link to Western Guide Mentoring across cultures (Dimitrov, 2009). Attending to cultural differences, adapting to cultural differences (McGill, 2020b).
Western University	"The relationship between the student and supervisor is one of the most important to the student's successful completion of the degree." (Western, 2020a, para 4).	Health and well-being are equally important to your academics (Western, 2020b).	Western Guide to Mentoring Across Cultures (Dimitrov, 2009).	Online resources, case studies Link to online resources (Western, 2020a).
McMaster University	"The relationship between the supervisor and student is unique and provides a remarkable opportunity to guide and mentor the student engaged in advanced academic learning." (McMaster, 2020b, para 1).	Link to wellness centre (McMaster, 2020a).	Links to virtual international graduate students (McMaster, 2020a).	Link to equity and inclusion office. (workshops). Inclusion and Anti-Racism Education (McMaster, 2020a).

Author Note

An earlier version of this manuscript was presented at the 2019 American Educational Research Association annual meeting.

Address for Correspondence
Kim Koh
Email: khkoh@ucalgary.ca