Effective and Ineffective Supervision

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Abstract

Although supervision is recognized as a significant tenant of professional growth for counseling and psychotherapy students, the variability of the effectiveness, or ineffectiveness, of supervision has come under scrutiny in recent times. Our sample of 128 participants shed light on the most effective (e.g., encouraged autonomy, strengthened the supervisory relationship, and facilitated open discussion) and most ineffective (e.g., depreciated supervision, performed ineffective client conceptualization and treatment, and weakened the supervisory relationship) supervisor skills, techniques, and behaviors. Moreover, effective and ineffective behaviors, along with best and worst supervisors, were significantly differentiated based on the supervisory working alliance, supervisor style, supervisor self-disclosure, supervisee nondisclosure, and supervisee evaluation. Implications for supervision competencies and supervisor accountability are discussed.

Keywords

supervision, training, education, supervisor effectiveness

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Over the past decade, the empirical literature has pointed out that supervision, arguably with benevolent intentions, has also proven at times to be problematic, counterproductive, harmful, and unethical (Ellis, 2001; Gray, Ladany, Walker, & Ancis, 2001; Ladany, Lehrman-Waterman, Molilnaro, & Wolgast, 1999; Nelson & Friedlander, 2001). The competency-based supervision movement has, in part, attempted to begin to prevent or mollify the negative side of supervision (Falender, Burnes, & Ellis, 2013; Falender & Shafranske, 2007). Some of the earliest empirical attempts to look at the influence of supervision on supervisees examined the extent to which supervision consisted of good versus bad events (Worthen & McNeill, 1996), best versus worst sessions (Martin, Goodyear, & Newton, 1987), best versus worst experiences (Allen, Szollos, & Williams, 1986), or successful versus unsuccessful (Tracey & Sherry, 1993). Methods typically employed were case studies or solely qualitative, or solely quantitative, and all focused on one supervision experience with supervisees in training. In general, these studies offered partial insight into some of the behaviors that supervisors exhibit that positively or negatively influence supervisees; however, few were methodologically sound investigations and most were conducted over a decade ago (Ellis & Ladany, 1997).

More recently, a few researchers have qualitatively examined primarily effective supervisor interventions or supervisory events. Jacobsen and Tanggaard (2009) investigated beginning Danish supervisees' experiences of good and bad supervisory events. His findings indicated that beginning supervisees found supervisor guidance and support helpful; however, there were large individual differences with respect to what supervisees found unhelpful. Bang and Park (2009) in a qualitative study of Korean supervisors found that teaching and exploration of personal issues were believed to be uniquely helpful to supervisees. Finally, Ancis and Marshall (2010) were able to identify theoretically based interventions (e.g., supervisor-focused personal development of the trainee) used by multiculturally competent supervisors.

The purpose of the present investigation was to extend the literature by using a mixed-method design, qualitative and quantitative inquiry, across multiple supervision experiences of the same participant supervisees. In addition, we were interested in supervisees who had experienced multiple types of supervisors over the course of their professional development. Specifically, we sought to identify supervisor skills, techniques, and behaviors that were deemed effective in facilitating supervisee growth versus those skills, techniques, and behaviors that were ineffective, or limited or hindered supervisee growth. We believed this level of specificity, in particular, would extend the literature to date, which tended to focus more on larger events in supervision.

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A second primary purpose of this investigation was to examine the relationship between effective and ineffective supervisor behaviors and supervision process and outcome, specifically the supervisory working alliance, supervisor style, supervisor self-disclosure, supervisee nondisclosure, and supervisee evaluation. A third and final purpose of our investigation was to determine the differences between the best and worst supervisors in relation to the supervisory working alliance, supervisor style, supervisor self-disclosure, supervisee nondisclosure, and supervisee evaluation. It was hypothesized that supervisors considered best/most effective, in comparison to those deemed worst/least effective, would have been perceived as having created a stronger working alliance, demonstrated more positive aspects of supervisor style, would have disclosed more, would have facilitated less supervisee nondisclosure, and would have developed a more favorable evaluation process. In sum, we believed that the effective and ineffective skills, techniques, and behaviors identified would form the basis for competency benchmarks in supervision (Falender & Shafranske, 2007; Fouad et al., 2009). We anticipated that our data would offer evidence both in support and perhaps in contrast to the competency benchmarks.

Method

Participants

Trainees. One hundred and eighty individuals initiated participation in this study. A total of 128 participants (100 female, 27 male, 1 unknown) averaging 35.4 years in age fully completed the study; the data of 52 participants were excluded because they did not complete the survey. The majority of participants (109, 85.2%) identified as European American/White; eight participants (6.3%) identified as Hispanic/Latino(a), five (3.9%) identified as African American/Black, three (2.3%) identified as Asian American or Pacific Islander, two (1.6%) identified as other race, and one did not specify race. Participants reported currently pursuing or having already received degrees from primarily (118) doctoral programs in clinical psychology (57.8%), counseling psychology (28.9%), school psychology (4.7%), and other related programs (8.6%). Participants described their experience as the beginning level of practicum (2.3%), advanced level of practicum (17.2%), internship (30.5%), postinternship (5.5%), or postdoctorate (42.2%), and 2.3% of participants did not describe their experience. For those participants who were currently still in training, they had been in their program on average for 4.36 years (SD = 1.52).

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Best supervisors. Each participant reported one "best supervisor." Thus, there were a total of 128 best supervisors described in the current study. In terms of race, the supervisors were White (109, 85.2%), Hispanic/Latino (5, 3.9%), African American (5, 3.9%), Asian American (4, 3.1%), other race (2, 1.6%), and unknown (3). More than half (56.3%) of the supervisors were female, while 41.4% were male. The majority of the supervisors (114, 87.6%) had a doctoral degree, while the remainder had master's degrees in counseling or social work. The degrees of three supervisors were not identified. Within supervision, students were often evaluated based on a pass or fail basis (76, 59.4%), letter grade (25, 19.5%), or other system (24, 18.8%). Supervision was given in various sites: college counseling centers (44, 34.4%), community mental health centers (24, 18.8%), private hospitals (10, 7.8%), state hospitals (8, 6.3%), veterans hospitals (12, 9.4%), other (26, 20.3%), and unreported (4). These supervisors were employed at college counseling centers (33, 25.8%), hospital settings (31, 24.2%), academic settings (26, 20.3%), community mental health centers (17, 13.3%), and private practice (14, 10.9%). The best supervisor provided an average 1.5 hours per week for an average total of 48.9 sessions.

Worst supervisors. Each participant reported one "worst supervisor." Thus, there were a total of 128 worst supervisors described in the current study. In terms of race, the supervisors were White (111, 86.7%), Hispanic/Latino (6, 4.7%), African American (3, 2.3%), Asian (3, 2.3%), and unknown (5). In terms of gender, about half of the supervisors were female (64), slightly less than half of the supervisors were male (60), and four supervisors' genders were not identified. The majority of supervisors were identified as holding a doctoral degree (105, 82.0%), while the remainder had master's degrees in counseling and social work. The degrees of five supervisors were not identified. In supervision, the majority of trainees were evaluated on a pass or fail basis (76, 59.4%), many received letter grades (30, 23.4%), some used another evaluation system (17, 13.3%), and five participants did not respond to the question. Supervision was given in college counseling centers (32, 25.0%), community mental health centers (32, 25.0%), private hospitals (13, 10.2%), state hospitals (10, 7.8%), veterans hospitals (10, 7.8%), and other sites (26, 20.3%), and five participants did not respond to the question. These supervisors were employed at hospital settings (32, 25.0%), academic settings (29, 22.7%), college counseling centers (20, 15.6%), community mental health centers (27, 21.1%), and private practice (10, 7.8%), and 10 participants did not respond to the question. The worst supervisor provided an average of 1.4 hours per week for an average total of 32.7 sessions.

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Measures

Supervisee evaluation of supervisor form. A qualitative questionnaire was developed for utilization in this study to inquire about helpful and hindering behaviors of best/most effective and worst/least effective supervisors. Participants were instructed to report at least three supervisor skills, techniques, or behaviors that facilitated their growth as a supervisee. They were also asked to list at least three supervisor skills, techniques, or behaviors that limited, or hindered, their growth as a supervisee. Participants responded to this form, and thus reported helpful and hindering behaviors, for each supervisor.

Working Alliance Inventory/Supervision–Short Form (WAI/S-Short). The WAI/S-Short is a 12-item self-report questionnaire utilized to assess the three constructs of Bordin's (1983) working alliance model: agreement on the goals of supervision, agreement on the tasks of supervision, and an emotional bond between the trainee and supervisor. The Working Alliance Inventory (WAI; Horvath & Greenberg, 1989) and the Working Alliance Inventory–Short (WAI-Short; Tracey & Kotovic, 1989) are widely utilized as measures of the therapeutic alliance. The Working Alliance Inventory/Supervision (WAI/S; Bahrick, 1989) and the WAI/S-Short are modified versions for supervision of the WAI and WAI-Short, respectively. The supervisory working alliance has been found to be one of the most robust supervision variables examined to date (Ladany & Inman, in press). The internal consistency coefficients of the total WAI/S-Short, Goal subscale, Task subscale, and Bond subscale for the best supervisors were .85, .73, .64, and .78, respectively. The internal consistency coefficients for the worst supervisors were .84, .76, .64, and .77, respectively.

Supervisory Styles Inventory (SSI). The SSI (Friedlander & Ward, 1984) is a 25-item self-report questionnaire. The scale assesses three constructs: Attractive (e.g., friendliness, warmth, supportiveness), Interpersonally Sensitive (commitment, therapeutic, perceptive), and Task Oriented (goal-oriented, thorough, focused). The internal consistency coefficients in this study were .84, .90, .86, and .78 for best supervisors. For worst supervisors, the internal consistency coefficients were .85, .91, .86, and .84.

Supervisor Self-Disclosure Index (SSDI). The SSDI (Ladany & Lehrman-Waterman, 1999) is a nine-item self-report questionnaire that measures supervisors' self-disclosure in the supervisory relationship. The items describe various types of self-disclosing statements (e.g., "My supervisor self-discloses information related to her or his present experiences") made by

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their supervisors. The internal consistency coefficient of the SSDI in the current study was .83 for the best supervisors and .89 for the worst supervisors.

Trainee Disclosure Scale (TDS). The TDS (Ladany, Walker, Pate-Carolan, & Gray Evans, 2008) is a 13-item self-report questionnaire that measures the degree to which trainees withhold information in the supervisory relationship. The scale was rationally and theoretically constructed based upon nondisclosure types (e.g., negative reactions to supervisor, personal issues, and clinical mistakes) described in the literature (Ladany, Hill, Corbett, & Nutt, 1996). The internal consistency of the SNI was adequate for both best supervisor ($\alpha = .83$) and worst supervisor ($\alpha = .80$).

Evaluation Process Within Supervision Inventory (EPSI). The EPSI (Lehrman-Waterman & Ladany, 2001) is a 21-item self-report scale that assesses the evaluation process in supervision. The scale consists of two constructs: Goal Setting (e.g., clarity, specificity) and Feedback (e.g., promptness objectivity). In the current study, the internal consistency coefficients for the total scale, Goal Setting subscale, and Feedback subscale for the best supervisor were .87, .84, and .71. The internal consistency coefficients for the worst supervisor were .81, .73, and .82, respectively.

Procedure

Data collection was solicited through multiple sources. Invitation to the study with the link to an online survey was electronically sent to program directors of American Psychological Association (APA)-accredited doctoral programs in counseling psychology, clinical psychology, and school psychology and master's programs that are accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, as well as Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) internship training directors. Participants were instructed to reflect upon their experiences with their best (most effective) supervisor and their worst (least effective) supervisor. Participants were also invited to forward the survey to anyone that might be interested in participating.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

To test for the potential confounding influence of the demographic variables on the primary variables in this study, a series of multivariate analyses were conducted. In each analysis, the demographic variable served as the independent

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variable, while the primary variables served as the dependent variables. The per comparison alpha coefficient was set to .001 to minimize Type I error and yet maintain a conservative estimate of potential confounding effects. Results indicate that none of the demographic variables (e.g., experience level) were significantly related to any of the primary variables.

Descriptive Analyses

Utilizing qualitative information obtained from the Supervisee Evaluation of Supervisor Form, discovery-oriented analysis was used to develop mutually exclusive categories for effective supervisor behaviors and ineffective supervisor behaviors. The effective supervisor behavior categories can be seen in Table 1 and the ineffective supervisor behavior categories can be seen in Table 2. In general, trainees reported an average of 5.1 effective behaviors and 3.2 ineffective behaviors for "Best" supervisors. Trainees reported an average of 2.6 effective behaviors and 3.5 ineffective behaviors for "Worst" supervisors."

Comparison of the "Best" Supervisors' and "Worst" Supervisors' Behaviors

The behaviors of the "best" supervisors were compared to the behaviors of the "worst" supervisors. An overall chi-square analysis was conducted to compare frequencies of the effective behaviors of the "best" supervisors to those of the "worst" supervisors. The analysis indicated that the comparison of the frequencies of effective behaviors of the "best" and "worst" supervisors was not significant, $\chi^2(9, N = 934) = 2.61, p = .98$. An overall chi-square analysis was conducted to compare frequencies of the ineffective behaviors of the best supervisors to those of the worst supervisors. The analysis indicated that the comparison of the frequencies of ineffective supervisor behaviors of the "best" and "worst" supervisors was significant, $\chi^2 (9, N = 742) = 63.52, p < .001$. Follow-up cell chi-square analysis further suggested that putting emphasis on evaluation and limitations, $\chi^2(1, N = 742) = 8.96, p < .001$, weakening the supervisory relationship, $\chi^2(9, N = 742) = 4.15, p < .05$, and other negative behaviors, $\chi^2(9, N = 742) = 5.95, p < .05$, made supervision with "best" supervisors less effective. Ineffective client conceptualization and treatment, $\chi^2(9, N = 742) = 4.44, p < .05$, and emphasis on evaluation and limitations, $\chi^2(9, N = 742) = 5.67, p < .05$, made supervision with "worst" supervisors less effective.

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Table 1. Content of Effective Supervisor Skills, Techniques, or Behavior: Definitions and Examples

Content	Definition	Examples
Encouraging Autonomy 6.5%B; 4.1%W	Supervisor's encouragement of supervisee's self-directed decision making and performance as well as self-reflection and independent thinking.	"Expressed trust in my ability to work autonomously." "Gave me flexibility to provide the type of therapy I wanted to."
Strengthened Supervisory Relationship 23.4%B; 7.1%W	Supervisor's support, encouragement, acceptance, respect, trust, empathy, open-mindedness, and other behaviors that contributed to the development of a positive supervisory relationship.	"Being non-judgmental regarding mistakes." "Demonstrated trust and confidence in my abilities." "Making me feel as though I am working with them instead of for them." "Providing safe space in supervision."
Open Discussion 10.9%B; 6.2%W	Supervisor's provision of an open forum of discussion in which supervisor listened to supervisees in order to promote their learning and growth.	"Brainstormed ideas with me." "Ability to ask difficult or uncomfortable questions regarding my thoughts, feelings, and perceived development in a non-provoking though not sugar-coated manner."
Positive Personal, Professional Qualities 11.7%B; 9.8%W	Supervisor's positive personal characteristics that facilitated supervision, as well as professional qualities that served as a model or positive influence for the trainee.	"Honesty" "Friendliness" "Modeling how to be/interact with clients in egalitarian and supportive way."
Demonstration of Clinical Knowledge/Skills 23.1%B; 29.9%W	Supervisor's demonstration of clinical knowledge and skills, as well as providing specific guidance and promoting professional development.	"Very knowledgeable in field of expertise." "Strong analysis of transference/countertransference issues." "Provided concrete examples of potential intervention strategies."

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Table 1. (continued)

Content	Definition	Examples
Providing Constructive Challenge 4.6%B; 3.0%W	Supervisor challenged supervisee to take risks, to experiment, and to go beyond their comfort zone.	"Challenged me to 'think outside box.'" "He encouraged me to work with clients I would have hesitated to work with."
Offering Feedback and Reinforcements 7.1%B; 7.4%W	Supervisor's ability to provide positive, negative, or both types of feedback in reaction to supervisee's performance, as well as ability to check supervisee progress.	"Provided effective feedback." "My supervisor demonstrated the ability to deliver constructive criticism in the most positive manner coupled with a positive."
Engagement and Valuing Supervision 8.6%B; 10.7%W	Supervisor's positive attitude towards and active involvement in supervision.	"Listened to tapes and provided ideas." "Continued availability if needed." "Treating the time as important, i.e., not taking phone calls, minimizing interruptions."
Other 4.2%B; 20.4%W	Supervisor's skills, techniques, or behaviors that facilitated supervisee's growth but did not fit into other categories or reported learning experiences that were not directly related to the supervisor's skills, techniques, and behaviors	"Made me more resourceful by seeking help from other supervisors and peers." "Direct communication with staff." "Checked in career goals.""(I) learned to deal with a difficult supervisor."
None 0%B; 1.5%W	There were no supervisors' skills, techniques, or behaviors that facilitated supervisees' growth.	

Note. %B and %W refers to the percentage for best and worst supervisors, respectively.

Table 2. Content of Ineffective Supervisor Skills, Techniques, or Behaviors: Definition and Examples

Content	Definition	Examples
Depreciating Supervision 31.6%B; 22.5%W	Supervisor's lack of involvement and fostering of growth in supervision.	"She seemed very busy. She often cut supervision hour short." "Took phone calls during supervision"
Ineffective Client Conceptualization and Treatment 1.9%B; 3.8%W	Supervisor was unable to understand client well or understood him/her incorrectly, as well as neglected to promote effective interventions.	"Did not seem to care about patients, expected supervision to be quick and factual with no discussions of patient dynamics or issues."
Weakened Supervisory Relationship 12.9%B; 12.6%W	Supervisor's condescension, humiliation, distrust, lack of support and respect, uncomfortable nonverbal behaviors, inappropriate boundaries, lack of understanding of supervisee's feelings, needs, and desires, and other behaviors that impaired the supervisory relationship.	"Lack of boundaries, took us out to drink and 'pal' around—confused." "Entered into the relationship in an attacking mode." "Making me feel as though I am working for them instead of with them." "Assumed that his interpretations of my feelings/perceptions were correct and, if I disagreed, I was in denial."
Insufficient Knowledge and Skill Development 9.7%B; 11.3%W	Supervisor did not focus enough attention on demonstration and teaching of clinical knowledge and skills, provided inadequate guidance, direction, and suggestions, or demonstrated ineffective clinical skills.	"Not very knowledgeable about the population." "Was not aware of multicultural issues in counseling and shied away from the topic when I would bring it up."
Insufficient Observation and Feedback 9.2%B; 6.1%W	Supervisor did not engage in adequate amount of direct observation (live, video, or audio) and neglected to provide an adequate amount of feedback, provided primarily positive feedback, or provided feedback that was inconsistent.	"Did not listen carefully to my session tapes." "Extensive positive feedback with no detail or constructive criticism." "Insufficient positive encouragement and/or feedback about what I did well." "Vague and nonspecific feedback."

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Table 2. (continued)

Content	Definition	Examples
Emphasis on Evaluation and Limitations 1.0%B; 6.1%W	Supervisor was focused on evaluation and primarily provided negative or critical feedback, or was punitive in the provision of feedback.	"Criticized my performance in a demeaning and personal way ('I can't believe they send me people like you who don't know what they're doing!')."
Negative Personal and Professional Qualities 17.0%B; 21.4%W	Supervisor's negative personal characteristics and traits that hindered supervision, as well as expressing a dominating attitude toward supervision.	"Judgmental" "Opinionated" "Injects own agenda into our work at times." "Micromanaging me every step of the way."
Lack of and Misapplication of Theory 4.6%B; 4.5%W	Supervisor lacked, or had limited, theoretical orientation and approach or did not appropriately use theoretical concepts and knowledge.	"Limited theoretical orientation." "Pushed own theoretical orientation on me, despite knowledge that we had different orientations."
Other 7.0%B; 4.5%W	Supervisor's skills, techniques, or behaviors that hindered supervisee's growth but do not belong in other categories or reported negative experiences in supervision not directly related to the supervisor's skills, techniques, and behaviors.	"Attempts to 'make me think on my own' that were confusing." "I had to come to her for help." "She was strikingly attractive, and although she did not in any way flaunt this, I was somewhat distracted as well as motivated not to reveal my own doubts."
None 5.1%B; 2.7%W	There were no supervisor skills, techniques, or behaviors that hindered supervisee's growth.	"Honestly, I can't think of any, perhaps, because the good so far outweighed any limitations/ faults."

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Differences in the Quantitative Variables Between "Best" and "Worst" Supervisors

The overall analysis of group differences was significant, Pillai's trace = .83, $F(10, 245) = 122.67$, $p < .001$. Follow-up analyses revealed that there were significant ($p < .001$) differences between the "best" and "worst" supervisors on all of the variables. Specifically, supervisees rated having a stronger emotional bond, $F(1, 254) = 685.54$, $p < .001$, and greater agreement on the tasks, $F(1, 254) = 903.09$, $p < .001$, and goals, $F(1, 254) = 737.13$, $p < .001$, of supervision with their best supervisors as compared to their worst supervisors. Additionally, best supervisors were reported as having more attractive, $F(1, 254) = 344.12$, $p < .001$, interpersonally sensitive, $F(1, 254) = 607.09$, $p < .001$, and task-oriented, $F(1, 254) = 43.78$, $p < .001$, supervisor styles than worst supervisors. Best supervisors were also reported to have disclosed more, $F(1, 254) = 30.41$, $p < .001$, in supervision. Supervisees reported less nondisclosure, $F(1, 254) = 297.26$, $p < .001$, in supervision with their best supervisors as compared to their worst supervisors. Lastly, supervisees reported more effective goal-setting, $F(1, 254) = 255.57$, $p < .001$, and feedback processes, $F(1, 254) = 275.38$, $p < .001$, for best supervisors than worst supervisors.

Effective Behaviors of the "Best" Supervisors

The proportion of the variance in the criterion variables accounted for by the predictor variables was not significant, Pillai's trace = .80, $F(90, 1{,}053) = 1.15$, $p = .170$. Thus, on a multivariate level, effective supervisor behaviors of the best supervisors in general were not related to trainee's perception of the components of the working alliance, supervisor styles, supervisor's self-disclosure, supervisee disclosure, and evaluation processes in supervision.

Ineffective Behaviors of the "Best" Supervisors

The proportion of the variance in the criterion variables accounted for by the predictor variables was significant, Pillai's trace = 1.22, $F(100, 1{,}170) = 1.63$, $p < .001$. Follow-up analyses indicated that ineffective supervisor behaviors of the best supervisors were related to supervisee disclosure ($R^2 = .15$, $F[10, 117] = 2.00$, $p = .039$) and the attractive supervisory style ($R^2 = .18$, $F[10, 117] = 2.50$, $p = .009$), as well as trainee perception of the bond ($R^2 = .28$, $F[10, 117] = 4.45$, $p < .001$), tasks ($R^2 = .16$, $F[10, 117] = 2.18$, $p = .024$), and goals ($R^2 = .19$, $F[10, 117] = 2.73$, $p = .005$) components of the alliance.

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Specifically, weakening the supervisory relationship was negatively related to trainee perception of the bond (β = –.34, $p < .001$), tasks (β = –.20, $p = .036$), and goals (β = –.42, $p < .001$) components of the alliance. Weakening the supervisory relationship was also negatively related to perception of an attractive supervisory approach (β = –.25, $p = .009$) and supervisee disclosure (β = –.28, $p = .005$). Emphasizing evaluation and limitations was negatively related to trainee perception of the bond (β = –.27, $p \leq .001$) and tasks (β = –.22, $p = .013$) components of the alliance.

Effective Behaviors of the "Worst" Supervisors

The proportion of the variance in the criterion variables accounted for by the predictor variables was not significant, Pillai's trace = .92, $F(100, 1{,}170) = 1.19$, $p = .108$. Thus, on a multivariate level, effective supervisor behaviors of the worst supervisors in general were not related to trainee's perception of the components of the working alliance, supervisor styles, supervisor's self-disclosure, supervisee disclosure, and evaluation processes in supervision.

Ineffective Behaviors of the "Worst" Supervisors

The proportion of the variance in the criterion variables accounted for by the predictor variables was significant, Pillai's trace = .96, $F(90, 1{,}053) = 1.39$, $p = .011$. Follow-up analyses revealed that ineffective supervisor behaviors of the worst supervisors were related to trainee's perceptions of the bond component of the alliance ($R^2 = .15$, $F[9, 118] = 2.28$, $p = .021$), the feedback process of evaluation ($R^2 = .16$, $F[9, 118] = 2.55$, $p = .010$), the attractive supervisory style ($R^2 = .21$, $F[9, 118] = 3.51$, $p = .001$), and the task-oriented supervisory style ($R^2 = .25$, $F[9, 118] = 4.27$, $p < .001$). Specifically, emphasizing evaluation and limitations was negatively associated with trainee's perceptions of the bond component of the alliance (β = –.34, $p < .001$), the feedback process of evaluation (β = –.38, $p < .001$), and the attractive supervisory style (β = –.35, $p < .001$). Depreciating supervision was negatively associated with perception of a task-oriented supervisory style (β = –.41, $p < .001$) and positively associated with perception of an attractive supervisory style (β = .19, $p = .038$).

Discussion

A mixed-methods investigation invariably generates large swaths of data that can produce findings that are overwhelming and often unnecessarily complex.

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The purpose of our discussion is to summarize the results along two lines of findings or themes: (a) effective and ineffective behaviors and supervisor competencies and (b) salient variables for understanding supervision process and outcome. Along both themes, theoretical, empirical, and practical implications are offered.

Effective and Ineffective Behaviors

What did our participants tell us about effective and ineffective supervisor skills, techniques, and behaviors? First, the identified effective supervisor skills, techniques, and behaviors arguably can be seen as a primer for supervisor competencies. Across both the best and worst supervisors, a series of consistent behaviors were identified. Adding to the robust findings in the literature to date (Ladany & Inman, in press) as well as current conceptualizations of supervision competencies (e.g., Falender & Shafranske, 2007), the supervisory relationship seems to be a critical component and foundational competency on which to attend (Rodolfa et al., 2005). Hence, it seems that the relationship has an important influence on supervisee learning. Bringing to bear counseling skills, such as empathy and encouragement, into the supervision context arguably provides a foundation for the efficacy of additional supervisory interventions. One unique finding that has only received cursory attention in the theoretical and practical literature (Kaslow & Bell, 2008; McWhirter & McWhirter, 2007) is the recognition that *empowering* the supervisee via encouraging autonomy and facilitating openness to the supervisee's ideas is valued by supervisees. Of course, much of these ideas can be traced back to Bordin (1983), who encouraged supervisors to give supervisees the opportunity to self-direct in supervision. Ultimately, it seems that the participant supervisees offered an important variable to consider in understanding the interpersonal dynamics in supervision.

The supervisor as expert clinician also was identified as an effective supervisory skill. Specifically, supervisors who were able to demonstrate their clinical knowledge, that is, to self-disclose clinical information that was relevant to the supervisees presenting concerns and was in the service of the supervisee, seemed particularly helpful. This finding coincides with theoretical, empirical, and practical writings on supervisor self-disclosure (Ladany & Walker, 2003). Finally, feedback that was positive and challenging seemed to be uniquely beneficial to supervisees. Hence, these results suggest that supervisors would do well not to offer unbridled optimism about supervisees and recognize that supervisees can handle challenges, and in fact, may welcome challenges, especially within a positive supervisory relationship.

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One interesting aside is that the effective and ineffective supervisor skills, techniques, and behaviors did not seem to differentiate supervisees who were at different experience (i.e., developmental) levels. This lack of finding coincides with questions about developmental hypotheses discussed in the theoretical literature that to date have limited empirical support (Ladany & Inman, in press). Moreover, it calls into question a fundamental assumption about the competency benchmarks, that is, the assumption that there are developmental changes that should take place in the supervisor's approach.

As the identified effective categories offer a primer for supervisor competencies, the identified ineffective categories perhaps offer a primer for supervisor incompetence. Results from our study coincide with findings from Magnuson, Wilcoxon, and Norem's (2000) qualitative investigation of "lousy supervisors." One of our more striking findings was how supervisors, at times, depreciated or devalued supervision. As has been found in the literature, supervision can be a place where supervisees are harmed (Ellis, 2001). As can be seen in the examples, presumably what is clearly not acceptable in a counseling relationship (e.g., answering phone calls) was deemed acceptable in supervision. A weakening of the supervisory relationship was understandably problematic for supervisees. What is unclear, however, is if the weakening was a rupture in the supervisory alliance that was irreparable (Ladany, Friedlander, & Nelson, 2005). In supervision, it would be expected that, at times, supervisors would not perform expertly. The question remains whether the supervisory alliance was strong enough to withstand potentially problematic supervisor behaviors. In sum, the results related to ineffective supervisor skills, techniques, and behaviors speak to the challenges that many supervisors seem to possess and have implications for training sites that may offer little guidance or accountability of supervisor performance (Ladany, 2007).

Supervision Process and Outcome

A second overarching implication from the findings pertains to the importance relegated to the quantitative variables under study, specifically the supervisory working alliance, supervisor style, supervisor self-disclosure, supervisee nondisclosure, and evaluation. Best versus worst supervisors and, to a large extent by extrapolation, effective and ineffective supervisor behaviors were linked with these aforementioned quantitative variables.

Hence, if one were to ask what an effective or highly competent supervisor were to look like, the findings point to the following. First, the supervisor would work toward developing a strong supervisory alliance by working toward mutually agreeing with the supervisee on the goals and tasks of supervision. The

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supervisor would use basic counseling skills such as listening, reflection of feelings, and empathy to facilitate the development of an emotional bond. An effective supervisor would attend to and offer a balance of attractive or collegial interactions, interpersonal attentiveness, and task-oriented structure. Moreover, self-disclosure would be used judiciously and in the service of the supervisee. It would be anticipated that supervisees would offer less nondisclosures, thereby facilitating a more meaningful supervision experience. Finally, supervisors would attend specifically to the evaluation aspect of supervision by facilitating the setting of supervisory goals and providing both formative and summative feedback.

The significance found from these variables offers a foundation upon which to conduct additional investigations. For example, along with and beyond the quantitative variables found to be salient, future researchers would do well to study additional variables such as supervisor ethical adherence, supervisor training, supervisor theoretical approach to supervision, supervisor responsiveness, supervisor multicultural competence, and so forth, thereby adding to the multifaceted skills required for the best supervisory experiences.

Limitations and Conclusions

The findings must be considered in light of the limitations to the experimental design. First, participant recall likely influenced the content and manner in which the participants responded. It is possible that the salience or meaningfulness of a supervision experience, be it positive or negative, played a part in the types of recall that occurred. In a related fashion, the instructions that asked participants to first consider their best, then their worst supervisors could have subjected the results to anchoring effects (Kahneman, 2011). Recommended future investigative work may or may not offer support to the current findings if the variables examined were in the context of single ongoing supervisory experiences. Second, only the supervisees' perspectives were considered. The extent to which supervisors actually engaged in these behaviors is unclear. Future work may want to consider assessing both members of the supervisory dyad, as well as objective raters, to determine the congruence with which they experience happenings in supervision. Finally, additional variables not studied may prove useful to determine the adequacy of the emerging model of variables based on the current investigation. For example, it may prove useful to consider effective or ineffective supervisor behaviors in relation to variables such as supervisee openness to learning, supervision setting, or supervisee anxiety. Moreover, particular kinds of outcomes, such as supervisee multicultural competence or supervisor and

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supervisee metacompetence (Falender & Shafranske, 2007), may be linked to effective or ineffective behaviors yet to be identified.

In sum, this investigation offers insight into a variety of supervisor skills, techniques, and behaviors that help, stagnate, or hinder supervisee growth. Moreover, the results provide linkages to the relevance of the current trend of defining supervision competency benchmarks (Fouad et al., 2009) both in relation to supporting some of the proposed competency benchmarks (e.g., importance of the supervisory relationship, goal setting) as well as not supporting other competency benchmarks (e.g., salience of developmental level).

Given the number of supervision experiences counseling students receive and given the number of ineffective supervisory experiences reported, counselor educators would do well to consider supervisor accountability in relation to an adequate training model. Specifically, supervisor accountability in terms of demonstrating proficiency has received virtually no recognition in the literature. At best, some state boards are requiring that supervisors receive training, but the content and efficacy of this training has been largely unstudied. To that end, we encourage supervisor trainers and researchers to seriously attend to evaluating supervisor behaviors in the same fashion given to counselor and psychotherapist evaluation to date.

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