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# Supervision Development and Working Alliance: A Survey of Counseling Supervisors

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## Supervision Development and Working Alliance: A Survey of Counseling Supervisors

### Abstract

This study explored the relationship between supervisor development and supervisor working alliance. Participants included counseling supervisors from professional counseling organizations. Data analysis showed positive correlations between working alliance and supervisor development. Regression results supported a significant relationship between the working alliance subscale of Client Focus and increased supervisor development. Recommendations for counselor supervisors and researchers are provided.

### Keywords

supervision development, working alliance, professional counseling supervisors

Supervision is the cornerstone of professional development and has a huge impact on professional counselors (Stoltenberg, 2005; Watkins, 1990). A distinct specialty in the counseling profession, supervision is a consistently evolving professional intervention (Evans, Wright, Murphy, & Maki, 2016). By definition, counselor supervision is a professional relationship between a supervisor and supervisee whereby the supervisor relies upon their experience to evaluate and educate the supervisee on the provision of counseling services (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014; Kaslow et al., 2012). Initially conceptualized as a “germ theory,” counseling supervision has evolved throughout the decades into a more formalized process that includes ethical guidelines and best practice recommendations (Blocher, 1983; Evans et al., 2016). Despite these efforts to establish a formalized process, there continues to be great variability in the provision of counseling supervision services. To address this, researchers continue to recommend the implementation of developmental models focused on supervisor development that conceptualize supervisors’ abilities based on experience and professional development using a learning-focused, reflective and constructive philosophy. By using these developmental approaches in conceptualizing supervisors’ development, supervisors are adhering to ethical guidelines, professional boundary recommendations, and best practices (Borders, 2014; Granello, Kindsvatter, Granello, Underfer-Babalis, & Moorhead, 2008; Watkins, 1990).

One example of a widely disseminated supervisory development method, the Supervisor Complexity Model (Watkins, 1990) identifies four, distinct stages of supervisor development. These stages include: “1) role shock; 2) role recovery and transition; 3) role consolidation; and 4) role mastery” (p. 556-558). Supervisor developmental issues within each stage include confidence in supervisory skill, insight about impact of supervision on the supervisee, inclusion

of supervision theoretical framework, and sense of professional identity (Watkins, 1990, p. 555). The Supervisor Complexity Model supports the idea that as the supervisor gains more experience, supervisor confidence, awareness, and ability increases and becomes a familiar part of the supervisor's professional identity and practice (Watkins, 1990). The transition from counselor to supervisor can be quite difficult and the current professional standards do not adequately reflect these challenges. This concept of supervisor development is fundamental as supervisors navigate the meaning and method of supervision practice within their many roles in the counseling profession (Borders, 2014; Granello et al., 2008).

Borders (2014) reflected the idea of supervisory role challenges in her review of efforts to identify supervision competencies and best practices by suggesting that counseling professionals should emphasize research on “critical guidelines necessary to developing supervision as a core professional activity” (p. 152). This developmental/cognitive change for the supervisor is often perceived as thinking like a counselor (focus on client's needs) to thinking like a supervisor (focus on supervisee's educational needs) (Borders, 1992; Granello et al., 2008). In addition to this cognitive shift, counseling supervisors are also encouraged to consult with the ever evolving standards of best supervision practice (ACA, 2016; ACES, 2011; Borders, 2014; CACREP, 2016; Fall & Sutton Jr., 2004; Magnuson, Norem, & Wilcoxon, 2002; Rapisarda & Britton, 2007).

Despite this internal shift in role identity and availability of standards, researchers continue to identify a need for a more consistent, nation-wide post-degree supervision training for counseling professionals (ACA, 2016; ACES, 2011; Borders, 2014; CACREP, 2016; Fall & Sutton Jr., 2004; Magnuson, Norem, & Wilcoxon, 2002; Rapisarda & Britton, 2007). One method to further examine the specific educational and developmental needs of supervisors is by

examining the working alliance and its impact on development. The working alliance between the supervisor and supervisee is defined as a “mutual agreement and understanding regarding goals, clear understanding of the tasks of each of the partners, and the creation of bonds between each of the partners to sustain the enterprise” (Bordin, 1983, p. 35). The working alliance between the supervisor and supervisee is an area of interest because it may identify the variables that influence supervisory development and could potentially contribute to best practice recommendations (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014; Borders, 2014; Mehr, Ladany, & Caskie, 2010; Ramos-Sanchez et al., 2002; Sterner, 2009; Watkins, 1990). Although frequently examined from the perspective of counselor-in-training, the experiences of counseling supervisors is scant in the professional literature. In response to a paucity in the literature on the variables that contribute to the provision of effective supervision services, this study sought to examine the working alliance from the perspective of the counseling supervisor. Recommendations for counselor educators and supervisors will be discussed.

### **Supervision Working Alliance**

To ensure development in the supervisory relationship between the supervisor and supervisee, a strong working alliance must be created and maintained (Bordin, 1983; Ladany, Ellis, & Friedlander 1999; Ladany, Walker, & Melincoff, 2001b; Sterner, 2009; Watkins, 2011). The working alliance was first described in terms of the therapeutic relationship of client and counselor, as a way to promote change and has evolved to include the conceptualization of the supervision relationship. In their work, researchers found that the relationship between client and counselor is as important as specific treatment used in therapy; and that the alliance is foundational in therapeutic services (Flückiger, Del Re, Wampold, Symonds, & Horvath, 2012; Norcross & Wampold, 2011). This hypothesis also extends into the supervision relationship

whereby the working alliance is perceived to be paramount in the provision of effective supervision services (Mehr et al., 2010).

Despite research into the alliance, best practice research on what factors support a positive working alliance between counseling supervisors and supervisees is still ongoing. As perceptions of positive supervision experiences increase, research shows increased supervisee satisfaction and increased supervisee disclosure that is generated by a strong working alliance (Mehr et al., 2010; Ramos-Sanchez et al., 2002). Supervisees who experienced negative events in supervision, including lack of trust and incongruence of goals, scored lower on working alliance measures (Ramos-Sanchez et al., 2002) and experienced higher levels of anxiety and unwillingness to disclose information to the supervisor (Mehr et al., 2010). These findings suggest that supervisees may be reticent to seek supervision guidance if they perceive the relationship to be unsupportive or threatening.

Bernard and Goodyear (2014) highlighted research on factors that influenced strong alliance including supervision style, attachment, self-disclosure, and ethical behavior. After examining a compilation of research, they concluded that a positive supervision alliance created overall supervision satisfaction and decreased role ambiguity and conflict (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). Increased working alliance is connected to increased supervisee satisfaction, perception of competence, and decreased stress (Ladany et al., 1999; Sterner, 2009). The need for continued research on the working alliance in supervision is necessary in order to promote all of the positive outcomes listed above, to support positive supervision growth for the supervisor and supervisee and to further understand the nature of the supervision bond (Ladany et al., 1999; Ladany et al., 2001b; Watkins, 2011; White & Queener, 2003). In addition, continued

examination of the working alliance may help with the creation and implementation of specific educational standards toward supervision development.

The *Working Alliance Inventory: Supervisor Form*, an instrument developed by Efstation, Patton, and Kardash (1990) sought to examine the supervisor's perceptions of the working alliance with their supervisees. Examining ratings on three subscales: 1) Client Focus; 2) Rapport; and 3) Identification, characteristics often associated with a working alliance, – respondents could self-report their evaluations of the relationship (Efstation et al.1990). For this measure, Client Focus is defined in terms of the supervisor's focus on goals and tasks including treatment plans and client conceptualizations; Rapport is the ability to express support, encouragement, and develop a relational bond with the supervisee. Identification is defined as the amount of perceived allegiance with the supervisee in relation to training, feedback and evaluation (Efstation et al.1990). Efstation et al. (1990) purported that these three constructs are necessary for a working alliance to be deemed successful by the supervisor and supervisee.

In response to Efstation et al. (1990), researchers found that the experience of the supervisor and supervisee could impact ratings on the *Working Alliance Inventory* (White & Queener, 2003). For example, in the early stages of counselor development supervisees reported a preference for supervisors for which they perceived a strong rapport with. In the advanced supervisees, this preference transitioned from those relational skills to more practice-based preferences in Client Focus and Identification to help improve the provision of therapeutic services (Efstation et al., 1990). These findings seem to suggest that as the supervisee becomes more confident in their delivery of counseling services, supervision can transition from supportive to collaborative.

Reflecting on the professional literature, it is imperative that researchers begin to examine the working alliance from the perspective of the counseling supervisor. A neglected population in the literature, the counseling supervisor is the primary professional that implements supervision as a professional intervention. This research focused on the perspective of professional counseling supervisors, in order to gain an understanding of supervision development and working alliance in relation to years in the field, and amount and quality of supervision experience. A goal of this research was to continue to expand the knowledge surrounding supervision development and ways to strengthen professional supervision identity and relationships. The research questions for this study were: Q1: To what extent is working alliance related to supervisor development? Q2: Does working alliance have a greater impact on supervisor development than experience?

## **Method**

### **Participants and Procedure**

After obtaining approval from the Institutional Review Board to begin the study, counseling supervisors were contacted via targeted recruitment strategies. This included recruitment posts on counseling listservs including the Counselor Education and Supervisor Network Listserv (CESNET), the American Counseling Association (ACA), the American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA), the American College Counseling Association (ACCA), the Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues in Counseling (ALGBTIC), the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC), and state affiliated counseling associations (e.g., Alabama Counseling Association, et cetera). Listserv moderators were contacted by email in regards to the anonymous



dissemination of the survey announcement and survey link to request dissemination of the survey instruments.

Participants clicked on the link to the survey, reviewed and signed consent electronically, and then were asked inclusionary criteria questions before being directed to the survey questions comprised of measures for working alliance and supervisor development. For this study, the inclusionary criteria sought to identify practicing counselors who had at least a master's degree in counseling and who had supervised at least five supervisees. This purposive sampling method allowed the collection of survey responses from diverse professionals and was regionally representative of the United States (e.g., Midwest, North Atlantic, South, and West). If a participant did not possess the inclusionary criteria, their data was not included in the final analysis. Even participants who were eligible and started the survey left some questions unanswered. Because of unanswered survey questions, not all cases were included in the final analysis of research questions. Final sample sizes for regression analysis are listed in the description of results for those research questions.

Of the participants who started the survey (n=101) 81 were female and 20 were male. Race of participants included: White (83.3%), Black or African American (5.9%), Hispanic or Latino (3.9%), Asian (2.9%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (2%), Bi/Multi-Ethnic (1%), and Other (1%). Of the participants that responded to the question about level and type of degree: Masters in Counseling (27%), Masters degrees in other counseling related fields (Social Work, Divinity, Marriage and Family, Education Specializations) (17.6%), Ph.D. in Counselor Education (11.3%), and Ph. D. in Psychology (8.8%). Setting of practice included: college/university counseling center (28.9%), private practice (18.2%), community mental health center (10.1%), and other (hospital, school, substance abuse) (7.5%).

The mean age of participants was 48 years old, the average years of practice as a counseling professional was 17.5 years and the mean average of years of supervised experience was 10.5 years. Regarding supervisor training, respondents (n=101) reported participation in at least one of three main types of training: credentialing (13.2%), coursework (6.3%), and continuing education (5%). Over one third of participants reported more than one of these three types of training (36.5%).

## **Instruments**

**Working alliance inventory: supervisor form.** *The Working Alliance Inventory: Supervision Form* (Efstation et al., 1990) is a 23 item self-report inventory, based on a Likert scale from 1 (almost never) to 7 (almost always). Higher scores on this measure relate to stronger working alliance. The measure is based on Bordin's (1983) definition of working alliance, and includes three subscales identified through factor analysis: Rapport, Client Focus, and Identification (Efstation et al., 1990; White & Queener, 2003). Internal consistency of the reliability in identifying alpha coefficients for the three scales were: .71 for Client Focus, .73 for Rapport, and .77 for Identification (Efstation et al., 1990, p. 325).

**Psychotherapy supervisor development scale.** *The Psychotherapy Supervisor Development Scale* (Watkins, Schneider, Hayes, & Nieberding, 1995) is an 18-item survey with a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 7 (always), higher scores equate to higher levels of supervision development. Items on the survey measure included concepts related to "competency, autonomy, identity, and self-awareness" and are based on Watkin's (1990) *Supervision Complexity Model* (Barker & Hunsley, 2014, p. 126). Factor structure analysis of the scale included internal consistency with an alpha coefficient of .93. Validity of the scale showed

discrimination in levels of supervision experience as supervisors with more experience (in years) scored higher on the measure than those with less experience (Barnes & Moon, 2006).

A reliability analysis was conducted for this study to determine the consistency across items for the survey questions based on: the *Working Alliance Inventory: Supervisor Form* (Efstation et al., 1990) and the *Psychotherapy Supervisor Development Scale* (Watkins et al., 1995). For this study, Cronbach's Alpha for overall items relating to working alliance resulted in a coefficient of .90. The reliability coefficients for working alliance subscales were: Client Focus .82, Rapport .81, and Identification .78. These reliabilities were similar to those listed in two previous studies using the *Working Alliance Inventory: Supervisor Form* (Efstation et al., 1990): the first found alpha coefficients of Client Focus .71, Rapport .73, Identification .77 (Efstation et al., 1990, p. 325) and the second study's alpha coefficients were overall .89, Client Focus .83, .80 Rapport .80, and Identification .82 (White & Queener, 2003, p.207). When assessing the reliability coefficient for the items related to supervisor development, an alpha coefficient of .65 was found. While this alpha is not extremely low, it is lower than those reported in other studies using the *Psychotherapy Supervisor Development Scale* (Watkins et al., 1995), as previous studies listed overall reliability coefficients of .93 (Barnes & Moon, 2006, p. 131), .89 and .91 (Crook-Lyon, Presnell, Silva, Suyama, & Stickney, 2011, p.37).

## **Results**

Analysis of data was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Services (SPSS) computer software (Version 22.0). Research Question 1 explored the relationship between working alliance and its three subscales (Client Focus, Rapport, Identification) and supervisor development based on analysis of survey responses based on the *Working Alliance Inventory: Supervisor Form* (Efstation et al., 1990) and the *Psychotherapy Supervisor Development Scale*

(Watkins et al., 1995). After analysis confirming multicollinearity and normality, a Pearson Correlation was used to assess the correlation between the three subscales of working alliance (Client Focus, Rapport, Identification) and supervisor development. Results from the correlation analysis showed positive correlations between all of the working alliance subscales and the overall measure of supervisor development. The highest correlation involved supervisor development with the working alliance subscale of Client Focus,  $r = .565$ . Working Alliance subscales were also positively correlated to each other as they measured the main overall construct of working alliance. Correlation results are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

*Pearson Correlations for Working Alliance Subscales and Supervisor Development*

Measure	1	2	3	4
1. Supervisor Development	-	.565**	.460**	.438**
2. Client Focus	.565**	-	.590**	.558**
3. Rapport	.460**	.590**	-	.571**
4. Identification	.438**	.558**	.571**	-

\*\*Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

For Research Question 1, a linear regression was conducted to further analyze the relationship between working alliance subscales and supervisor development. The three subscales of working alliance (Client Focus, Rapport, Identification) were assessed as predictors for supervisor development. The summary of regression results was significant, showing the strength of association of working alliance subscales to supervisor development,  $n=98$ ,  $R^2 = .354$ ,  $F(3, 94)=17.14$ ,  $p < .01$ . After accounting for the adjusted  $R^2$ , these results indicated that working alliance subscales accounted for about 33% of the variance in supervisor development. In addition, the working alliance subscale of Client Focus is significant ( $p < .01$ ) as a predictor of supervisor development. The regression results are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

*Regression Analysis of Predictors Client Focus, Rapport, and Identification with Dependent Variable of Supervisor Development*

Predictor	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	Part
Working Alliance Subscales	.354	.333	-	-	-
Client Focus			.409*	.000	.311
Rapport			.147	.186	.110
Identification			.126	.243	.097

\*Note:  $p < .05$ ;  $\beta$ =standardized coefficient

Research Question 2 asked if experience has a greater impact on supervisor development than working alliance. To examine this question, a hierarchical regression was used and predictor variables were entered in model blocks. Model 1 included years of counseling experience and years of supervisor experience; Model 2 then added the variable of credentialing to years of counseling and supervisor experience; Model 3 added the working alliance subscales to credentialing and years of counseling and supervisor experience. Significant results were found in Model 3 with the addition of working alliance subscales,  $n=94$ ,  $R^2 = .378$ ,  $F(6, 87)=8.817$ ,  $p < .01$ . Again the working alliance subscale of Client Focus was significant to supervisor development,  $p < .01$ . Results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

*Regression Analysis of Predictors Years of Counseling Experience and Supervision Experience, Supervision Credentialing, and Subscales of Working Alliance with Dependent Variable of Supervisor Development*

Predictor	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Change	F Change	$\beta$	<i>p</i>
Model 1	.053	.053	2.528		
Years Counseling Exp.				.167	.260
Years Supervision Exp.				.077	.602
Model 2	.053	.001	.050		
Years Counseling Exp.				.175	.253
Years Supervision Exp.				.071	.637
Supervision Credential				-.024	.823
Model 3	.378	.325	15.155		
Years Counseling Exp.				.077	.544
Years Supervision Exp.				.006	.963
Supervision Credential				-.046	.600
Client Focus				.366*	.002
Rapport				.179	.116
Identification				.141	.198

\*Note:  $p < .05$ ;  $\beta$ =standardized coefficient

### Discussion

Understanding factors that enhance supervisor development and working alliance is necessary for the continual improvement of professional supervision practice (ACA, 2014; ACES, 2011; Borders, 2014; CACREP, 2016; Fall & Sutton Jr., 2004; Magnuson et al., 2002; Rapisarda & Britton, 2007; Watkins, 1990). This study explored the relationship between supervisor development and working alliance, as well as the impact of professional supervisor,

counseling, and credentialing experience on development. The results from this study align with the professional literature and highlight the importance of supervisor development and working alliance in the provision of supervision services.

These results supported previous research on factors, including focus on the client that increases positive supervision relationships and development of both the supervisor and supervisee (Ladany et al., 1999; Ladany et al., 2001b; Ramos-Sanchez et al., 2002). Ladany et al.'s (2001b) study on supervision style and working alliance explored the relationship between style and alliance, including the connection of a counselor-oriented supervisor style to working alliance factors of goal understanding and task agreement. Ladany et al. (2001b) found that supervisors who embodied a counselor-oriented style and supported collaborative supervision perceived greater agreement on tasks and objectives with supervisees. These factors correspond to the *Working Alliance Inventory: Supervisor Form* (Efstation et al., 1990) subscale of Client Focus. Client Focus subscale items include statements about working on specific goals with the supervisee, creating treatment plans, and helping the supervisee see things from the client's perspective. Both counselor-oriented supervisor style and the Client Focus subscale promote supervisee exploration, agreement on goals, mutual understanding of tasks and objectives, and the creation and implementation of supervisor interventions.

Ramos-Sanchez et al. (2002) also focused on factors that support or counteract the supervision process and working alliance. This study highlighted the importance of understanding and agreement of tasks and goals (components of Client Focus) and the negative consequences of incongruence. Supervisees who experienced incongruent tasks and goals during supervision reported increased lack of trust in supervision relationships, and decreased working alliance (Ramos-Sanchez et al., 2002). Negative supervisor experiences, including those related

to Client Focus, can greatly impact working alliance. Congruent Client Focus promotes understanding of goals, interventions, and client conceptualization that helps strengthen working alliance.

The subscale of Rapport also contributes to the overall working alliance during the supervision process. Promoting trust, respect, and openness are part of working alliance that involves relational bonds and the working alliance subscale of Rapport for the current study. The concept of rapport and bond building is strongly supported in previous research on the importance of creating and maintaining supervision relationships (Campbell, 2006; Ladany et al., 1999; Skovolt & Trotter-Mathison, 2011; Watkins, 2011). Communicating warmth, authenticity, honesty, and respect for supervisee autonomy are upheld by past research on supervision styles and types of communication that create authentic, positive supervision relationships (Hess, 1987; Ladany et al. 1999; Ramos-Sanchez et al., 2002; White & Queener, 2003).

A third factor in measuring working alliance is the subscale of Identification. The concept of self-disclosure, feedback, and evaluation during the supervision process is embedded in the subscale of Identification. Identification can include supervisor self-disclosure about past clinical and professional challenges, and provision of continued feedback and evaluation. While not significant in the current study's data analysis, Identification is a concept that was examined and supported in prior research (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014; Gunn & Pistole, 2012; Knox, Burkard, Edwards, Smith, & Schlosser 2008). The concept of Identification is also used when supervisors address the potential power differential between supervisor and supervisee—acknowledging and addressing power differentials was presented as important for working alliance in past studies (Heru, 2004; Pettifor, Sinclair, & Falender, 2014; Schwartz, 2008). Although the working alliance factor of Client Focus was found to be significant for supervisor development in the



current study, all three working alliance factors (Client Focus, Rapport, and Identification) are critical components of working alliance. Strong working alliance is an important factor in supervisor development and continued supervision research (Bordin, 1983; Ladany et al., 1999; Ladany et al., 2001b; Sterner, 2009; Watkins, 2011). As the supervisor builds a strong working alliance with the supervisee, an alliance built on a genuine bond that promotes shared tasks and goals, then the supervisor can practice more advanced and in-depth supervisory orientations and interventions that include not only supporting growth of the supervisee's skills and development, but also focus on the client and the client's growth and change. The increased development of the supervisor can increase the supervisee's skills and development within supervision, and outside supervision as development extends to the counseling relationship with focus on the client.

### **Implications for Counselor Education and Supervisor**

Investigating factors that support supervisor development and build working alliance was an aim of this research, and several findings from this study provided increased knowledge and awareness of factors that impact supervisor development and working alliance. The main result of this study is to further advance the idea that working alliance is significantly correlated with supervisor development. The current study reinforced past research on this correlation, and identified, through regression analysis, a specific factor within working alliance that increases supervisor development—Client Focus. For this study, Client Focus emerged as a significant predictor for overall increases in supervisor development. Past research does support this finding, in part, asserting that Client Focus and task-oriented supervisor promoted certain aspects of working alliance and growth (Efstation et al., 1990; Fernando & Hulse-Killacky, 2005; Ramos-Sanchez et al., 2002). However, other studies found that different styles of supervision,

and other factors of working alliance, also contributed to overall supervision development (Bordin, 1983; Ladany et al., 1999; Ladany, Marotta, & Muse-Burke, 2001a; Ladany et al., 2001b; Steward, Breland, & Neil, 2001). While not found as statistically significant in the current study, Rapport and Identification working alliance subscales are also important measures of working alliance and the development of the supervisor. The unique nature of the supervision process makes all three factors notable in developing and maintaining an alliance, and increasing development. Each factor should be taken into account within the supervisor role when working with supervisees.

As a whole, these results illustrate the complexity of working alliance and supervisor development. With expansion of Watkins (1990) original Supervisory Complexity Model, research supports the idea that development in supervision, from role shock toward role mastery, occurs due to challenges within multiple areas during the supervision process for the supervisor and supervisee (Baker, Exum, & Tyler 2002; Watkins, 1994). These areas include: role of supervisor, affective focus, cognitive skill focus, dependency, and role of support and confrontation (Baker et al., 2002). Learning how to deal with challenges in various dimensions of supervision leads to greater supervisor self-efficacy, lower anxiety, tolerance for ambiguity, and eventual supervisor role mastery (Baker et al., 2002). This multi-dimensional understanding of development is a foundation for supervision research, and is further investigated in the current study. Supervision best practice is also a key factor in ongoing supervisor research, education, and training (ACES, 2011; Baker et al., 2002; Borders, 2014; Watkins, 1990; Watkins Jr, 1994). The current study contributes to best practice guidelines by further identifying factors such as Client Focus that help promote growth and alliance.

## **Limitations and Future Research**

There were several limitations of the current study. The small sample size of participants is a noted limit for the evaluation of statistical data and results. An average sample size of below one hundred participants may be too small to generalize conclusions about findings to the larger population of professional supervisors. Of the respondents who did participate in this study, there still exists a difference in requirements for supervisor education, training, and credentialing depending on state standards. Assessing the impact of experience, especially in regard to credentialing, may vary greatly.

Future researchers should focus on various aspects of this study. A follow-up qualitative study on experiences and underlying themes in relation to supervisor development and working alliance could promote further understanding of specific supervisor experiences over the course of their supervision work. Another area of continued research involves further testing of the two measures used for this survey: *Working Alliance Inventory: Supervisor Form* (Efstation et al., 1990) and *Psychotherapy Supervisor Development Scale* (Watkins et al., 1995). Of particular interest is the supervisor development measure, as the necessity for ongoing research and validation of this measure was promoted by past research studies (Barker & Hunsley, 2014; Barnes & Moon, 2006; Watkins et al., 1995). As stated previously, because of the complex nature of supervision, working alliance, and supervisor development, future researchers should continue to further investigate factors that contribute to holistic supervision practices.

In summary, this study examined supervisor development and working alliance in counseling supervisors through the purposive sampling of counselors across the United States. The results from this study suggest that supervisors with a focus on the client, in addition to the supervisee, build rapport and a working alliance with supervisees. The supervision relationship

starts with a focus on the supervisee's needs as they grow into their role as a counselor, and then expands to include focus on the needs of the client. Working alliance that includes client focus builds on the foundation of a supportive and authentic supervision relationship and helps facilitate the development of more advanced skills for both the supervisor and supervisee. As researchers continue to examine the role of supervisors in clinical practice, it is imperative that they continue to identify what factors lead to positive supervision outcomes. This study contributed to the empirical base by emphasizing the importance of Client Focus as one factor, among many, that can enhance the provision of supervision services.

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