Most and least helpful events in three supervision modalities

By: Melissa J. Fickling, L. DiAnne Borders, Keith A. Mobley, and Kelly Wester

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Abstract:

The authors conducted a content analysis of supervisors' (n = 10) and supervisees' (n = 31) descriptions (n = 707) of most and least helpful significant events in individual, group, and triadic supervision across 1 semester. Categories by group for each modality and areas of agreement and disagreement are highlighted.

Keywords: clinical supervision | content analysis | individual supervision | triadic supervision | group supervision

Article:

Despite a global explosion of research on supervision (Borders et al., 2014), there is much yet to be learned about the supervision process. One promising avenue toward highlighting key variables and processes is studying supervisees' and supervisors' descriptions of significant events during supervision (Hill, 1990; Hill & Corbett, 1993; Wheeler, Aveline, & Barkham, 2011). Several researchers have applied a *significant event approach* to supervision sessions. Rabinowitz, Heppner, and Roehlke (1986) asked supervisees their perceptions of the most important issues and supervisory interventions (using a checklist) in weekly individual sessions across one semester. Overall, supervisor support, direction, and treatment planning were endorsed by supervisees at three experience levels (beginning and advanced practicum, doctoral internship). In contrast, Gray, Ladany, Walker, and Ancis (2001) interviewed master's and doctoral supervisees about "counterproductive events" they had experienced in individual supervision. Most frequently, the negative events involved supervisors dismissing supervisees' thoughts and feelings, which supervisees believed weakened the relationship. Thus, in individual supervision, supervisees highlighted the supervisor's role in both helpful and unhelpful events.

Other researchers have focused on group supervision. In two complimentary studies, supervisees reported helpful events and processes (Carter, Enyedy, Goodyear, Arcinue, & Puri, 2009) and "hindering phenomena" (Enyedy, Arcinue, Puri, Carter, Goodyear, & Getzelman, 2003) from their most recent group session. As with the studies concerning individual supervision, supervisors figured prominently in both studies. Not surprisingly, peers and group dynamics also were key clusters. In helpful events, supervisors were open, validating, and provided specific instruction; peers learned from each other's tapes and feedback was open and diverse; and the group was safe and supportive. In hindering events, supervisors were dominating, rigid, unwilling to give frank feedback, and inexperienced; peers were competitive, had conflicts with each other, and were unwilling to share; group members felt highly anxious, unsafe, alienated, and unsupported. In a somewhat broader approach, Fleming, Glass, Fujisaki, and Toner (2010) asked both supervisees and their supervisors to describe helpful and hindering aspects of group sessions across a semester. Safety emerged as a critical core element and was promoted by group cohesion, discussion of group process, and shared leadership, as well as individuals' openness and vulnerability in group. Safety was hindered by unresolved conflict in the group as well as individuals' defensiveness and intense anxiety.

These studies yielded some consistent findings, yet provided a limited perspective, as most researchers collected only supervisees' perspectives, and Fleming et al. (2010) combined supervisors' and supervisees' reports in group-level analyses. Thus, it is unclear whether supervisors and supervisees would report similar helpful and hindering events; such agreements and disagreements could have implications for supervisee satisfaction and development (cf. Reichelt & Skjerve, 2002). In addition, it is unclear what events supervisors and supervisees would highlight while engaged in more than one supervision modality. Borders et al. (2012) gathered both supervisors' and practicum supervisees' perceptions of their experiences in individual, triadic, and group supervision across one semester. Rather than a significant event approach, they interviewed participants around advantages and disadvantages of each modality. Overall, supervisors and supervisees agreed that individual sessions were more personalized, deeper, more challenging, and more focused on supervisee self-awareness. They described triadic sessions as safer, more engaged, and yielding more in depth peer feedback than group sessions, although both were more time pressured than individual supervision. They valued multiple perspectives and broader exposure to clients and clinical styles in group sessions, although group dynamics sometimes limited peer feedback. These comparative insights around the three supervision modalities were informative; a similar investigation of supervisors' and supervisees' significant events would provide a different window to explore the value and challenges of each modality by highlighting specific actions that help or hinder supervisee learning. Such a replication, using a complimentary research approach to Borders et al. (2012), could further contribute to the ongoing development of supervision theory and pedagogy.

Thus, the purpose of this study was to begin to identify significant events across three supervision modalities that supervisors and supervisees found most and least helpful for supervisee growth. Two research questions guided this study: (a) What are supervisor and supervisee perceptions of the most and least helpful events in individual, group, and triadic supervision? (b) To what extent do supervisors and supervisees agree or disagree about which events are most and least helpful in each supervision modality? Similar to Borders et al. (2012), we gathered data from supervisors and supervisees in a master's practicum experience rather than

including both practicum and internship students, since views of helpful and hindering events (e.g., preferred supervision approach) might differ by supervisee developmental level (e.g., Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010).

Method

Context and Participants

This study was based in an on-campus practicum course in a full-time counselor education program in the southeastern United States. Master's-level supervisees clocked a minimum of 40 hours of direct contact with volunteer undergraduate clients in the program's on-campus clinical facility and, in line with Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP; 2015) Standards, received 1 hour of face-to-face individual or triadic (one supervisor with two supervisees) supervision and an average of 1.5 hours of group supervision per week. Supervisees (n = 31) included three male and 28 female participants (M age = 29.1, SD = 5.88) who were in clinical mental health, school, college, and couple and family counseling programs. Seventeen participants identified their race/ethnicity as Caucasian, seven as undisclosed, five as African American, one as Asian/Pacific Islander, and one as Hispanic.

Supervisors were 10 (three male, seven female; eight White, one African American, one Latino) doctoral students who had completed a didactic course in supervision and were enrolled in a supervision internship. Six were assigned two master's supervisees each for individual supervision and paired to cofacilitate group supervision for their combined four supervisees; four were assigned four supervisees each for individual and group supervision. Triadic supervision was optional; when chosen, triads met two or three times during the semester in lieu of an individual session. For triadic supervision, supervisees reviewed each other's tapes and provided structured feedback to each other, facilitated by the supervisor. For individual supervision, supervisees submitted reviews of a self-selected tape, which was reviewed in full by the supervisor. In group supervision, supervisees took turns making case presentations that included tape segments and specific requests for feedback, typically following some variation of a structured format (e.g., Borders, 1991).

Because of the somewhat unique approach to practicum and supervisor training, going outside the program likely would have introduced noise in the data, hence the focus on only one site for this study. Despite optional and low participation in triadic supervision sessions, we have included the data here since so little data yet exist about this modality; these results should be interpreted with caution.

Procedure and Data Collection

Following institutional review board approval and prior to the first supervision sessions of the semester, all practicum supervisees (n = 32) and supervisors (n = 11) were invited to participate. Those who consented completed a form following each supervision session. One supervisor and one supervisee were excluded from data analysis because of their low participation. Supervisors and supervisees completed identical forms consisting of questions asking them to identify the most helpful and least helpful session events. They were instructed to describe the event and

their reactions, and explain why the event was helpful or unhelpful. For the least helpful events, participants were instructed, "Even if all of the events seemed helpful, choose the least helpful of these events." With the exception of one participant, the entire population of responses was included in the analysis.

Table 1. Most Helpful Events for Individual, Group, and Triadic Supervision

	Individual[a]				Group[b]				Triadic[c]			
	Supervisors		Supervisees		Supervisors		Supervisees		Supervisors		Supervisees	
Event	**PT**	**ST**	**PT**	**ST**	**PT**	**ST**	**PT**	**ST**	**PT**	**ST**	**PT**	**ST**
Skill building	8	24	15	24	3	3	17	22	2	6	2	2
Addressing supervisee emotions	9	26	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Supervisor technique/activity	9	28	6	7	8	21	18	30	4	4	6	8
Evaluation/feedback	9	23	19	32	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0
Confidence building/validation	7	22	15	30	2	3	3	3	0	0	4	6
Counselor goals	5	9	9	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Logistics	2	2	5	5	1	1	3	3	1	1	4	4
Theory/case conceptualization	8	24	14	25	2	3	11	16	2	3	3	5
Supervisee self-awareness	9	29	17	23	2	3	7	8	2	2	1	3
Session intentionality and planning	5	10	19	37	0	0	0	0	3	4	1	2
Relationship	6	20	9	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tape review/case presentation	1	4	14	24	4	7	16	37	1	1	3	4
Session management	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Discussing clients	3	4	18	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
New perspectives	6	10	8	15	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Group dynamics					4	7	6	9	0	0	0	0
Peer feedback					4	5	16	19	3	3	8	9
Peer match					0	0	0	0	2	3	3	3
Vicarious learning					0	0	6	10	1	1	5	6
Other/no response	0	0	4	11	0	0	5	9	0	0	1	4
Facilitate learning	0	0			4	8			0	0		
Assessing supervisee	5	11			4	6			0	0		

Note. A blank cell indicates that the event is not relevant for the corresponding role or modality. A zero indicates that no participant responses were coded for the event. PT = participants; ST = statements.
[a]Supervisors: participants $N = 10$, statements $N = 221$. Supervisees: participants $N = 31$, statements $N = 286$. [b]Supervisors: participants $N = 10$, statements $N = 67$. Supervisees: participants $N = 31$, statements $N = 166$. [c]Supervisors: participants $N = 6$, statements $N = 31$. Supervisees: participants $N = 17$, statements $N = 58$.

Data Analysis

We employed conventional content analysis procedures (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Insch, Moore, & Murphy, 1997; Krippendorff, 2012) because our goal was to produce a comprehensive yet manageable list of helpful and unhelpful supervision events from the complete set of responses of supervisors and supervisees. Handwritten responses on 707 forms were typed and compiled by participant group and by event (e.g., supervisors' most helpful events for individual supervision, supervisees' least helpful events for group supervision); these 12 groupings served as the *texts*. We specified the unit of analysis, or *recording unit*, as each individual event reported by participants; when statements included more than one event, these were separated and coded individually (total number of statements per group and supervision modality are reported in Tables 1 and 2). Next, we used an inductive approach to allow categories to emerge from repeated readings of the data. Then, to enhance consistency, the coders (first two authors)

pretested the initial categories by coding together a sample of the supervisors' and then the supervisees' data. Initially, interrater reliability was 60%, indicating a need to refine the categories. Through a recursive and iterative process of rereading the data and reaching consensus, the coders refined and defined the categories in a codebook (available from the first author by request) and then applied them independently to each text group, coming together after each text group to reach consensus (pretested texts were recoded). Halfway through coding, the coders displayed a high degree of interrater reliability, with fewer than 10% of statements coded differently (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007), and by the end of data analysis, coders had reached 95% agreement, indicating saturation of the data and codebook categories. The auditor (third author) reviewed coded data for each text group and provided feedback throughout the process; his suggestions were incorporated by the first two authors.

Table 2. Least Helpful Events for Individual, Group, and Triadic Supervision

	Individual[a]				**Group[b]**				**Triadic[c]**			
	Supervisors		**Supervisees**		**Supervisors**		**Supervisees**		**Supervisors**		**Supervisees**	
Event	**PT**	**ST**	**PT**	**ST**	**PT**	**ST**	**PT**	**ST**	**PT**	**ST**	**PT**	**ST**
Skill building	3	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Addressing supervisee emotions	4	5	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Supervisor technique/activity	10	20	9	9	4	7	13	23	1	1	7	8
Evaluation/feedback	6	13	10	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Confidence building/validation	2	14	1	1	1	4	3	3	0	0	0	0
Counselor goals	3	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Logistics	10	60	19	49	9	16	13	25	4	6	9	10
Theory/case conceptualization	4	8	3	5	1	1	1	2	0	0	1	1
Supervisee self-awareness	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Session intentionality and planning	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Relationship	3	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tape review/case presentation	8	16	9	15	1	1	6	7	2	2	1	2
Session management	9	42	20	40	5	11	11	16	4	8	5	8
Group dynamics					4	8	10	15	1	2	0	0
Peer feedback					1	2	3	4	1	1	4	5
Other/no response	4	13	20	57	4	7	15	33	2	2	7	12
Readings	1	1	0	0	3	3	5	7	0	0	0	0
Supervisor feelings (about supervisee)	1	2			0	0			0	0		
Discussing clients	0	0	5	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
New perspectives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Facilitate learning	0	0			0	0			0	0		
Assessing supervisee	0	0			0	0			0	0		
Peer match					0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Vicarious learning					0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Focus on counselor	0	0	5	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not presenting							4	4			0	0

Note. A blank cell indicates that the event is not relevant for the corresponding role or modality. A zero indicates that no participant responses were coded for the event. PT = participants; ST = statements.
[a]Supervisors: participants $N = 10$, statements $N = 212$. Supervisees: participants $N = 31$, statements $N = 210$. [b]Supervisors: participants $N = 10$, statements $N = 60$. Supervisees: participants $N = 31$, statements $N = 139$. [c]Supervisors: participants $N = 6$, statements $N = 23$. Supervisees: participants $N = 17$, statements $N = 48$.

Trustworthiness

All authors bracketed their assumptions during a research team meeting prior to data analysis. All believed each supervision modality would include both helpful and unhelpful events. They assumed supervisees would be anxious, value concrete feedback and skill practice, and might be reluctant to address self-awareness, based on their knowledge of developmental models of supervision (e.g., Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010). The second author thought the doctoral supervisors might be self-focused and question their competence, based on her experience as a supervisor educator and her knowledge of supervisor development models (e.g., Watkins, 1993). These assumptions were discussed throughout the process of the study in order to verify the credibility of the coding process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants gave their completed forms to a research assistant; none of the researchers had access to them until the end of the semester. In addition, we created no a priori codes based on the supervision literature; we used an inductive approach instead. Use of an auditor also contributed to trustworthiness of the study by helping to establish confirmability of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Results

Results are reported in Tables 1 and 2 by participant group. In the following section, results are reported by research question. First, we summarize the events most often reported as most and least helpful per supervision modality by each participant group; given the extensive amount of data collected and space limitations, only the top three or four categories for each grouping are described. Then, we address agreements and disagreements among supervisors' and supervisees' results.

Supervisors

Most helpful individual supervision events. Supervisors described events related to *supervisee self-awareness* as most helpful in individual supervision. An example event was "Exploring supervisee attitudes/beliefs about client—especially in regard to exploring her irritation toward client." *Supervisor technique/activity* often included modeling by the supervisor, role playing specific counseling interventions, metaphors, and other expressive arts techniques. One supervisor named a role play "to help her experientially experience clients' feelings"; another said, "I thought the processing of her visual metaphor that she drew was a powerful way to conceptualize where she was in the process." Supervisee anxiety and professional identity concerns were common events under *addressing supervisee emotions*. One supervisor's event was "Exploring supervisees' anxiety and their physical expression of that anxiety with their client and during supervision." *Evaluation/feedback* consisted of supervisors giving feedback, assessing the supervisee's skill or developmental level, and formal evaluation procedures.

Least helpful individual supervision events. All supervisors also named supervisor technique/activity as a least helpful event in individual supervision. One shared, "Trying to go piece by piece and give her feedback on the tape review form. It was forced and awkward." Another indicated that during a role play "I didn't spend enough time setting it up or processing it together afterward." A typical *logistics* event was "Scheduling—took up a lot of time, but necessary." Supervisors also indicated their own *session management* (e.g., time, activity) as least helpful, such as "I was disorganized in my thinking—gave too much feedback and overloaded supervisee." *Tape review/case presentation* event responses often involved the

supervisor's critique of the way he or she integrated the tape into the session, but also included feeling that the counseling tape review was redundant or that the supervisee was not prepared to discuss the tape.

Most helpful group supervision events. Supervisor technique/activity emerged as the most helpful group supervision events. One supervisor indicated, "The bridge activity was helpful as I was able to see what everyone found helpful for their growth. I was surprised that 'reading' and 'supervision' were on the list." Another identified event was "When I self-disclosed about risks and, further, when I showed discomfort in sharing those risks—showed I was human." *Group dynamics* were named less often, but referred to group cohesiveness and members' engagement with one another, leading to more powerful moments in supervision. One supervisor noted, "I think the most helpful was when the group members began to become more vulnerable and take risks. It seems they got to know each other in a way that they hadn't before. I tried to use reflections to support this."

Least helpful group supervision events. Similar to individual supervision, logistics was a common least helpful group event. Less frequently, session management events were described, such as, "My cosupervisor's and my facilitation seemed off. More planning needed."

Most helpful triadic supervision events. Six of the 10 supervisor participants conducted triadic supervision. Supervisor technique/activity emerged again. One said, "I thought having the supervisees role play with each other based on their feedback from the tapes helped facilitate growth." *Peer feedback* also emerged, with one supervisor noting, "I was proud that they were beginning to give more substantive feedback." For *session intentionality and planning*, one named "Discussion about reevaluation of goals when the counselor doesn't know where to go."

Least helpful triadic supervision events. Logistics (e.g., "Not being able to record the session") and session management (e.g., allowing excessive conversations) were the two most frequent categories for least helpful triadic events. One supervisor wrote, "Some of the idle chatter once a subject was done; I could have redirected the conversation sooner."

Supervisees

Most helpful individual supervision events. For supervisees, evaluation/feedback and session intentionality and planning were the most commonly endorsed themes for most helpful events in individual supervision. Data indicated that supervisees valued both formal evaluation and informal feedback. One wrote, "Midterm review and talking about what work I need to do," and another stated, "Talking about areas to improve and how to work at improving them." Supervisees also seemed to appreciate developing concrete plans for upcoming sessions, as one noted, "Otherwise wasn't sure how to progress with client." Another frequently named category was *discussing clients*, or talking about a specific case with their supervisor. One supervisee noted, "Helping me to process what is going on with my challenging clients. I was able to explore different directions." Supervisees also identified gaining self-awareness as most helpful, such as "to be aware of counter-transference" and "Looking at myself, my self-talk, and internal processes that are affecting my sessions with clients. It is difficult for me to look at my own 'stuff' but beneficial to slow down and acknowledge the role it plays in my life." Half of the

supervisees named events leading to *confidence building/validation*, such as "Recognizing my improvements; helped me to see some of my strengths." Half also named *skill building* through practice of a specific technique or intervention. One noted, "Discussion over what reflection of feelings is and the many ways it can be accomplished! It was an 'aha' moment. It was helpful to view this skill in a new light."

Least helpful individual supervision events. Session management was the most frequent least helpful category, including topics or tasks that seemed less relevant to supervisees, as well as what they perceived as mismanagement of the time in session (e.g., "Talking about my undergraduate work"). Logistics included talking about clinic procedures (e.g., how to complete a clinic form). Many supervisees also provided *other/no response*, by either leaving this question blank or stating that everything was helpful. For evaluation/feedback, one wrote, "not having any negative feedback about the session so that I could improve."

Most helpful group supervision events. Supervisees often found supervisor technique/activity helpful, even though they were skeptical of some activities at first. One said, "We each chose toys and put them in the sand tray to represent where we are right now. It seemed silly but ended up being surprisingly insightful." Skill building events included "Ideas of how to set goals" with clients. A tape review/case presentation event allowed one supervisee "to see how to conceptualize clients." Peer feedback included "Sharing personal experiences with clients and getting input from others."

Least helpful group supervision events. Most frequently, supervisees provided other/no response for least helpful group supervision events. Logistics included necessary but unhelpful events (e.g., "I think scheduling; even though it was necessary, there was not really a benefit"). For supervisor technique/activity, supervisees named specific activities or a supervisor's use of an intervention, such as "Asking where we are at as counselors. The question feels kind of vague to me and sometimes I don't even know." Session management included mismanaged time, so that an uneven amount of time was spent on each supervisee's case presentations. Group dynamics were named less frequently. One group member said her peers were so quiet that "we spend so much time waiting for someone to say something."

Most helpful triadic supervision events. Seventeen supervisees who received triadic supervision described helpful events. For peer feedback, one supervisee said, "Triadic structure was helpful because my peer was able to pick out things I didn't realize myself." Supervisor technique/activity again emerged as a most helpful category, as did *vicarious learning*, with one supervisee writing, "Seeing through the extra person how different people can use different methods and still succeed."

Least helpful triadic supervision events. Supervisees named least helpful triadic events related to logistics (e.g., "The laptop took forever to load") and supervisor technique/activity, such as, "I find it helpful when our supervisor is more direct in conversation." Session management events highlighted a sense of too little time. Some supervisees provided no response.

Supervisor and Supervisee Agreement

The second research question concerned agreement between supervisors and supervisees about which events were most and least helpful in supervision. We determined "agreement" when there seemed to be consensus among most supervisors and most supervisees that certain event categories were most or least helpful, and "disagreement" when one group referenced a particular type of event category far more or less often than the other group. Given the uneven numbers of supervisors and supervisees, "more" and "less" refer to proportional comparisons rather than absolute numbers of participants in each group.

Most helpful individual supervision events. Most supervisors and supervisees named events regarding supervisee self-awareness and evaluation/feedback as most helpful in individual supervision sessions. To a lesser extent, supervisors and supervisees seemed to agree that events focused on skill building and *theory/case conceptualization* events were most helpful. Yet there was more disagreement than agreement about most helpful events. Nearly all supervisors, but only four supervisees, indicated at least one most helpful event around a focus on supervisee emotion. They also disagreed about session intentionality and planning; more supervisees than supervisors cited this as most helpful. There was an even bigger disparity between numbers of events regarding discussing challenging clients and tape review/case presentation, with more supervisees than supervisors naming these. Finally, most supervisors believed their own techniques or activities were most helpful events in individual supervision, although few supervisees named these events.

Least helpful individual supervision events. Supervisors and supervisees agreed that both logistics and session management events were among the least helpful in individual supervision. The general sentiment in their wording seemed to be that participants wanted to get right to the "work" of supervision. Things like scheduling and other "housekeeping" tasks were necessary but overall not helpful. As in most helpful individual supervision events, participants disagreed about whether supervisor technique/activity was least helpful; all supervisors but few supervisees wrote events coded into this category. Supervisees more frequently indicated other/no response events than did supervisors.

Most helpful group supervision events. Supervisors and supervisees agreed that supervisor technique/activity events were often most helpful in group supervision. Although peer feedback and tape review were not frequently cited overall, supervisors and supervisees agreed they were helpful when they were named. Comparatively more supervisees than supervisors felt that skill building events were most helpful group supervision events.

Least helpful group supervision events. Supervisors and supervisees agreed logistics were least helpful events in group supervision. About half of each group also endorsed session management, group dynamics, and supervisor technique/activity as least helpful.

Most helpful triadic supervision events. About half of supervisors and supervisees who participated in triadic supervision indicated that events related to peer feedback were most helpful in triadic supervision. There was some disagreement about how often session intentionality and planning was most helpful, with half of the supervisors of triadic but only one supervisee, identifying this as the most helpful event in triadic sessions.

Least helpful triadic supervision events. Both supervisors and supervisees often listed logistics as the least helpful event in triadic supervision. They disagreed somewhat around supervisor technique/activity, with proportionally more supervisees than supervisors indicating this was least helpful.

Discussion

Doctoral supervisors and their practicum supervisees reported a range of most and least helpful events during their individual, group, and triadic supervision sessions. Although no a priori categories from the supervision literature were utilized, categories of events included all the focus areas of the discrimination model (Bernard, 1997; e.g., counseling skills, case conceptualization, self-awareness) as well as the supervisory relationship, peer and group interactions, evaluation and feedback, and logistics. Supervisors and supervisees appeared to agree about the helpfulness of many events, with differences highlighting their different roles and responsibilities, particularly around those categories that emerged only for supervisors (e.g., *facilitate learning*, *supervisor feelings*, and *assessing supervisee*) or supervisees (e.g., *not presenting* in group supervision).

Supervisor technique/activity was identified by both supervisors and supervisees as most and least helpful in most modalities, indicating that supervisors' interventions may be key to perceptions of supervisory effectiveness, similar to Rabinowitz et al.'s (1986) and Gray et al.'s (2001) findings. Supervisors named these events as most helpful much more often than did their supervisees (especially in individual sessions); nevertheless, every supervisor also said their intervention was least helpful in at least one individual supervision session. Their comments included a notable degree of self-critique, perhaps reflecting their novice status (e.g., Watkins, 1993). In contrast, their supervisees' comments seldom included critiques of their supervisors' competence, again perhaps reflecting a developmental tendency toward dependence on their supervisor's direction (e.g., Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010).

Both supervisors and supervisees cited logistics as least helpful events, although necessary (e.g., learning clinic procedures). Session management also was frequently named, as both supervisors and supervisees stated that they ran out of time or could have used their time more efficiently, a common theme in triadic supervision research (e.g., Borders et al., 2012; Lawson, Hein, & Stuart, 2009). These events seemed to detract from supervisees feeling prepared for their next sessions. Supervisors and supervisees frequently cited skill building as the most helpful event in supervision. It seems that supervisees feel best helped when they can practice during session and then leave supervision with a plan (session intentionality and planning), particularly when they are able to discuss challenging clients. These most helpful events are in line with previous research (e.g., Carter et al., 2009; Rabinowitz, 1986) and developmentally appropriate for practicum supervisees (e.g., Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010).

Several categories appeared only or primarily in individual supervision. Both supervisors and supervisees more often endorsed self-awareness (e.g., discussing reactions to a client) events as most helpful in individual supervision. These results are in line with Borders et al.'s (2012) finding that supervisees said individual supervision a safer place to focus on self-awareness and personal growth. However, supervisors in this study were more likely than supervisees to

endorse directly addressing supervisee emotions (e.g., general anxiety), primarily as most helpful individual supervision events. Although some supervisors questioned their handling of these topics in individual supervision (least helpful event), no supervisees named self-awareness as a least helpful event. Participants named direct discussion of the supervisory relationship only in individual sessions; these were more often seen as helpful versus unhelpful events. Similarly, *new perspectives* only appeared in individual supervision events except for one supervisor's triadic event. New perspectives included all events involving discussion of multicultural issues, which were much more often cited by supervisors than supervisees and were always most helpful. Multicultural discussions were never listed as least helpful and were not identified for group or triadic sessions. Similarly, *relationship*, *counselor goals*, and addressing supervisee emotion events were only identified in individual sessions. Either these events did not happen in group and triadic sessions, or they were not viewed as most or least helpful events when they did.

Other categories appeared only in triadic or group supervision. Not surprisingly, peer feedback was named in both and was more often helpful than unhelpful, reflecting the mixed results of previous studies (e.g., Lawson et al., 2009); some supervisees stated a preference for supervisor feedback, similar to Borders et al. (2012). Group dynamics, cited primarily for group supervision, also were seen as sometimes helpful and sometimes detrimental, again in line with previous research (e.g., Borders et al., 2012; Carter et al., 2009; Enyedy et al., 2003). Vicarious learning characterized triadic and group sessions, always as most helpful events, in line with previous research (e.g., Lawson et al., 2009; Stinchfield, Hill, & Kleist, 2010).

Overall, for both supervisors and supervisees, the reported most helpful events highlighted more personal aspects of individual supervision (e.g., attention to the relationship, self-awareness), peer feedback in triadic sessions, and vicarious learning in group supervision. These results seem to support previous findings (Borders et al., 2012) that each supervision modality makes important, unique, and yet complimentary contributions to supervisee growth. In addition, across modalities, supervisees valued supervisor structure (i.e., intervention), direction, and assistance with planning that included concrete and direct feedback, suggesting supervisors' intentional attention to practicum supervisees' developmental needs (e.g., Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010) are critical significant events.

Limitations

Data were collected from a single CACREP-accredited program, in which all students are enrolled full time; agreement across participants could be due to similarity in training and professional socialization. All were relative novices at counseling and supervision; their developmental status seemed reflected in some of their responses (i.e., supervisors' self-critiques, supervisees' difficulty articulating least helpful events and valuing concrete feedback; Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010; Watkins, 1993). The boundaries of this sample were necessary to keep the data somewhat manageable (still resulting in at least two discrete events on each of 707 forms). Studies based in other programs or across programs might yield different categories and frequencies, and studies of interns and practitioners likely would yield different significant events; these are suggested avenues for future research. In addition, because of the use of consensus building between the primary coders, no reliability coefficient could be calculated

(Stemler, 2001). Percent agreement, reported above, is subject to chance agreement and must be interpreted with caution.

Given the longitudinal design of the study and somewhat time-intensive participation demands, most participants did not complete a form for every supervision session, so data sets across modalities and participant groups were varied; missing data and nonparticipants' reports may have altered the results. Supervisors varied in their frequency of sessions in all modalities, with relatively few triadic sessions completed, which also could have introduced noise.

The subjective nature of the coding process means some potential for researcher bias. Notably, *most helpful* is not synonymous with nor an objective assessment of supervision effectiveness, an area for future research. *Most* and *least helpful* also do not capture the perceived degree or intensity of the impact of each event. The open-ended format of the data collection form only allowed for written responses based on participants' perceptions and ability to describe them. It is possible that follow-up prompts may have allowed participants to more fully explain their responses.

Finally, because this research is an early step in a complex theory-building process, it seemed important to retain more categories than to prematurely collapse categories, which led to a large number of categories that prevented any quantitative analyses. The difference in results for some related categories (e.g., supervisees' frequencies for addressing supervisee emotions and self-awareness), however, suggests that collapsing categories may be premature at this point in explorations of important supervision events.

Implications

Results around both helpful and unhelpful events suggest implications for supervisor training, including instruction around how to structure triadic sessions to facilitate peer feedback (see Borders, Brown, & Purgason, 2015), promote vicarious learning in triadic and group, and manage group dynamics in group supervision, as these processes were key ingredients in differentiating between most and least helpful events. Intentionality may be needed to bring multicultural issues into triadic and group sessions (see Borders et al., 2015; Lassiter, Napolitano, Culbreth, & Ng, 2008). Addressing supervisee emotions may be important yet unwelcomed, and a *focus on counselor* can be perceived as less helpful than session intentionality and planning when working with beginning supervisees. Nevertheless, supervisees seemed quite open to supervisor feedback, even sometimes desiring more critical and direct feedback. Thus, it is important to help new supervisors develop skills and confidence around giving constructive feedback (Borders & Giordano, 2016; Borders, Welfare, Sackett, & Cashwell, 2017).

This study contributes to the goal of identifying important events to be studied more systematically in future research. Additional studies, such as those using other approaches to access events and more experienced supervisees and supervisors, would help confirm or modify existing lists of advantages and disadvantages, most and least helpful events across supervision modalities. Psychotherapy significant event researchers (e.g., Hill, 1990; Hill & Corbett, 1993; Stiles, Hill, & Elliott, 2015) have suggested that research on significant events include

consideration of their context, sequence of incidents within the event, and outcome of the event. For example, what might differentiate our helpful versus unhelpful confidence building/validation events? Was it timing of the event during the session, what occurred before and after the event, the supervisors' wording or nonverbal behaviors, or some other contextual influence? Did the details of confidence building/validation events differ by supervision modality? Similar questions would be appropriate around supervisor techniques and activities that were cited as both most and least helpful (e.g., role plays). Focused and in depth observations of events, perhaps in combination with relevant objective measures around them (e.g., session depth, supervisory relationship), are needed to more fully understand significant supervision events. Such sequential studies would provide a logical progression toward building theory (Stiles et al., 2015), which is sorely lacking in supervision pedagogy.

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