The Ruptured Supervisory Alliance and Its Repair: On Supervisor Apology as a Reparative Intervention

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In what ways do supervisors repair the ruptured supervisory alliance? In this article, that question is considered, with focus given to one rupture repair intervention: Supervisor apology. Apology/ forgiveness theory and research are integrated with current thinking about supervision alliance rupture and repair. Using the recent conflict transformation research of Kirchhoff and colleagues (Kirchhoff, Strack, & Jager, 2009; Kirchhoff, Wagner, & Strack, 2012) as a building block, the 10 elements of apology are examined vis-à-vis the supervisory situation, and the applicability of the concepts of simple and complete apology for supervision alliance rupture repair are presented. Eight statements that link apology and forgiveness with supervision alliance rupture and repair conceptualization are proposed, and a case example that communicates the reparative effectiveness of supervisor apology is described. Supervisor rupture identification and repair is viewed as being an important competency that involves a supporting knowledge base, skill set, and values core.

KEYWORDS supervisory alliance, rupture, repair, apology, forgiveness

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INTRODUCTION

The supervisory alliance has been referred to as the heart and soul of supervision and is viewed as significantly contributing to the unfolding of a favorable supervision experience (Beinart, 2014; Ellis, 2010; Inman et al., 2014; Watkins, 2014b). As Watkins (2014a) has indicated, "of the various elements that compose the supervision relationship, none seems to exert more power and influence on supervisor and supervisee than their jointly-forged *supervisory alliance*" (p. 20; italics in original). The alliance's preeminent value for supervision has strong clinical support (i.e., being internationally affirmed and practically embraced across supervisors, supervisees, and settings; Gonsalvez & Calvert, 2014); it also has a growing base of research support (e.g., Inman et al., 2014; Inman & Ladany, 2008; Watkins, 2014a). Thus, the alliance is recognized increasingly as being a crucial mediator, if not *the* crucial mediator, in the making or breaking of the entirety of the supervision experience itself (cf. Goodyear, 2014).

Supervision rupture has long been viewed as problematic (Beinart, 2014; Bordin, 1983; Fleming & Benedek, 1964). If left unaddressed, ruptures have the potential to undermine, even completely derail, the supervisor-supervisee alliance. Effort has been increasingly made within the past 20 years to more substantively incorporate attention to ruptures into supervisory understanding and practice (e.g., Burke, Goodyear, & Guzzard, 1998; Friedlander, 2015; Ladany, Friedlander, & Nelson, 2005). Based on research about conflict and negative experiences in supervision, agreement exists within the supervision community that (a) ruptures can be significant supervision events that have implications for supervision process and outcome; (b) because of their potential significance, such ruptures merit close attention and scrutiny during supervision; and (c) where problems of rupture arise, supervisors would do well to judiciously deal with those matters with dispatch (e.g., Bang & Goodyear, 2014; Burke et al., 1998; Ellis, Berger, Hanus, Swords, & Siembor, 2014; Grant, Schofield, & Crawford, 2012; Gray, Ladany, Walker, & Ancis, 2001; Nelson, Barnes, Evans, & Triggiano, 2008; Nelson & Friedlander, 2001; Ramos-Sánchez et al., 2002; Son & Ellis, 2013).

But in attending to rupture events in supervision, what exactly do supervisors do to try to make them better? In answer to that question, we want to consider the implications of apology for rupture repair. It is our contention that the apology/forgiveness literature can prove instructive in thinking about the supervision rupture/repair experience. Two sets of questions are addressed subsequently: (a) What precisely are supervision alliance ruptures and why does their repair matter so much?; and (b) What role do apology and forgiveness play in relational repairs and how can those constructs accordingly be used to inform thinking about supervision ruptures and their repair?

Several limitations and qualifications attend our proposals. First, our exclusive focus is on those situations where supervisors have committed some sort of alliance-rupturing behaviors, are open to considering their mistakes or errors, and desire to remedy them. The supervisor is routinely in a power position vis-à-vis the supervisee and generally sets the tone for the relationship in matters of repair and otherwise (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014; Borders & Brown, 2005). Obstacles to and contraindications of apologizing can be identified (e.g., being unwilling to admit fault and say "I am sorry"; apology is judged to be better delivered at a later time), but those variables are not emphasized here. Second, much of what is covered here may apply for both supervisor *and* supervisee, but the supervisee's role in rupture repair (other than being an apology recipient) is not emphasized. Third, although apology is but one viable approach to rupture repair, we believe it to be a crucial reparative communication that merits review in its own right.

Fourth, our own perspective on apology is inevitably Western influenced, and what follows may be most reflective of that Westernized perspective. Better understanding how cultural differences—Western *and* non-Western— can impact the apology/alliance repair relationship is a significant supervision issue yet to be addressed. Our subsequent proposals are offered as stimulants to that issue's further discussion. Although the precise definition of an apology can differ among and within cultures, apologies do appear to be a cross-cultural phenomenon (Howard-Hassmann & Gibney, 2008; Renteln, 2008) and, we contend, are cross-culturally relevant in some form for supervisory alliance repair. As Engel (2001) has stated, apology is for everyone, but the specifics of what makes that so appears to vary by culture and is a subject that could benefit from serious supervision scrutiny.

SUPERVISORY ALLIANCE, ALLIANCE RUPTURES, AND ALLIANCE REPAIRS: DEFINITIONS AND RAMIFICATIONS

What Is the Supervisory Alliance?

Building on the seminal work of Fleming and Benedek (1964, 1966) and Bordin (1983), the supervision alliance can be defined as the bond that develops between supervisor and supervisee and their mutual agreement on the goals and tasks of supervision. More than 50 years ago, Fleming and Benedek (1964, 1966) first proposed the presence of a supervisor-supervisee learning (or supervisory) alliance. Although Fleming and Benedek were psychoanalytic supervisors writing for psychoanalytic supervisors, their message continues to be trans-theoretical in its reach and import. Framing their conceptualization after Freud's perspective on the treatment relationship, Fleming and Benedek (1964, 1966) identified the supervisor-supervisee learning alliance as being a partnership, pact, or compact; their vision of the

learning alliance remains intact, continues to be broadly felt in contemporary supervision practice (psychoanalytic and otherwise), and perhaps is reflected best in Bordin's (1983) widely embraced pan-theoretical bond-goals-tasks supervision alliance proposal (Watkins, 2015).

Why Does the Alliance Matter?

Fleming and Benedek (1964, 1966) ascribed considerable if not determinative impact potential to the supervisor-supervisee alliance. That fundamental conviction is a significant part of how the supervision alliance is regarded on an international scale: The alliance is viewed as (a) being foundational to the formation and advancement of the supervision experience; (b) substantially affecting supervision process; and (c) substantially affecting supervision outcomes (e.g., Inman et al., 2014; Pilling & Roth, 2014; Psychology Board of Australia, 2013; Watkins, 2014a,b). Research has consistently affirmed that, where the alliance is perceived favorably by supervisees, other desirable features also tend to routinely be in place (e.g., greater perceived effectiveness of supervision, greater supervisee willingness to self-disclose; Watkins, 2014a). As Inman and Ladany (2008) indicated, "One tentative but important conclusion that can be drawn from … [reviewed] studies is that the supervisory working alliance is at the heart of supervision … " (p. 502). Considering that the vast majority of supervision alliance studies have actually appeared since that Inman and Ladany review (see Watkins, 2014a), their words have accumulated much more gravitas in a rather short period of time. It does indeed seem that, as goes the alliance, so goes supervision.

Supervision Alliance Ruptures and Their Importance

Much of what is known about supervision ruptures involves reasoned extrapolations of the therapeutic alliance rupture literature (e.g., Aspland, Llewelyn, Hardy, Barkham, & Stiles, 2008; Safran, 1993; Safran, Muran, & Shaker, 2014) to the supervision situation (see Bernard & Goodyear, 2014; Ladany et al., 2005). A supervision alliance rupture can be defined as involving some sort of relational strain between supervisor and supervisee, where the quality of their working interaction is negatively affected (cf. Safran, Muran, & Proskurov, 2009). Ruptures can be caused by a wide range of events, ranging from momentary empathic failures, multicultural insensitivities, and neglect, to mistakes or errors. Bernard and Goodyear (2014) identified at least three major sources of supervision rupture possibilities: (a) mismatched expectations and miscommunications; (b) developmentally normative conflicts; and (c) problems of interpersonal dynamics. Scaife (2009) also indicated that ruptures can arise due to supervisee inexperience and skill deficits, an excess of supervisor task orientation, and special circumstances that create situational difficulties. Some examples of rupture events include the following:

supervisees reacting negatively when they feel that the supervisor ignores their input about the therapy case under review; supervisees feeling that their own burgeoning theoretical perspective is not encouraged or given weight during case conceptualization; supervisees being offended when they experience the supervisor as manifesting insensitivity with regard to gender or culture; or supervisees being angered when blindsided by negative late-term evaluation feedback. Ruptures can prove particularly problematic because they possess fester capacity (i.e., if left unaddressed, they can come to be viewed increasingly unfavorably and prove corrosive to the supervisor-supervisee alliance). Because supervision conflict and negative experiences can occur in any supervision relationship, the matter of alliance rupture appears cross-culturally relevant (e.g., Bang & Goodyear, 2014; Son & Ellis, 2013; Tsui, O'Donoghue, & Ng, 2014; Wong, Wong, & Ishiyama, 2013).

Supervision Alliance Repairs and Their Importance

Rupture repairs refer to efforts that are made to acknowledge and resolve the conflict or issue that has given rise to the supervision rupture, the hope being that through such reparation the supervision alliance can be restored to good working order. As Ladany and colleagues (2005) stated, "A successful repair of the alliance … occurs when supervisees [or supervisors] express an understanding of the impasse in a way that indicates they no longer experience the feelings aroused by the conflict" (p. 85). Two basic supervisor action steps have routinely been identified as making repair more likely: (a) opening up the matter of rupture for discussion; and (b) processing it as fully as possible with the supervisee (cf. Bernard & Goodyear, 2014; Grant et al., 2012; Ladany et al., 2005; Nelson et al., 2008; Scaife, 2009). Openness, disclosure, safety, non-defensiveness, and goodwill on the part of the supervisor (and supervisee) all seem necessary to creating the opportunity for and realizing rupture resolution (Grant et al., 2012; Gray et al., 2001; Kemer, Borders, & Willse, 2014; Nelson et al., 2008; Nelson & Friedlander, 2001). As Nelson and Friedlander (2001) indicated, each alliance component—bond, goals, *and* tasks—is important to consider when addressing supervision difficulties.

Supervision Alliance Rupture Identification and Repair as Competency

The totality of the rupture identification and repair process may actually involve the presence of at least five supervisor components. These include the supervisor's

1. openness to examining her or his supervisory work and willingness to engage in ongoing self-reflection;
2. sensitivity to signs of conflict in supervision (e.g., noting the emergence of supervisee withdrawal or diminished responsiveness);

3. identification of the presence of a possible rupture and internally processing how best to proceed;
4. bringing the identified rupture up in supervision for joint processing and discussion; and
5. working to achieve a rupture resolution that is satisfactory to the supervisee and restores the good standing of the supervision alliance (Grant et al., 2012; Kemer et al., 2014; Nelson et al., 2008).

These five components fit into a competence perspective and reflect the knowledge, skills, and values of rupture resolution. Rupture identification and repair would require (a) having a sufficient knowledge base about the rupture/ repair experience; (b) valuing a solid working alliance and the importance of supervisory self-examination; and (c) being able to skillfully identify, address, and repair ruptures.

What Role Does Apology Play in Alliance Rupture Repair?

Apology has been identified as one aspect of repair in supervision discourse (Ladany et al., 2005; Nelson et al., 2008; Scaife, 2009). But the role of apology in rupture repair has yet to be addressed in the supervision literature in any substantive way. Beyond simply recognizing that an apology may be important for repair purposes, no effort has been made to specifically consider the relevance of apology theory and research for the supervision rupture/repair process. We propose that apology knowledge and skill are critical components of alliance rupture/repair competency.

APOLOGY IN RELATIONAL REPAIR: DEFINITION, THEORY, AND RESEARCH EVIDENCE

Apology and Forgiveness

Apology can be defined as a communication that acknowledges both responsibility and regret for some sort of trust violation (Ferrin, Kim, Cooper, & Dirks, 2007; Kim, Ferrin, Cooper, & Dirks, 2004). As Kirchhoff, Wagner, and Strack (2012) indicated, "An apology is often elucidated as a prelude to forgiveness and reconciliation … . Sometimes apologies are even described as constituting the heart of a reconciliatory process … " (p. 109). Thus, while a variety of variables can increase the likelihood of forgiveness (e.g., relationship commitment, victim agreeableness; Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002), apology has been identified as one crucial means by which the forgiveness process can become actuated and actualized. Although forgiveness theory and research accentuate the importance of not seeing forgiveness as being contingent on an apology (McCullough,

Pargament, & Thoreson, 2000; Worthington, 2003, 2005), apology and forgiveness understandably remain linked relational concepts theoretically, empirically, and culturally (Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010; Renteln, 2008); that forgiveness is increasingly likely when an apology is offered is not only intuitive and predictable but also affirmed via research (Fehr et al., 2010; Reyna, 2013; Weiner, Graham, Peter, & Zmuidinas, 1991).

Apology Composition

Composition appears to matter in an apology's effect on the transgressed party. Kirchhoff and colleagues (2009), based on a comprehensive review of 39 studies, identified 10 basic elements of effective apologies. Those 10 elements, having implications for apologizing in any context (e.g., supervision), are as follows:

1. statement of apology for one's transgression (e.g., "I'm sorry. I apologize.");
2. naming the offense (e.g., "What I did was … ");
3. taking responsibility for the offense (e.g., "I am responsible for what happened.");
4. attempting to explain the offense but not trying to explain it away;
5. conveying emotions (e.g., shame, remorse);
6. addressing the emotions of and/or damage to the offended party;
7. admitting fault;
8. promising forbearance (e.g., "I want to refrain from doing that again.");
9. offering reparation (e.g., offering something tangible to the offended party); and
10. requesting apology acceptance (see Kirchhoff et al., 2012, Table 1, p. 111).

Kirchhoff and colleagues (2012) empirically examined the effects of simple and complete apologies on the act of forgiveness. Simple apologies involved a few or even only 1 of the 10 elements, whereas complete apologies included more of those 10 elements. In their set of studies, Kirchhoff and colleagues (2012) concluded that (a) when the offense is severe, a more complete apology tends to be most helpful; (b) different offense contexts seem to require more or fewer apology components; (c) in resolving conflict, not all apology components are created equal, with some being more important than others; and (d) the four most important apology components appear to be conveying emotions, admitting fault, making a statement of apology for one's transgression, and attempting to offer explanation for (but not explain away) the offense.

In a follow-up study to Kirchhoff and colleagues (2012), Reyna (2013) studied the impact of simple and complete apologies on forgiveness in the context of romantic relationships ($N = 803$). Reyna's results, largely consistent

with Kirchhoff and colleagues' (2012) findings, were as follows: (a) both simple and complete apologies were positively associated with forgiveness; (b) complete apologies had stronger correlations with forgiveness than did simple apologies; (c) simple apologies were more effective when the victim perceived the offender as being more humble; and (d) when transgression severity was high, complete apologies were more effective in promoting forgiveness than less complete apologies. Those results underscore the power of apology in stimulating forgiveness in couple relationships and suggest that more serious transgressions may require a more complete apology.

Relational Implications of Apologies

Apologies can indeed be words of magic that contain the healing seeds of conflict transformation (Kirchhoff et al., 2012). When apologies are offered with humility and sincerity, make concern for the victim paramount, and take measure of infraction severity, the probability of their having the desired effect greatly increases. The growing database about the importance of apologies in stimulating forgiveness generally has been consistent. An apology reflects a significant moment where two liberating opportunities converge: the opportunity for offender atonement and the opportunity for victim forgiveness. But theory and research suggest that meaningful apologies are delivered foremost with concern for the apology recipient's welfare, not as self-centered efforts where the interests of the apologizer are prioritized (Kirchhoff et al., 2012).

EXTENDING APOLOGY-FORGIVENESS CONCEPTUALIZATION TO THE CLINICAL SUPERVISION RELATIONSHIP

We believe that this apology-forgiveness material has relevance for the supervisory experience. Where any supervision rupture is repaired, some element of forgiveness may be involved (cf. Rusbult, Hannon, Stocker, & Finkel, 2005); where forgiveness is granted, apology would seem facilitative in making it possible. We propose eight statements in an effort to deliberately connect (a) what is known about apology and forgiveness; (b) what is known about the supervision alliance and its rupture; and (c) how that combined information can be used to inform supervision alliance repair.

1. *Intentionally or unintentionally, supervisors can engage in alliance-rupturing behaviors for which supervisee forgiveness may be needed.* Just as forgiveness can be important for restoring relationship balance in various interpersonal contexts, the supervision situation is no exception: Supervisors could benefit from having understanding about forgiveness,

its interpersonal implications, and its supervision relevance. Although intentional supervisor ruptures can conceivably occur (e.g., where a supervisor knowingly vents unprocessed anger toward a supervisee or knowingly and consistently arrives late for supervision), it is our experience that (a) ruptures often tend to be unintentional, even well-intentioned, efforts that have gone awry (e.g., due to a lack of education about how to supervise), and (b) where acknowledged as such by supervisors, supervisees can be quite understanding and forgiving of those missteps.

2. *When supervision alliance ruptures occur, apology is a powerful reparative intervention that supervisors can use to stimulate supervisee forgiveness and ideally repair the relationship.* Just as apology can be important for stimulating forgiveness in various interpersonal contexts, the supervision situation is again no exception: Supervisors could benefit from understanding apology, its forgiveness implications, and its potential supervision relevance.

3. *The 10 elements of apology, identified as useful for relational repair in various interpersonal contexts, are relevant for and applicable to the supervision alliance repair process.* Each of the 10 elements of apology (Kirchhoff et al., 2009, 2012) has a place in alliance repair, and being informed about those elements provides some of the knowledge base for establishing supervisor alliance rupture/repair competency (cf. Domenech Rodriguez, 2014).

4. *Where supervision alliance ruptures are of less severity, a more complete supervisor apology may not be required.* The proper *matching* of apology to fit the severity of the offense is supported by research (Kirchhoff et al., 2009, 2012; Reyna, 2013). But as practicing supervisors, we would also caution that just because an offense may seem minor to the supervisor, it may not be perceived as minor by the supervisee. It would appear best to process collaboratively and openly any possible rupture event with supervisees, determine their views and assessment about that event, and then tailor (or adjust an already delivered but perhaps insufficiently complete) supervisor apology accordingly.

5. *Where supervision alliance rupture events prove severe, a more complete supervisor apology about and processing of the offending events may be required.* More of the 10 apology elements, particularly statement of apology for one's transgression, admitting fault, conveying emotions, and attempting to offer explanation for (but not explain away) the offense, may be needed when the rupture is of a more severe nature (or perceived to be severe by the supervisee).

6. *In apologizing for a rupture, supervisor humility, concern for the welfare of the supervisee, and concern for the welfare of the supervisor-supervisee alliance are all important in increasing the possibility of rupture repair.* What appears to substantially increase the probability of apology

acceptance is that the apologizer privileges the feelings and welfare of the apology recipient and humbly delivers the apology with those matters in mind. We contend that it is no different in supervision: Humbly delivered supervisor apologies in which supervisee feelings and welfare are privileged are most likely to be favorably received and instigate alliance repair.

7. *The likelihood of apology failure greatly increases where (a) a significant mismatch exists between the supervisor's apology and the severity of the rupture event and (b) the supervisor's humility and sincerity are perceived to be low or lacking.* This statement largely reflects the converse of the preceding statement. When supervisors misread the seriousness of an alliance rupture and offer an apology that mismatches the offending event, apology failure is more apt to occur. To optimize apology success, it would seem essential to (a) avoid the expression of insincere and non-humble supervisor behaviors and (b) sensitively gauge the depth of supervisee perspective about the rupture event (e.g., through actively listening and encouraging open discussion about the event).

8. *Where successfully delivered and favorably received, supervisor apology can restore the alliance to its pre-rupture condition and fortify it further against future relational conflicts.* A rupture event can be likened to a germ: (a) it sometimes can be of such minimal impact that it affects supervisor and supervisee hardly at all; (b) in other cases, it can be of such impact that it disastrously infects and cross-contaminates the whole of the supervisory relationship; and (c) where an affecting germ event has been successfully addressed, that corrective action can have a strengthening, protective, and corrective effect on the supervisory system (Watkins, 2012). We accordingly believe that a well-placed apology has the potential to be a positively affecting germ antidote for the ruptured supervisory alliance.

CASE EXAMPLE

An example of a supervision rupture and repair process is presented from the supervisee's perspective. Some of the identifying information and example content have been altered to protect the identities of the involved parties.

Participants and Setting

The supervisor was a 45-year-old Caucasian male; he was a counseling psychologist and had been providing supervision services for 10 years. The supervisee was a 30-year-old Mexican-American male in his second year of doctoral training in an American Psychological Association (APA)-approved counseling psychology program. The supervision took place in a university counseling center.

Supervisee Description of Rupture and Repair

"During my second training year, I had a supervisor from whom I received individual supervision. He had a clear desire to connect with me but was often quite inconsistent in attempting to do so. During supervision sessions, he would sometimes be warm and supportive; but then in other sessions, he could instead be very rigid and critical. I often found myself feeling tense and hesitant, because I never knew which way he would be during any given supervision session. Consequently, it was difficult for me to establish any sort of solid alliance and trust. The learning environment felt unsafe, and over time, I came to the decision that I would keep quiet, do what I needed to do, and count down the days until supervision was over.

"But during the course of our supervision, it also happened that this supervisor received feedback from another source—another of his supervisees—that he sometimes came across as critical and inflexible with students. And to my shock, my supervisor then brought up the outside feedback that he had received in our next supervision session. In his doing so, what also quickly became quite clear to me was that my supervisor was himself shocked with the feedback that he had received, had really been thinking it over, and was concerned that it indeed had too much the ring of truth. He said that he was bothered that he might have been harsh or unnecessarily critical of me during our work together, adding that he had not been aware that he was creating such an unwelcoming, inhospitable environment. He apologized, saying:

> What I most regret is that I appear to have created a situation in which you, too, might have felt that you could not come to me when matters were not going well. For that, I am truly sorry because that is not the kind of supervisor I want to be. I can think of a couple of instances here that may have led to you feeling that way. I plan to spend more time thinking about all this. I cannot believe this environment existed right in front of me but outside my awareness; it is my job to see such realities but I did not. Moving forward I would like it to be different here. What could I do to create a safer supervision environment? Would you be willing to talk about these concerns with me? I want to leave this meeting with you knowing that I want us to have a good supervisory relationship and that I regret the ways in which I have made having that good relationship more difficult for us.

In that moment, I recall being completely thrown off and being confronted with the totally unexpected. I did wonder about the reliability and sincerity of his words, but in his apology, I also saw a humanness and humaneness that I had not seen before. While providing any feedback to this supervisor felt very risky, it also felt like a positive opportunity for change that had not been available before. I shared my thoughts with him, and he listened. I continued to be supervised by this same supervisor for a second semester, and I noticed some definite changes specifically related to the feedback that I had shared.

It became very apparent to me that he was really trying, and this provided me with impetus to do the same. I worked to be more open and vulnerable with him in our work together, and our second semester of supervision was a more favorable experience for us both. Through this experience, my supervisor showed me that self-awareness and apologizing and correcting one's errors were part of professionally responsible practice.

Explanatory Comment

In this example, the supervisor (a) was unaware of having engaged in rupture-inducing behavior; (b) as the supervision experience unfolded, became aware that he had unknowingly created a rupture; and (c) set about providing an apology as a primary means of alliance repair. Although a number of factors conceivably contributed to this highly favorable outcome (e.g., supervisor receptiveness to feedback, supervisee willingness to risk), the supervisor's apology seemed to play a critical role in transforming the supervision landscape. Five components were involved in this supervisor's apology: (a) naming the offense ("What I most regret is that I appear to have created a situation in which you, too, might have felt that you could not come to me when matters were not going well."); (b) statement of apology ("For that, I am truly sorry because that is not the kind of supervisor I want to be."); (c) taking responsibility ("I cannot believe this environment existed right in front of me but outside my awareness; it is my job to see such realities but I did not."); (d) offering reparation ("Moving forward I would like it to be different here. What could I do to create a safer supervision environment?"); and (e) apology acceptance request ("I want to leave this meeting with you knowing that I want us to have a good supervisory relationship and that I regret the ways in which I have made having that good relationship more difficult for us."). We see here that (a) the very act of apology had a positive impact on beginning repair of an ongoing series of supervision rupture events, and (b) this five-component apology was a critical interpersonal step in opening up those repair possibilities. As this supervisee later stated, "While this was never one of my stronger supervisory alliances, one reality is certain: Without that supervisor apology, our alliance would have been astronomically worse. It was only through his apology that we were able to start putting in place a satisfactory working relationship." The supervisor's self-examination and apology not only contributed to relationship realignment, but provided a constructive model of professional behavior (i.e., owning one's mistakes and striving to correct them) that would have relevance for the supervisee's delivery of treatment services as well. The supervisor's behavior reflected the Platinum Rule in action: Do unto others as you would have others do unto others (Pawl & St. John, 1998).

Although racial/ethnic differences were not identified by this supervisee as contributing to this rupture, being mindful of that possibility is important. Lack of (or limited) multicultural knowledge and sensitivity can negatively

affect the supervision alliance (Inman & Ladany, 2014; Soheilian, Inman, Klinger, Isenberg, & Kulpe, 2014), and striving to obviate that unfortunate outcome is essential.

Although the delivery of apology in this situation appeared to fit what the supervisee needed, the delivery of an apology may not always be so straightforward in its effect. For example, with beginning supervisees who lean heavily on and idealize the supervisor's expertise, it may be that apology would in some way upend the power differential, lead to supervisee disillusionment with the supervisor's authority, and contribute to an escalation of supervisee anxiety. Prior to delivering an apology, reasonable questions to ask then would be the following: How might an apology, although perhaps warranted, undermine my apparent expertise in the eyes of this supervisee? Might an apology increase supervisee anxiety? How would my delivery of apology then be affected? By taking into account such questions, the supervisor is better able to take a more contextualized, relationship-specific approach and tailor any delivered apology accordingly. In our view, however, whatever negative consequences may result from the delivery of an apology (e.g., supervisee disillusionment), the consequences of the supervisor's not apologizing for a problematic rupture event generally will be far more negative in the end.

TWO SUGGESTED SUPERVISION PRACTICE/EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Two practice/education recommendations about supervision alliance and apology that merit implementation consideration are as follows:

1. Where not already the case, it is recommended that supervisors add apology/forgiveness information to their existing alliance rupture/repair fund of knowledge and incorporate apology into their intervention repertoire; and
2. In teaching supervisors to supervise, it is further recommended that rupture/repair apology information and apology role-play possibilities be incorporated into supervision seminars and the supervision of supervision experience.

CONCLUSION: LOOKING FORWARD

Conflicts occur in supervision and can rise to the level of a rupture. Rupture identification and repair is an important supervision competency, reflecting a knowledge base, skill set, and values core. Although much of this material has

relevance for supervisee-initiated rupture repair efforts, our focus has been on supervisors and their use of the apology/forgiveness literature to inform thinking about alliance repair. The primary points of this article can be summarized as follows:

1. Supervisors make mistakes and errors that can negatively affect the supervisory alliance.
2. Apologies can help repair those negative alliance effects.
3. The 10 elements of apology (Kirchhoff et al., 2009, 2012) are applicable to that supervisory alliance repair process.
4. Apologies should be tailored to reflect offense type and severity.
5. Humility and genuine concern for the supervisee increase the likelihood of apology effectiveness, whereas lack of humility and genuine concern increase the likelihood of apology failure.
6. Effective apologies can fortify the supervisory alliance.

Although our focus has been practical, the eight statements that link the apology/forgiveness and supervision alliance literatures have research implications. Each statement reflects an idea that could be researched qualitatively and quantitatively.

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