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Feminist supervision and supervisee nondisclosure: The mediating role of the supervisory relationship

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the authors investigated the predictive relationship between a feminist supervisory approach and supervisee nondisclosure, along with the potential mediating effect of the supervisory relationship. Among a sample of master's-level counseling interns ($N = 111$), supervisees who perceived more feminist behaviors from their supervisor were more likely to rank the supervisory relationship as stronger and were less likely to report withholding information from their supervisor. Furthermore, the supervisory relationship partially mediated the link between feminist supervision and supervisee nondisclosure. Implications for supervisors and researchers are discussed.

Clinical supervision is inherently hierarchical due to a supervisor's roles in providing formative and summative feedback, maintaining legal and ethical accountability, and gatekeeping the profession (Falender, 2009). Such hierarchical relationships create a power differential between supervisor and supervisee (Nelson et al., 2006). Although unavoidable much of the time and not inherently negative, power differentials can influence supervisees' perceptions of the supervisory relationship (Murphy & Wright, 2005). Power differentials also impact supervisees' willingness to share information with their supervisor (e.g., supervisee concerns, personal issues, clinical mistakes; Ladany, Hill, Corbett, & Nutt, 1996). Previous researchers have concluded that supervisees' reasons for withholding information are often connected to perceived power differentials in supervision (Hess et al., 2008; Ladany et al., 1996; Mehr, Ladany, & Caskie, 2010) and to the strength of the supervisory working alliance (Gibson, 2017; Hutman, 2015; Mehr, Ladany, & Caskie, 2010). In her conceptual framework of feminist supervision, Szymanski (2003) noted that supervisors can externalize power differentials via intentional and ongoing discussions of hierarchy and power, thereby assuaging the perceived magnitude of a power differential and ultimately empowering the

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supervisee. By utilizing a feminist supervisory approach from the beginning of supervision, supervisors might build stronger supervisory relationships with supervisees (Szymanski, 2003) that in turn may predict fewer instances of supervisee nondisclosure. Researchers have scarcely focused on feminist supervision, particularly the impact of feminist supervision on the supervisory relationship and on nondisclosure. In this study, we examined the extent to which a feminist supervisory approach predicted self-reported supervisee nondisclosure and whether or not the supervisory relationship mediated this effect.

Supervisee nondisclosure

Although supervisee disclosure is considered positive and necessary, nondisclosure occurs regularly in supervision. Supervisee nondisclosure may stem from supervisees not knowing what is relevant to discuss in supervision (Knox, 2015) or from purposeful attempts to distort or withhold information (Yourman & Farber, 1996). Ladany and colleagues (1996) and Mehr and colleagues (2010) estimated the prevalence of nondisclosure occurred 84.3% to 97.2% of the time in supervision. Commonly withheld information includes supervisee concerns about the supervisor or the supervision process, personal issues, clinical mistakes, and evaluation concerns (Hess et al., 2008; Ladany et al., 1996; Mehr et al., 2010; Yourman & Farber, 1996). Supervisees who do not disclose relevant information to a supervisor may undermine the purpose of supervision, jeopardize client welfare, or inhibit their development as counselors (Hess et al., 2008; Knox, 2015; Ladany et al., 1996).

Some supervisees may resort to withholding information from a supervisor as a way to maintain power in the supervisory relationship. Using a qualitative approach, Murphy and Wright (2005) interviewed 11 marriage and family therapy supervisees about their perceptions of power in supervision. Related to the supervisor's use of power, the authors found themes consistent with a feminist supervision approach (e.g., discussing power, empowering the supervisee, promoting safety, collaborating with the supervisee), as well as themes that contrasted with a feminist approach (e.g., imposing a style or theoretical orientation onto the supervisee, misusing power [e.g., breaching confidentiality]). Murphy and Wright (2005) also found that supervisees in their study exercised power by triangulating with peers in supervision, viewing themselves as the consumers of supervision services, and intentionally not disclosing information to their supervisor.

Ladany and colleagues (1996), Mehr and colleagues (2010), and Hess and colleagues (2008) all found evidence that a hierarchical supervisory relationship might influence a supervisee's decision to withhold information. Ladany and colleagues (1996) found that supervisees did not disclose information to their supervisors because they did not feel it was their place as supervisees to

bring up an issue with their supervisor, they desired to maintain a favorable impression, and they feared the consequences of the disclosure. Based on these findings, the authors surmised that "these reasons may be reflective of power differences and the evaluative nature inherent in counseling supervision" (p. 18). The rationales provided by the participants in Ladany and colleagues (1996) were also found in a later study by Mehr and colleagues (2010). Finally, Hess and colleagues (2008) found that supervisees in problematic supervisory relationships (i.e., poor working relationship) identified power differentials within the supervisory relationship as a reason for withholding information. Supervisee disclosure was also hindered when they felt unheard or misunderstood due to differing cultural identities (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation; Hess et al., 2008).

In addition to power imbalances, supervisees have pointed to the quality of the supervisory relationship as an explanation for nondisclosure. For example, supervisees who perceived a weak supervisory working alliance with their supervisors were less likely to disclose in supervision (Gunn & Pistole, 2012; Mehr et al., 2010; Mehr, Ladany, & Caskie, 2015). In a qualitative study, Hess and colleagues (2008) found that the content supervisees shared with their supervisors differed depending on whether they perceived a good or poor quality supervisory relationship. When supervisees perceived a good supervisory relationship, they reported nondisclosures about client-related concerns (e.g., clinical mistakes, client-counselor relational issues). When the supervisee perceived a poor supervisory relationship, nondisclosures included client-related *and* supervisory relationship-related concerns (e.g., confusing evaluation criteria, supervisor competency).

Based on existing literature, supervisee nondisclosure may occur, at least in part, as a natural consequence of unbalanced, hierarchical supervisory relationships and/or poorly formed supervisory relationships. In contrast, a feminist supervisory approach directly addresses power differentials that can be created in hierarchical supervisory and counseling relationships (Falender, 2009). It is therefore possible that a feminist supervisory approach might relate to fewer instances of nondisclosure as a consequence of a strengthened supervisory relationship.

Feminist supervision

Feminist-oriented supervisors explicitly integrate issues of power, activism, and diversity—including gender, race, and class—with an awareness of how one's intersecting social identities may shape experiences of privilege and oppression (Arczynski & Morrow, 2017; Crespi, 1995; Falender, 2009; Gentile, Ballou, Roffman, & Ritchie, 2009; Green & Dekkers, 2010; Mangione, Mears, Vincent, & Hawes, 2011; Murphy & Wright, 2005; Nelson et al., 2006; Prouty, 2001; Szymanski, 2003, 2005). Szymanski (2003) conceptualized a

feminist supervisory approach as comprised of four overarching dimensions: (a) collaborative relationships, (b) power analysis, (c) diversity and social context, and (d) feminist advocacy and activism. Collaborative relationships involve non-authoritarian, respectful relationships between supervisor and supervisee that minimize hierarchy and the power differential while maintaining appropriate boundaries and promoting supervisee growth and autonomy (Arczynski & Morrow, 2017; Degges-White, Colon, & Borzumato-Gainey, 2013; Szymanski, 2003, 2005; Worell & Remer, 2003). Power analysis refers to a process of recognizing and explicitly addressing supervisor-supervisee power dynamics and differentials so that the impact of power is minimized (Arczynski & Morrow, 2017; Porter & Vasquez, 1997; Szymanski, 2003, 2005). Diversity and social context addresses people's intersecting identities and how sociocultural factors (e.g., racism, sexism, privilege) impact wellness (Szymanski, 2003) and the supervisory relationship (Szymanski, 2005). Finally, feminist advocacy and activism refers to teaching and modeling a feminist perspective to supervisees through empowerment, promotion of feminist issues, and involvement in social change (Szymanski, 2003, 2005). Each of these components feeds into an overall, comprehensive, feminist-oriented approach to clinical supervision.

The feminist components just described are implemented from the beginning of supervision. The supervisor structures clinical supervision from a systemic/contextual perspective that draws in sociopolitical considerations and constructivist (i.e., multiple realities) ideologies (Falender, 2009). Practically, the supervisor strives to share leadership and decision making with the supervisee (Arczynski & Morrow, 2017; Falender, 2009; Worell & Johnson, 1997) by mutually establishing supervision goals; acknowledging/ addressing power differentials; appropriately self-disclosing; discussing boundaries; and discussing supervisor, supervisee, and client cultural factors (Szymanski, 2003, 2005). As the feminist-oriented supervision process evolves, the supervisor and supervisee learn to balance and share power appropriately, which fosters a deeper sense of connection and energy between collaborative partners in the supervisory process (Murphy & Wright, 2005).

Szymanski (2003) developed the Feminist Supervision Scale (FSS) based on her conceptual framework, and she tested the measure with a sample of 108 clinical supervisors (primarily psychologists). The FSS helped advance scholarly work on feminist supervision beyond a mostly conceptual body of literature. Using the FSS with marriage and family therapy trainees, Green and Dekkers (2010) found that supervisees indicated higher satisfaction and more favorable learning outcomes when their supervisors attended to power and diversity in supervision. Notably, supervisors reported a higher frequency of feminist supervision behaviors and higher student learning outcomes than did supervisees, which highlighted a disagreement on the extent

to which supervisors were utilizing feminist supervision behaviors (Green & Dekkers, 2010).

Mangione and colleagues (2011) employed a qualitative study of women psychologists and their supervisees to investigate feminist themes of power, collaboration, reflexivity, and authenticity. The authors found that, according to supervisors and supervisees, attendance to each of these themes in supervision introduced greater connectedness and energy to supervision. Burnes, Wood, Inman, and Welikson (2013) conducted a qualitative study with supervisees from three feminist-based clinical supervision groups. The authors found that feminist variables (e.g., relational attributes, sociocultural process, issues of power and equality) affected the group supervision process positively by fostering an open atmosphere that allowed for exploration. Finally, in their grounded theory study with 14 self-identified feminist-multicultural supervisors, Arczynski and Morrow (2017) found that the application of this approach to supervision was centered around a core category of anticipating and managing the complexities of power in supervision. These participants defined power as "the ability to influence the lives of others and their own lives" (p. 196). Thus, "feminist supervision that is explicitly multicultural" (p. 193) aspires to, but cannot reach, true power symmetry. Collectively, the limited research suggests that a feminist supervisory approach may offer positive benefits for supervisee growth and for the supervisory relationship. Notably, however, the literature on nondisclosure and feminist supervision has been primarily generated in psychology and marriage and family therapy. A gap remains in understanding how these constructs fit together across the helping disciplines.

The supervisory relationship

The supervisor-supervisee relationship has been conceptualized and researched in a variety of ways. One conceptualization, the supervisory working alliance, refers specifically to a supervisor-supervisee emotional bond and agreement on tasks and goals for supervision (Bordin, 1983). In her validation study of the FSS, Szymanski (2003) detected a significant, positive correlation ($r = .43$, $p < .001$) between the FSS and the Supervisory Working Alliance Inventory (SWAI; Efstation, Patton, & Kardash, 1990), providing preliminary evidence that a feminist approach and the working alliance are related. Although a commonly researched construct on the supervisory relationship, critics have noted that the operational definition of the working alliance overlooks evaluative and educational components inherent to supervision (Palomo, Beinart, & Cooper, 2010; Tangen & Borders, 2016).

Cliffe, Beinart, and Cooper (2016) refined a broader conceptualization of the supervisory relationship to include a safe base, reflective education, and structure. Cliffe and colleagues' (2016) notion of a safe base (i.e., a

collaborative, open, safe supervision environment) is closely aligned with Bordin's (1983) concept of an emotional bond, but Cliffe and colleagues (2016) also included collaboration, respect, and safety in their notion of safe base. Reflective education refers to the supervisor's ability to facilitate the supervisee's learning while also remaining attentive to process issues, and structure relates to how the supervisor facilitates supervision sessions. Cliffe and colleagues' (2016) focus on collaboration, safety, respect, structure, and reflective learning as components of the supervisory relationship appears to conceptually align more with the intended outcomes of a feminist supervisory approach.

Regardless of the definition, there is consensus in the literature that a strong supervisor-supervisee relationship in general is an important element for supervisee growth, development, and positive outcomes in supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014; Borders & Brown, 2005; Ladany, Ellis, & Friedlander, 1999; Tangen & Borders, 2016). Notably, in addition to being related to a feminist supervisory approach, supervisees' perceptions of the supervisory relationship overall have been linked to a likelihood to disclose information to supervisors (Gunn & Pistole, 2012; Hess et al., 2008; Mehr et al., 2010, 2015). Thus, it is possible that the supervisory relationship serves as one connecting piece between a feminist supervisory approach and supervisee nondisclosure.

The current study

We proposed a conceptual model in which a stronger feminist approach from a supervisor relates to fewer instances of supervisee nondisclosure. In addition, because the supervisory relationship has been related to feminist supervision and to nondisclosure, we conceptualized the supervisory relationship as a mediating variable between feminist supervision and supervisee nondisclosure. Researchers have identified supervisor/supervisee power dynamics as one reason for nondisclosure (Hess et al., 2008; Ladany et al., 1996; Mehr et al., 2010), and a comprehensive feminist supervisory approach could potentially account for fewer instances of supervisee nondisclosure as the supervisee gains a sense of safety and empowerment to decide to disclose information. In addition, researchers have identified the supervisory relationship as a factor in supervisee nondisclosure (Gunn & Pistole, 2012; Hess et al., 2008; Mehr et al., 2010, 2015), and there is conceptual and preliminary empirical support that a feminist supervisory approach and the strength of the supervisory relationship are positively related (Szymanski, 2003).

Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between a feminist supervision approach and supervisee nondisclosure. We also sought to examine whether the strength of the supervisory relationship would account for the relationship between feminist supervision and

supervisee nondisclosure. We hypothesized that (a) greater frequency of feminist supervision behaviors would be significantly related to fewer instances of supervisee nondisclosure and that (b) the supervisory relationship would at least partially mediate this relationship.

Method

Procedure

Based on our regression analyses described next, we conducted an a priori power analysis using G*Power 3.1 (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) and determined we needed at least 68 participants to observe a small effect (.15) with power at .80. Thus, we sought a sample of at least 68 supervisees. To contribute to a broader, interdisciplinary understanding of the constructs of interest, we sought a sample of professional counseling supervisees. We first composed a list of all counselor education programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) using CACREP's website. We contacted 316 counselor education programs that were accredited throughout the United States as of October 2016.

In CACREP-accredited programs, students completing an internship experience are required, at a minimum, to engage in weekly individual supervision with a site supervisor and in biweekly group supervision with a university supervisor. We reasoned that the required frequency of supervisor-supervisee contact across CACREP-accredited programs afforded relatively consistent opportunities for participants in this study to observe a feminist approach from their supervisors, to establish a supervisory relationship (if possible), and to withhold or disclose information from supervisors. Next, we identified all faculty members from accredited programs whose e-mail addresses were listed publicly online. Upon obtaining institutional review board approval, we e-mailed all faculty members on our list ($N = 1,766$) and asked that they forward a participation request to students enrolled in a counseling internship course. Supervisees who agreed to participate completed a survey online in Qualtrics. To gather comparable data, we asked supervisees to think about their site supervisor as they completed the survey.

Participants

A total of 114 master's-level counseling students currently enrolled in a supervised counseling internship participated in this study. Sixty-five additional participants opened but did not participate in the study, and two participants began the study but did not complete it (63% completion rate). Two additional participants completed the study but were removed because

they did not meet the criteria for participation. Participants' ages ranged from 22 to 57 years ($M = 29.26$, $Mdn = 25$, $SD = 8.69$). Ninety-eight (86%) participants identified as female, 12 (10.53%) identified as male, and four (3.51%) specifically identified as cisgender in addition to their affirmed gender identity. One participant identified as female-to-male transgender (.88%), another participant identified as androgynous (.88%), and two (1.75%) participants did not indicate their gender. Participants' race/ethnicity was reported as follows: Caucasian/White ($N = 87$, 76.32%), African-American/Black ($N = 10$, 8.77%), Hispanic ($N = 7$, 6.14%), Multiracial/Biracial ($N = 6$, 5.26%), Latino/a ($N = 1$, 0.88%), Asian ($N = 1$, 0.88%), Native American ($N = 1$, 0.88%), Puerto Rican ($N = 1$, 0.88%), Irish ($N = 1$, 0.88%), Chinese ($N = 1$, 0.88%), Taiwanese ($N = 1$, 0.88%), Italian-American ($N = 1$, 0.88%), and Middle Eastern ($N = 1$, 0.88%). Two (1.75%) did not report their race/ethnicity. We allowed participants to respond open-endedly in self-identifying their gender and race/ethnicity. Some participants affirmed more than one identity across both questions; thus, percentages totaled to more than 100%.

Participants had completed an average of 45.13 credit hours in their counseling program ($Mdn = 48$, $SD = 15.06$, 4 outliers not included [> 100 credit hours]). Participants' counseling specialties were as follows: clinical mental health counseling ($N = 63$, 55.26%); school counseling ($N = 28$, 24.56%); marriage, couple, and family counseling ($N = 9$, 7.89%); student affairs and college counseling ($N = 6$, 5.26%), addictions counseling ($N = 2$, 1.75%); rehabilitation counseling ($N = 2$, 1.75%); and other ($N = 2$, 1.75%; e.g., dual tracks). Two (1.75%) participants did not indicate their counseling specialty. Participants reported spending an average of 1.87 hours per week in supervision with a site supervisor ($Mdn = 1.50$, $SD = 1.07$).

Instrumentation

Feminist supervision scale (FSS; Szymanski, 2003)

The original 32-item FSS measures feminist supervision behaviors, as self-reported by supervisors, across dimensions of feminist supervision: (a) collaborative relationships (CR; e.g., "I believe that supervisees and supervisors should be equal partners in the supervisory process"); (b) power analysis (PA; e.g., "I attend to power relations in the supervisory context"); (c) diversity and social context (DSC; e.g., "I recognize cultural diversity and oppression as it impacts my supervisees"); and (d) feminist advocacy and activism (FAA; e.g., "I educate my supervisees about feminist issues"). Responses are recorded along a seven-point Likert scale from 1 (almost never true) to 7 (almost always true). Mean full scale or subscale scores can be used, with higher scores indicating more frequent use of feminist supervision behaviors.

Szymanski (2003) provided evidence of construct validity via expert review and an exploratory factor analysis. Convergent validity was established through significant correlations between the FSS and self-identification as a feminist supervisor ($r = .74$, $p < .001$), liberal gender role attitudes ($r = .39$, $p < .001$), and feminist therapeutic behaviors ($r = .79$, $p < .001$). Szymanski also found evidence for internal consistency (full-scale Cronbach's alpha [α] = .95). Green and Dekkers (2010) modified the FSS for completion by supervisees (e.g., changing item wording from "I" to "my supervisor") and found supervisee response patterns to be equally reliable on the instrument overall ($\alpha = .96$). For this study, we obtained permission from Szymanski to modify the item wording for supervisees as done by Green and Dekkers (2010). To capture a global comprehensive feminist supervision approach, we utilized the overall FSS scale ($\alpha = .95$).

Short supervisory relationship questionnaire (S-SRQ; Cliffe et al., 2016)

The S-SRQ is an 18-item measure of the supervisory relationship from the supervisee's perspective. Items are scored on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) with higher scores reflecting a more positive perception of the supervisory relationship. The S-SRQ can be scored along three subscales (i.e., Safe Base ["My supervisor was approachable"], Reflective Education ["My supervisor encouraged me to reflect on my practice"], Structure ["Supervision sessions were focused"]) or as a global measure of the supervisory relationship.

The S-SRQ is a shortened version of the Supervisory Relationship Questionnaire (SRQ; Palomo et al., 2010) derived empirically from a principal components analysis. Cliffe and colleagues (2016) found that the S-SRQ correlated positively with similar measures of the supervisory relationship (e.g., Working Alliance Inventory Trainee Form, $r = .92$, $p < .001$; SRQ, $r = .95$, $p < .001$). The authors also reported a negative correlation with the Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity Inventory ($r = -.73$, $p < .001$). Collectively, these findings provide evidence for convergent validity. The authors also reported test-retest reliability at .94 and α for the overall measure at .96. In the present study, we used the overall scale score ($\alpha = .91$).

Supervisee nondisclosure scales (SNDS; Ellis & Colvin, 2016; Siembor, 2012)

The SNDS is an 11-item self-report measure of supervisee nondisclosure. Participants respond using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = fully disclosed, 4 = sometimes disclosed, 7 = decided not to disclose). The SNDS is scored using item response theory (IRT) scores that are computed using IRTPRO (Cai, Thissen, & Du Toit, 2011). Supervisee nondisclosure is interpreted on an IRT scale of 1 to 10 with higher scores indicating greater levels of supervisee nondisclosure. The SNDS contains two subscales: Clinically Related Nondisclosures (CRND; e.g., "… discuss my feeling of inadequacy") and

Supervision-Related Nondisclosures (SRND; e.g., "... discuss negative reactions about supervisor's behavior or attitudes").

Siembor (2012) initially tested a pool of 30 items, informed by previous research on nondisclosure (e.g., Hess et al., 2008; Ladany et al., 1996; Yourman & Farber, 1996), using a sample of 973 supervisees. The 11-item SNDS (Ellis & Colvin, 2016) was derived empirically using graded response IRT (Hambleton, Swaminathan, & Rogers, 1991), and the 11 items were retained based on item-level fit statistics and chi-square (χ^2) fit statistics (i.e., CRND [$M_2(77) = 442.36$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .07], SRND [M_2 (20) = 446.34, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .20]). Consistent with Siembor (2012) and Hutman (2015), we utilized the SNDS as a single-factor instrument by summing IRT scores. In this study, $\alpha = .84$, which was comparable to Siembor ($\alpha = .90$) and Hutman ($\alpha = .93$).

Data analysis

To test our hypotheses, we utilized multiple regression to examine the relationships among feminist supervision behaviors, the supervisory relationship, and supervisee nondisclosure. We followed causal steps defined by Baron and Kenny (1986) to test for mediation, which require the following criteria to be met: (a) the relationship between FSS scores and SNDS scores must be significant (path c; hypothesis one), (b) the relationship between FSS scores and S-SRQ scores must be significant (path a), and (c) the relationship between S-SRQ scores and the SNDS scores must be significant (path b). Next, by regressing the SNDS onto the FSS and S-SRQ simultaneously, a direct effect of FSS to SNDS (path c^1) can be observed in light of the mediating effect. If path c^1 either drops to nonsignificance or remains significant but with a smaller effect compared to path c, then evidence for mediation can be inferred.

To evaluate this causal steps approach, we used SPSS 25 (IBM Corporation, 2017) to examine regression coefficients, p-values, and adjusted R^2 (effect size). We calculated observed power using G*Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2007). Consistent with Baron and Kenny (1986), we determined mediation existed if FSS scores significantly predicted S-SRQ and SNDS scores, respectively, and if a significant relationship between FSS and SNDS scores either was reduced to nonsignificance or the direct effect of path c^1 was less than path c when S-SRQ scores were entered into the final regression equation. Prior to specifying the regression models, we checked for missing data, along with assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity.

We identified 20 missing item responses, 19 of which were on the FSS. One participant skipped three items in a row, another skipped four in a row, and a third skipped eight in a row ($N = 15$). Although there is no rule of thumb for how much missing data is too much, Cheema (2014)

Table 1. Correlation coefficients for variables in the current study (N = 111).

	FSS	S-SRQ	SNDS
FSS	1	.61**	−.40**
S-SRQ		1	−.58**
SNDS			1

Note. FSS = Feminist Supervision Scale; S-SRQ = Short Supervisory Relationship Questionnaire; SNDS = Supervisee Nondisclosure Scales.

** $p < .001$.

recommended that deletion is the least risky solution when the sample size is large enough to provide sufficient power for data analysis. Because our sample size was sufficiently large enough for the regression model being tested, we removed these three participants from the data set, leaving 111 participants. We used multiple imputation to replace the remaining five instances of missing data as they appeared randomly throughout the surveys.

Q-Q plots indicated that data from all three variables likely came from uniform distributions and were multivariate normally distributed and linear. Box plots indicated no instances of univariate outliers, and Mahalanobis' distance indicated no instances of multivariate outliers. All three variables were significantly correlated with one another (see Table 1), but correlations were below .8. In addition, tolerance values ranged from .62 to 1.00, and the variance inflation factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.00 to 1.61, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern. A scatterplot indicated that the variance of standardized residuals was homogeneous across the predicted values, supporting the assumption of homoscedasticity.

The causal steps approach to testing for mediation has limitations, most notably that it cannot provide a point estimate for the mediation (indirect) effect (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Greason and Cashwell (2009) noted that a point estimate for an indirect effect can be calculated by multiplying unstandardized regression weights for paths *a* and *b*, but this approach does not provide evidence for statistical significance. Bootstrapping is a nonparametric approach to calculating point estimates and statistical significance of mediating effects by empirically generating a sampling distribution via resampling and replacement (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). In addition to the causal steps approach, we calculated the bootstrapping point estimate for the indirect effect of the supervisory relationship (5,000 iterations), as well as 95% confidence intervals (CIs), using SPSS syntax from Preacher and Hayes (2008). The mediating effect was considered significant if zero did not lie between the upper and lower CI limits; that is, if we could conclude with 95% confidence that the estimated path coefficient would not equal zero. This bootstrapping approach allowed us to more directly test our second hypothesis.

Table 2. Regression analyses for relationships among feminist supervision, supervisory relationship, and supervisee nondisclosure ($N = 111$).

Path	Variables	B	β	SE	t	p-value	Power	Adjusted R^2
a	FSS on S-SRQ	.58	.62	.07	8.18	.001	1.00	.38
b	S-SRQ on SNDS	−2.05	−.58	.31	−7.35	.001	1.00	.33
c	FSS on SNDS	−1.34	−.40	.30	−4.54	.001	.85	.15
c^1	FSS on SNDS	−.24	−.07	.33	−.71	.48	.99	.32

Notes. FSS = Feminist Supervision Scale; S-SRQ = Short Supervisory Relationship Questionnaire; SNDS = Supervisee Nondisclosure Scales. Path a: $F(1, 109) = 66.88$, $p < .001$. Path b: $F(1, 109) = 53.94$, $p < .001$. Path c: $F(1, 109) = 20.57$, $p < .001$. Path c^1: $F(2, 108) = 27.10$, $p < .001$. Power = observed power computed with G*Power 3.1.

Results

We hypothesized that a greater frequency of feminist supervisory behaviors, as reported by supervisees, would predict lower scores of supervisee nondisclosure and that the strength of the supervisory relationship would at least partially mediate the predictive relationship. Summary statistics from the regression models used to test the hypotheses are provided in Table 2, and the hypothesized model is depicted in Figure 1. FSS scores significantly predicted SNDS scores and accounted for 15% of the variance in SNDS scores (path c). FSS scores also significantly predicted S-SRQ scores and accounted for 38% of the variance in S-SRQ scores (path a). S-SRQ scores significantly predicted SNDS scores and accounted for 33% of the variance in SNDS scores (path b). Based on these results, Baron and Kenny's (1986) preliminary criteria for mediation were met and Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Regarding Hypothesis 2, when we regressed SNDS scores onto FSS and S-SRQ scores simultaneously, FSS scores no longer significantly predicted SNDS scores (path c^1), which provided evidence that the supervisory relationship partially mediated the relationship between a feminist supervisory approach and supervisee nondisclosure. This overall regression model with the mediating
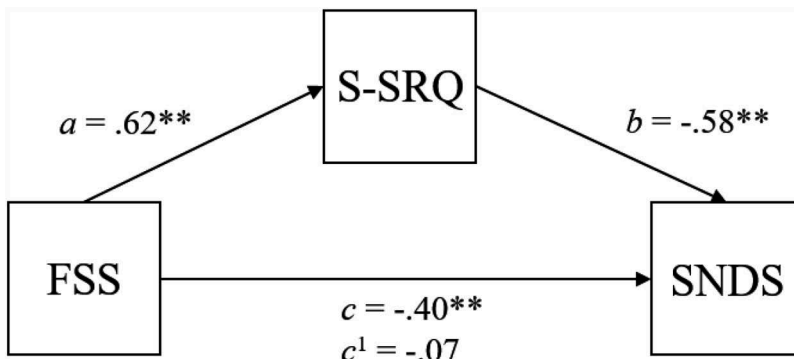
Figure 1. Standardized point estimates for the relationship between feminist supervision (FSS) and supervisee nondisclosure (SNDS) as mediated by the supervisory relationship (S-SRQ). **$p < .001$.

effect accounted for 32% of the variance in SNDS scores (see Table 2). Based on results of the bootstrapping analysis, FSS scores explained variance in SNDS scores indirectly through higher S-SRQ scores (*ab* point estimate = –1.89, 95% CI = –2.57, –1.17). Based on the collective results, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Discussion

In this study, we examined the extent to which a feminist supervisory approach was related to the supervisory relationship and to supervisee nondisclosure. We found that higher ratings of a feminist supervisory approach predicted fewer instances of withholding information from a supervisor. This finding supports and extends prior research. Previous researchers have identified power imbalances between supervisor and supervisee, a core focus of feminist supervision (Arczynski & Morrow, 2017), as one reason for supervisee nondisclosure (Hess et al., 2008; Ladany et al., 1996; Mehr et al., 2010). A feminist-oriented supervisor respects a supervisee's ways of knowing and attempts to address and appropriately balance hierarchy and power differentials, thereby building a collaborative relationship that empowers the supervisee (Falender, 2009; Szymanski, 2003, 2005). Findings with the current sample highlight that approaching supervision from a feminist orientation is directly related to fewer instances of supervisee nondisclosure.

We also found that the relationship between a feminist supervisory approach and supervisee nondisclosure was partially mediated by the supervisory relationship. That is, supervisees who rated their supervisor's approach as more strongly feminist were more likely to rate a stronger supervisory relationship. In turn, this stronger relationship predicted lower nondisclosure scores. Feminist supervision and the working alliance have been correlated previously (Szymanski, 2003), and researchers also have implicated the supervisory relationship as a predictor of nondisclosure (Cook & Welfare, 2018; Gunn & Pistole, 2012; Mehr et al., 2010, 2015). Scholars have referred to the supervisory relationship as a crucial element for supervisee growth and development (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014; Borders & Brown, 2005; Ladany et al., 1999; Tangen & Borders, 2016), and this study contextualized the supervisory relationship as one factor connecting a feminist supervisory approach to supervisee nondisclosure.

Competent implementation of a feminist supervisory approach rests on the supervisor being self- and other-aware in regards to culture, oppression, and privilege prior to facilitating supervision (Falender, 2009). By approaching supervisees and their clients from a place of reflective practice and establishing supervision on feminist principles from the very beginning (Szymanski, 2003; Worell & Remer, 2003), the ingredients for building a stronger supervisory relationship may be present. As the supervisor and

supervisee build a relationship backed by feminist components, the supervisee may feel safer with, more trusting of, and more respected by the supervisor. In turn, the supervisee may not feel the need to withhold information from the supervisor and does feel safe to openly express needs and concerns.

Limitations

Our findings should be considered in light of several limitations. Our e-mail recruitment approach meant that we were unable to calculate a response rate. In addition, supervisees who elected to participate may have had a motivated interest in the topic that could have affected responses. Participants also were mostly White (76.3%) females (86%), which limits generalizability of the findings to diverse groups. Participants were also drawn from one professional background (i.e., professional counseling), and additional research is needed to investigate the variables from this study across professional disciplines. Related, counseling interns in CACREP-accredited programs are assigned a university supervisor and a site supervisor. In this study, we asked participants to think of their site supervisor when completing the surveys. It is possible that supervisees' relationships or experiences with their university supervisors influence their views of the relationship with the site supervisors.

Supervisees' perceptions of their supervisors' feminist approach could be limited by the supervisees' ability to discern feminist behaviors measured by the FSS. Notably, Green and Dekkers (2010) found that supervisees tended to report lower FSS scores compared to supervisors, indicating that supervisee judgments of supervisors' feminist supervisory approaches may be more conservative. Thus, it is also possible that FSS scores in this study were conservative estimates from supervisees. Related, participants in this sample were intern-level trainees, and it is possible that trainees or practitioners at other developmental levels could differ in their ability to perceive a supervisor's feminist approach.

Implications for research and practice

Whereas nondisclosure has been described and researched as a function of the supervisee, our study broadened the nondisclosure process by relating a supervisory approach to nondisclosure dynamics. Although the decision to share or withhold information ultimately lies with the supervisee, a supervisor's approach appears to be one factor in this decision. Supervisors ask supervisees to bring their areas of struggle into supervision, to be vulnerable and open to feedback, and to then be evaluated (Borders, 2009). Our study speaks to the importance of feminist supervision behaviors—power analysis, diversity and social context, advocacy, and collaborative relationships—in involving supervisees in supervision.

Translating feminist supervisory theory into practice can be complex for novice and experienced supervisors (Arczynski & Morrow, 2017; Fickling, & Tangen, 2017). For example, a supervisor must become personally aware of privilege and oppression before integrating such concepts into work with supervisees (Szymanski, 2005; Worell & Remer, 2003). Falender (2009) also noted that a feminist approach can create tension for the supervisor as one strives for a balance between reducing hierarchical power differentials and maintaining supervisory accountability (e.g., legal liability, supervisee evaluation, gatekeeping). Importantly, supervisee nondisclosure is not a target behavior of feminist supervision because supervisors recognize that a supervisee's choice not to disclose is a way of using power to establish a sense of safety within the supervisory relationship. Implementing feminist principles as a direct way to increase disclosure is not relationally or culturally sensitive and could be viewed as a misuse of power. Rather, the feminist supervisor respects supervisee nondisclosure and focuses instead on understanding the supervisee and building a genuine, collaborative relationship based on shared power. In this way, we encourage supervisors to view disclosure that may stem from a feminist-based supervisory experience as a natural consequence or by-product of trust, safety, and a healthy supervisory relationship.

Supervisors who utilize a feminist approach may see positive results in strengthening relationships with supervisees. We encourage supervisors to be open to multiple ways of knowing and experiencing, to intentionally broach cultural similarities and differences in the supervisory relationship and in supervisees' counseling relationships, and to model a feminist perspective for supervisees. Similarly, supervisors should consider engaging with a supervisee in analyzing power differentials (particularly around roles, expectations, and evaluation), to maintain a collaborative approach as appropriate to supervisee needs, and to balance process and content in a way that fosters collaboration but also provides developmentally appropriate structure and direction for supervisees.

Our study also raises additional questions for researchers. We examined feminist supervision as a comprehensive approach, but future researchers might examine the four components of feminist supervision (e.g., diversity and social context) to better understand the nuanced predictors of the supervisory relationship and supervisee nondisclosure. We also did not explore the content that supervisees did or did not disclose to supervisors, and this is a needed area of future study. Namely, supervisees may withhold client- and supervision-related information from supervisors when the supervisory relationship is poor or weak, and supervisees may still withhold client-related information from supervisors when the supervisory relationship is strong (Hess et al., 2008). Researchers need to examine relationships among a feminist supervisory approach and domains of nondisclosure, particularly client-related nondisclosure.

In this study, we sampled master's-level counseling intern trainees, and more research is needed to investigate nondisclosure processes among supervisees across developmental levels, as well as whether or not feminist supervision and/or the quality of the supervisory relationship influence such processes. For example, concerns about formative and summative evaluation have been documented as reasons for supervisee nondisclosure (Hess et al., 2008; Ladany et al., 1996; Mehr et al., 2010), which could be amplified among trainees worried about a course grade but less relevant to practitioners working under supervision. Neophyte supervisees also tend to be more dependent on the supervisor (Stoltenberg, 1981), which may lend more power, real or perceived, to the supervisor. As supervisees develop and become more autonomous and independent, nondisclosure as a source of supervisee power could decrease as they find their own autonomy. Researching variables from this study across levels of supervisee development could help supervisors understand how to integrate a feminist approach in a way that promotes supervisee growth over time.

We examined the supervisory relationship as a mediating variable, and the mediating model accounted for 34% of the variance in supervisee nondisclosure scores. Researchers might examine other variables that account for additional variance in nondisclosure scores. For example, supervisees may withhold information from supervisors as a means of leveling power differentials (Hess et al., 2008; Ladany et al., 1996; Mehr et al., 2010; Murphy & Wright, 2005). A feminist approach theoretically balances power differentials (Falender, 2009; Szymanski, 2003, 2005), but researchers might examine supervisee perceptions of power as a potential mediator to nondisclosure. Cook, McKibben, and Wind's (2018) Power Dynamics in Supervision Scale was designed specifically to measure perceptions of power in supervision sessions and could possibly assist in exploring the power dynamic further. Last, researchers might also examine supervisee perceptions of how a supervisor navigates supervisee-supervisor cultural dynamics (Hess et al., 2008) as a mediator between a feminist supervisory approach and supervisee nondisclosure.

Finally, this was a cross-sectional study, so we cannot infer that change in any one variable caused change in other variables. Future researchers might conduct experimental studies to test for causal links among the variables in this study. For example, researchers might manipulate feminist supervisory behaviors and measure differences in the supervisory relationship or in nondisclosure. Alternatively, researchers might utilize single-case designs (i.e., multiple baseline) to implement feminist supervision components and track changes in the supervisory relationship and supervisee nondisclosure over time. Outcome research is a needed area of study in clinical supervision (White, in Goodyear et al., 2016), and experimental designs could further test

the relationships among a feminist supervisory approach, the supervisory relationship, and supervisee nondisclosure.

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