DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIORS DURING RESIDENCY:

THE SHARED EXPERIENCES OF RESIDENT IN COUNSELING SUPERVISORS

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ABSTRACT

The development of the counselor does not end with graduation from a counselor education program. As a part of the licensure process, counselors must complete their post-graduate state residency requirements. As a result, supervisors play an essential role in the training and licensure of residents in counseling. Prior research has mainly focused on professional development and dispositions of counselors, but little research has been conducted in the role supervisors play in developing professional behavior outside of the counseling room. With the counselor's professionalism and behavior being crucial to client welfare, therapeutic alliance, and overall trust in the profession, there is a need to better understand the role that supervisors can play in helping to develop residents in this area. To this end, a qualitative thematic analysis design was used to gain knowledge of the development of professional counselors through understanding supervisors' awareness of their responsibility in the development of professional behavior of supervisees.

*Keywords:* Supervision, counselor education, professional development, counselor dispositions, resident-in-counseling supervisors

## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my children, Derek, Trevor, and Kayla. "See the good in people and help them"—Gandhi. It is my hope that they will always work to see the good and to help wherever they can.

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**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

The impact that a counselor has on the clients they serve is based on knowledge, skills, and dispositions obtained and cultivated in counselor education programs and supervision both pre- and post-graduation (Gaubatz & Vera, 2002; Spurgeon et al., 2012). Clinical supervisors play an essential role in the training and licensure of counselors through the application of these required skills and dispositions (Crunk & Barden, 2017; Falender, 2018). Students continue their education by remaining under supervision until acquiring the necessary number of state mandated hours to qualify for licensure and the ability to practice independently (Jordan, 2018; Watkins, 2016). This requirement alone demonstrates the vital role that supervisors play in the development and growth of counselors (Falender & Shafranski, 2012).

**Background of the Problem**

Counselor knowledge and skills are easily measured in counselor education programs, and curriculum in these areas provide a solid base of requirements for individuals to master (Gaubatz & Vera, 2002; Ziomek-Daigle & Christensen, 2010). But counselor dispositions are a more difficult area to assess due to concerns for valid and reliable assessment tools and an unclear and inconsistent definition of appropriate counselor dispositions (Christensen et al., 2018; Forest et al., 1999). Though these programs are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that graduates meet all these requirements in order to see clients, it is crucial that dispositional factors, which affect the counselor's professional development and behavior, are adequately addressed with appropriate and effective training (Lloyd-Hazlett & Foster, 2017).

Dispositions are rooted in professionalism and set the tone for counselor behavior and professional development (Christensen et al., 2018). The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) defined professional counseling

dispositions as the commitments, characteristics, values, beliefs, interpersonal functioning, and behaviors that influence both the counselor's professionalism and their professional behavior and interactions with clients and colleagues. The CACREP has allowed counselor education programs to focus more on dispositions of counselors-in-training and also requires programs to measure dispositions, placing them more in the spotlight of counselor training. Additionally, the American Counseling Association (ACA; 2014) Code of Ethics addresses counselor dispositions and requires that supervisors gatekeep and remediate supervisees as needed. The Code of Ethics also addresses counselor educators and their role in the assessment and appraisal of counselor competency with their students.

**Dispositions**

Although skills and knowledge are important to the competency of a counselor, professional identity development along with the development of professional dispositions and ethical behavior are necessary to be an effective counselor (Miller et al., 2020). These dispositions are important to field work with clients in many regards, but specifically within the context of multicultural competency and diversity, ethical and legal competency, psychological fitness, self-awareness, and professional identity (Constantine & Gainor, 2001; Herlithy & Dufrene, 2011; Kaplan et al., 2011; Lloyd-Hazlett & Foster, 2017; Sutton, 2016). Professional dispositions also include non-academic behaviors, personal characteristics, professional performance, and personal development (Christensen et al., 2018; McAdams & Foster, 2007; Spurgeon et al., 2012). These affect counselors' ability to conduct themselves appropriately online or within the community, interact professionally with colleagues and coworkers, and function within the rules and regulations of employment, insurance payors, and counseling standards (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2019). The dispositional character that is held by the counselor is

a key factor in establishing the therapeutic relationship with clients and can be a predictor of the development of professional and ethical behavior both inside and outside of the counseling room (Duba et al., 2010).

Currently, dispositions and professional behavior are cultivated in counselor education programs that assist students with professional identity development and provide remediation and gatekeeping to ensure the ongoing trust in the profession of counseling (Lloyd-Hazlett & Foster, 2017). Professional dispositions are addressed in counselor education programs, and the personal characteristics of individuals including core values, attitudes, and beliefs are identified as either enabling or restricting the ability of the counselor (Christensen et al., 2018). CACREP, in accordance with accreditation standards, has identified dispositional areas of focus in counselor education programs, which include social responsibility, commitment, reflection, integrity, professionalism, cooperativeness, openness to feedback, personal responsibility, and emotional regulation (CACREP, 2016). These dispositional best practices are rooted in professionalism and assist with the development of self-awareness and professional behavior in counselors-in-training (CACREP, 2016).

Despite these CACREP standards, without clear guidelines for disposition assessment and development, the task of instruction and gatekeeping is difficult for counselor educators (Gaubatz & Vera, 2002). There is no identified plan for the developing, teaching, and remediating of professional behavior both in and outside of the counseling room or how and where this can be most effectively done (Calley & Hawley, 2008; Foster & McAdams, 2009). This problem impacts employers, colleagues, and coworkers and indirectly affects the clients being served (Christensen et al., 2018; Dottiti, 2009; VanZandt, 1990).

**Professional Behavior**

The counselor's professionalism and behavior outside of the counseling room are crucial to client welfare, therapeutic alliance, and to the overall trust in the field of counseling (Duba et al., 2010; Gaubatz & Vera, 2002; Vaacha-Haase et al., 2004). The attitudes, values, and beliefs of the counselor, or counselor dispositions, form a foundation for the professional identity that is developed throughout their education experience and career (Spurgeon et al., 2012). When there are core dispositional problems, the result can be unprofessional behaviors that poorly reflect on the profession of counseling and undermine the professionalism and ethics of the counselor (Christensen et al., 2018; Moss et al., 2014). These behaviors can interfere with the counselor's ability to ethically and professionally work with clients, and they become the primary focus of attention in the workplace or community (Brown, 2013).

Though professional identity is essential to working with clients, with a lack of research on professional behavior of counselors outside of the counseling room, employers and colleagues are left to tolerate or discipline behaviors within the workplace rather than focus on the clients seeking treatment (Dollarhide et al., 2013; Jackson, 2016). Counselor behavior is not addressed in the literature despite being an important aspect of professionalism (Jackson, 2016). Additionally, the professional behavior of the counselor is indirectly handled through the ACA Code of Ethics, but there is not currently a definition for what is considered appropriate professional behavior outside of the counseling room (ACA, 2014). These factors can have a negative effect on the client and the profession of counseling when they are not discussed or demonstrated (Dollarhide et al., 2013).

The need for a clear picture and description of professional behaviors required of counselors is evident and will only help to strengthen the trust society has in the profession

(Neukrug & Milliken, 2011). For example, counselors-in-training may get to the workplace and display behaviors such as inappropriate use of social media or negative online presence; poor work ethic and a lack of motivation; discriminatory, insensitive, and biased attitudes or beliefs; acts of dishonesty or fraudulent behavior; dressing inappropriately; poor time management, throwing temper tantrums; spreading gossip; and inappropriate interactions with coworkers and colleagues (Judd & Johnston, 2012; Myers et al., 2012; Peters, 2017). Though counselors may believe that they understand the ethical requirements of being a counselor, they often do not understand how their attitudes, beliefs, and personal biases may contribute to unprofessional behavior (Kaplan et al., 2011). For instance, strong political, social or systemic biases that are shared online and in the context of social media may seem to be a personal right but can cause harm to current or future clients seeking unbiased support and acceptance through counseling (Brew et al., 2013; Myers et al., 2012). The ethical acculturation of students begins with integration of personal ethics with those values associated with the profession of counseling in order to form a solid professional identity (Jenkin et al., 2019).

**Instruction in Dispositions and Professional Behavior**

Appropriate site supervision during internship and practicum is a requirement for not only the development of counselors-in-training but providing a positive workplace environment that cultivates learning in professional behavior, appropriate dispositions, and appropriate interactions or relationships with colleagues and coworkers (Borders, 2014; Manninen et al., 2015; Uellendahl & Tenenbaum, 2015). The role of a site supervisor includes being a clinical supervisor, mentor, and gatekeeper to counselors entering the field, collaborating with counselor educators, and attending to both the client and the trainee (Vespa et al., 2002). But often site supervisors are consumed with heavy workloads and lack of time to adequately supervise and

mentor counselors-in-training who are placed in their care (Freeman et al., 2016). These barriers along with poor attitudes toward students, lack of clear and honest communication, and lack of acknowledgement or understanding of their responsibilities can prevent the necessary professional development of counselors-in-training and the advancement of appropriate counselor dispositions and behavior (Dean et al., 2018; Russell et al., 2007). Further, there continues to be a lack of a universally accepted definition of appropriate professional and personal dispositions, making it difficult for counselor educators to measure and evaluate students (Miller et al., 2020; Schuerman et al., 2018). This along with other barriers such as fear of lawsuits, university backlash, and feelings of failure as an educator make evaluation, remediation, and gatekeeping of students difficult for counselor educators who are already faced with many demands and a lack of resources and time to adequately teach and model professional dispositions and behavior (Gaubatz & Vera, 2002; Ziomek-Daigle & Christensen, 2010).

**Post-Graduate Supervision/Residency**

The residency or post-graduate requirement of counselors-in-training varies from state to state and requires the supervision of clinical hours to obtain licensure (Falender et al., 2004). Along with the development of counseling skills, experience in the counseling room, and the expansion of knowledge provided through one-on-one supervision, the residency requirement assists with the professional development of the counselor and sets the tone for professionalism throughout the counselor's career (Watkins et al., 2015). The workplace, or residency site placement provides students with practice in real workplace settings with the benefit of supervision (Trede, 2012). Socialization processes, professional roles, and the ability to understand workplace culture all influence the professional identity of the counselor-in-training (Jackson, 2016). The post-graduate/residency site is where professional behavior both in and

outside of the counseling room is demonstrated as counselors first experience their career and daily challenges and decisions in the workplace (DeStefanoa et al., 2017). It is here that evaluation, instruction, and mentoring can make a difference in the behaviors that begin to develop (Trede, 2012). The professional identity development and the shaping of appropriate behavior of a counselor requires not only instruction but the experience of being learning the professional culture of counseling, which allows for opportunities for mentoring and a continuation of development (Tradea et al., 2012) This world experience along with academics provides the setting for development that is fostered by the authentic experience of the student (Cherry, 2005).

**Supervision Training/Requirements**

The post-graduate supervisory relationship is a key dynamic in the facilitating of professional dispositions and contributes to the continued evolution and growth of professional identity and behavior of the supervisee (Sabella et al., 2020). Supervisors provide the link between counselor education and the professional practice of counseling by ensuring that individuals entering the field are well trained and competent both personally and professionally (Roberts & Morotti, 2001). As with other professional disciplines such as nursing and teaching, specific formal training in supervision, including gatekeeping protocols along with mentoring, holds more value than experience as a counselor or supervisor alone (Baker et al., 2002; Stevens et al., 1998). Though there are training requirements for supervisors in most states, attention to the development of the supervisor must be paid as they learn skills and strategies to enhance their expertise as a supervisor and attend to their supervisee's needs and learning (Dimino & Risler, 2012). With clinical experience being the main requirement of an approved residency supervisor, it is important to note that often effective counselors are not effective as supervisors and can be

unwilling to assume this responsibility in promoting a supervisee's effectiveness and professional identity development (Borders, 2014; Ladany, 2014).

Standards for the preparation and practice of supervisors are also limited, which presents a barrier to the appropriate and adequate development of counselor dispositions and professionalism in residency experiences (Bjornestad et al., 2014, Falender, 2018). In the state of Virginia, supervisors must have an active, unrestricted license in the jurisdiction where supervision will be provided, and they must also have a minimum of 2 years of post-licensure clinical experience (Virginia Department of Health Professions, 2021). Supervisors must also complete at least 20 hours of continuing education per year from approved providers and be approved as a supervisor through an application process (Virginia Department of Health Professions, 2021). However, many supervisors are not fully aware of their responsibilities as a supervisor, as licensing boards are often vague with their definition of supervision, leaving many residents with inappropriate or incompetent supervision (Criukshanks & Burns, 2017; Falender, 2018; Nelson et al., 2006).

Though there have been many steps forward in the implementation of standards and required training for supervisors, there continues to be a need for a better understanding of the complexity and importance of supervisors and their influence on newer counselors (Storlie et al., 2019). Determining the needs, perception, and understanding of the role and responsibilities of supervisors in counselor residency sites is a step toward providing supervisees with adequate training and mentoring in dispositions and professional behavior (Domino & Risler, 2012). Developing a better understanding of this and how these areas should be addressed will further extend the development of future counselors and the continued care of clients (Cruikshanks & Burns, 2017; Domino & Risler, 2012).

**Statement of the Problem**

The development of the counselor does not end with graduation from a counselor education program; it continues and is influenced through supervision on site within an identified residency (Watkins et al., 2015). Unlike other professional fields, counselors must go through long residency requirements according to their state, and supervisors are responsible for assessing knowledge, skills, and dispositions; reporting to state licensure boards; and ensuring competence for licensure without the support and resource provided by the school (Dye & Borders, 1990; Uellendahl & Tenenbaum, 2015). This next level of supervision is needed for the continued development of the counselor, especially in professional behavior (Cruikshanks & Burns, 2017; Sabella et al., 2020). The ACA Code of Ethics for the counseling profession requires that counselor supervisors be gatekeepers and remediate supervisees as needed to address counselor dispositions and behaviors, stressing the importance of dispositions in the ethical delivery of services (ACA, 2014). But little is known about how supervisors perceive this requirement or their experience with the development of professional behaviors of counselors in residency (ACA, 2014).

Though there is much literature that addresses the need for good site supervision within internship and practicum, there is a gap in the literature regarding residency supervision and how this can be used to assist counselors-in-training with further development of professional dispositions and behavior. But despite the growing body of research regarding counselor dispositions, little is known about residency supervision and the perception of supervisors and their role in the development of professional behavior of counselors both personally and professionally. This study sought to address these questions by focusing on the shared experience of residency supervisors with their counselors-in-training. This study can support the

development of professional counselors through a better understanding of supervisors' awareness of their responsibility in the professional development of supervisees both in and outside the counseling room, how supervisors assess and teach professional dispositions and behavior, and the impact that resident behavior has on clients, coworkers, colleagues, and employers.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of counseling residency supervisors' role in developing the professional behavior of their supervisees outside of the counseling room. I sought to identify central themes that emerge from resident-in-counseling supervisors' narratives about developing, teaching, and addressing the professional behavior of their supervisees. A qualitative phenomenological approach was used to explore these experiences and gain knowledge of residency supervision and the continued development of counselor dispositions and professional behavior outside of the school setting.

## Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study are:

1.     What are resident-in-counseling supervisors' perceptions of their role in the development of their supervisees' professional behavior outside of the counseling room?

2.     What are the shared experiences of resident-in-counseling supervisors in developing professional behavior of supervisees in the office or workplace?

3.     What are the shared experiences of resident-in-counseling supervisors in addressing and developing professional dispositions of supervisees in the office or workplace?

4.      What are the shared experiences of resident-in-counseling supervisors in addressing and developing professional behavior of supervisees with social media and online interactions?

5.      What are the shared experiences of resident-in-counseling supervisors in regard to dealing with persistent problematic unprofessional behavior of supervisees?

## Definition of Terms

*Professional behavior:* Professional behavior is defined as behaviors outside of the counseling room or the client/counselor relationship that reflect upon the person of the counselor and the profession of counseling in either a negative or positive way. Professional behaviors are influenced by dispositional aspects including core values, attitudes and beliefs held by the supervisee (Brown, 2013; Spurgeon et al., 2012).

*Resident in counseling:* A resident in counseling is an individual who has graduated from a CACREP-accredited counselor education program and is registered and approved as a resident with the Virginia Board of Counseling (www.dhp.virginia.gov/counseling).

*Resident-in-counseling supervisor:* A resident in counseling is an individual who has an unrestricted licensed professional counselor (LPC) license with the Virginia Board of Counseling and who has received professional training in supervision according to regulation 18VAC115-20-106 (Virginia Department of Health Professionals, 2021).

## Chapter Summary

The need for competent and professional counselors is crucial for clients, and the impact of post-graduate supervision is evident. Educators are able to measure skills and knowledge easily but often struggle with dispositional and professional development of counselors-in-training, which leads to a lack of teaching, modeling, and mentoring in the area of professional

behaviors. But professional behaviors outside of the counseling room are necessary for the continued trust in the field of counseling and can reflect either poorly or positively on the person of the counselor. Resident-in-counseling supervisors play a role in the continued development of counselor residents through their supervision within the workplace and through positive supervisory relationships. With little research on residency supervision, this study addresses the shared experiences of resident-in-counseling supervisors and their understanding of their role in the teaching, remediation, and gatekeeping of professional behaviors of their counseling residents.

**CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Counselor supervision is a vital part of the training process to become a competent counselor. Supervision is a requirement for counselors-in-training both pre- and post-graduation and is necessary for further development of counselor skills, knowledge, and dispositions. Though extensive research has focused on professional identity development and professionalism within the counseling profession, few studies have focused on professional behavior and necessary counselor dispositions and the impact this has on clients. The supervisory relationship along with a better understanding of the needs of residency supervisors is key in the understanding, instruction, and development of professional behavior. Therefore, the aim of this study was to gain a better understanding of the shared experiences of resident-in-counseling supervisors related to their role in the teaching, developing, and remediation of professional dispositions and behaviors of supervisees.

In this chapter, I will focus on providing a detailed background of the research problem discussed in Chapter 1. The chapter will begin with a look at the significance of counselor dispositions and the professional development of counselors. This will include research on the process of identity development, the integration of personal and professional identity, counselor impairment and impaired dispositions, and the relationship between counselor dispositions, professionalism, and professional behavior. Next, I will provide the historical development of counselor dispositions, including a definition of dispositions with an emphasis on the importance of appropriate dispositions in relation to counselor competence. I will then discuss the professional identity development of counselors and take a closer look at what professional behaviors outside of the counseling room look like. The relationship between counselor dispositions and unprofessional behaviors will be discussed, including the impact that certain

dispositions have on behavior. Further information on admission gatekeeping and remediation of dispositions and the difficulties that are faced by faculty and supervisors in this process will be discussed in this area.

The next section of this review will focus on the significance of supervision both pre- and post-graduation. A discussion of supervision and development of professionals in other fields will be provided to compare other standards with the field of counseling. Focus on the significance of supervision will include the impact of the supervisor/supervisee relationship. The collaboration between counselor educators and site supervisors will then be looked at along with a focus on post-graduate or residency supervision. This discussion leads to further review of the role of resident-in-counseling supervisors in assisting with the professional development of supervisees. The role of supervision will be examined along with the standards, training, and requirements for approved supervisors. This section of the literature review will conclude with a look at established standards on the professional behavior of counselors outside of the counseling room and supervisors' obligation to residents, future clients, and the field of counseling. This focus on the literature will support the need for research on supervision and the professional behavior of supervisees. This chapter will end with a summary.

**Significance of Counselor Dispositions and Professional Development**

Dispositions, personality traits (Rhodes et al., 1988), or temperament (Heimpel et al., 2006), are a major division and predominant drive of someone's total personality (Cattrell, 1946). Dispositions are core values, attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs that are necessary to be a competent and effective counselor (Spurgeon et al., 2012). Dispositions are extremely important to the work that is done with clients, especially in the context of multicultural competency and diversity, ethical and legal competency, psychological fitness, self-awareness, and professional

identity development and behavior (Constantine & Gainor, 2001; Herlithy & Dufrene, 2011; Kaplan et al., 2011; Lloyd-Hazlett & Foster, 2017; Sutton, 2016). Who the counselor is as a person, or their personality, has a greater impact on the therapeutic process than the skills and techniques that they use (Cavanagh, 1982; Rogers, 1961). The counselor is the instrument through which services and treatment are provided, and though the skills, techniques, and knowledge of counseling may be the same, the counseling will be different depending on who the counselor is and what personality traits and dispositions they possess (Cavanagh, 1982; Rogers, 1961).

The 2009 and 2016 standards of the CACREP requires student disposition assessments to be included with program and student evaluations. The 2016 CACREP accreditation standards explicitly referred to dispositions in this manner:

B. The counselor education program faculty demonstrate the use of the following to evaluate the program objectives:

1. Aggregate student assessment data that address student knowledge, skill, and professional dispositions

G. The counselor education program faculty systematically assesses each student's professional dispositions throughout the program. The assessment process includes the following:

1. Identification of key professional dispositions;

2. Measurement of student professional dispositions over multiple points in time;

3. Review or analysis of data.

The ACA (2014) Code of Ethics also requires that counselor supervisors are to gatekeep and remediate supervisees as needed and stresses counselors' professional dispositions and

behaviors with the ethical and competent delivery of services. Although the term disposition is not used specifically, areas such as client welfare (Code F.1.a), gatekeeping and remediation (Code F.6.b), counseling for supervisees (Code F.6.c), and addressing personal concerns (Code F.8.d) confirm supervisors' obligation and responsibility to monitor supervisee dispositions and professional behavior (Miller et al., 2020).

Further, national accrediting organizations for related mental health disciplines such as the Council on Social Work Education, the National Association of School Psychologists, the American Psychological Association, along with many state licensing boards are requiring that counselors are assessed in dispositions. This competence also extends to counselor supervisors through the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), with standards that include a "description of eleven core areas of personal traits, knowledge, and competencies that are characteristic of effective supervisors" (p. 30). Some specific areas identified are commitments to updating counseling and supervisory skills; sensitivity to individual differences; recognition of self-limitations; demonstration of encouragement, optimism, and motivational qualities; identification of strengths and weaknesses as a supervisor; and awareness of personal patterns in interpersonal relationships (Standard 2; ACA, 1990, 2010, 2014; CACREP, 2016; National Association of School Psychologists, 2010).

Although most counselor evaluations are based on the knowledge and skills acquired in the counselor education program, which is easier to assess based on class requirements, there continues to be concern for valid and reliable assessment tools to appropriately evaluate professional dispositions (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2013). The inability to clearly define counselor dispositions can cause unclear expectations to be placed on students, leaving them to feel they are treated unfairly (Christensen et al., 2018; Forest et al., 1999). It is important to identify,

assess, and develop counselor dispositions throughout counseling training and their employment in the counseling community (Spurgeon et al., 2012). The appropriate identification and assessment of this crucial area of counselor professionalism will continue to increase the quality of the counselor's service and treatment with clients and extend the credibility of the counseling profession (Redekop & Wlazelek, 2010; Spurgeon et al., 2012).

**History of Counselor Dispositions**

In 2001, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) defined professional dispositions as "professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities" (p. 7). In identifying what dispositions are, researchers have indicated characteristics of effective counselors such as empathy, interest in people, friendliness, and emotional stability (Pope & Kline, 1999). Further research suggested therapist characteristics like being flexible, trustworthy, and open (Ackerman & Hilsenroth, 2003). Other research identified qualities of "master therapists" as the ability to learn, be self-aware, and have relationship skills (Ackerman & Hilsenroth, 2003; Jennings & Skovholt, 1999; Pope & Kline, 1999). Professional dispositions in counselor education are best defined as aspects that help a counselor's professional capacity (Christensen et al., 2018), such as core values, attitudes, and beliefs, which can affect the therapeutic process (Acherman & Hilsenroth, 2003; McAdams & Foster, 2007; Spurgeon et al., 2012). Though there is no universally accepted definition of counselor dispositions in the counseling profession, they are a prerequisite to the development of counselor competence (Miller et al., 2020). Dispositions can affect fellow students and colleagues due to feelings of frustration and lack of professionalism in counselor education programs or the workplace (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2019).

Counseling education programs need to revise admission criteria to enable the selection of only highly qualified counseling students (Markert & Monke, 1990). Dispositions are only evaluated through proxy measures such as reference letters, applicant interviews, and other documents written and submitted by the applicant (Miller, 2020; Redekop & Wlazelek, 2010). Early on, personal interview processes were identified as one way to assess for personal and professional development at admission, but research has suggested the need for more effective assessment tools (Smaby et al., 2005). Without sound measurements, clear definitions, and excellent remediation, unqualified applicants are admitted, gatekeeping of counselor educators is more difficult, and risky and future clients may be negatively impacted (Christensen et al., 2018; McAdams et al., 2007; McAdams & Foster, 2007).

**Professional Identity Development of the Counselor**

There are many aspects of mental health care, and the field of counseling must obtain a solid professional identity to differentiate and demonstrate equal effectiveness as other mental health professions (Person et al., 2020). This professional identity, which includes appropriate attitudes and values, helps to define the profession and instill trust both within the community and with legislators and third-party payors (Calley & Hawley, 2008). The counseling profession is based on a developmental, preventative, and wellness approach with a unified professional identity across many subspecialties (Mellin et al., 2011). This unified professional counselor identity helps to define roles and provide a clear definition to the public (Calley & Hawley, 2008; Mellin et al., 2011; Woo, 2013). This identity development begins with counselor educators, who influence the profession of counseling through the shaping of a unified professional identity including education, gatekeeping, and remediation (Calley & Hawley, 2008; Foster & McAdams, 2009). It is important for counselors to continue to learn and expand

their skills and knowledge through education as they mature (Limberg et al., 2013; Lloyd-Hazlett & Foster, 2017; Woo et al., 2017). Six themes that are influential to counselors' professional identity development and gaining experience include adjustment to expectations, confidence and freedom, separation versus integration, experienced guide, continuous learning, and work with clients (Moss et al., 2014).

Professionalism is crucial to the consumers of services and treatment, which requires achieving and maintaining a consistent identity (Cox & Grus, 2019; VanZandt, 1990). The therapeutic alliance is directly related to a counselor's dispositions such as empathy, positive regard, congruence, and openness (Gibbons et al., 2013). Without appropriate dispositions when entering a counseling program, many students can view their future role as a counselor as just a job (Weatherford & Spokane, 2013). But there must be a calling to the profession and desire to help others while putting their needs and issues aside (Gibbons et al., 2013). Insufficient dispositions, such as difficulty with emotion regulation or problems with accepting constructive criticism or feedback, may interfere with the ability to effect change and be harmful to clients (Freeman et al., 2019). Another example of inappropriate counselor dispositions is attitudes and acceptance of cultural groups; students may have pre-existing beliefs and attitudes toward various cultures that may be harmful for multicultural clients they may attempt to counsel (Weatherford & Spokane, 2013). Inappropriate counselor dispositions are damaging, but they can be addressed and remediated before they enter the workplace through competent professors and supervisors at the graduate level (Freeman et al., 2019; VanZandt, 1990).

The counseling profession, as a helping profession, must clearly identify as unbiased, non-judgmental, caring, ethical and trustworthy organization of highly trained and competent individuals who place the welfare of their clients first (Bayne & Doyle, 2019). This can only be

achieved through extensive training, skills, knowledge, and appropriate inherent personal

qualities of the individuals providing the counseling (Christensen et al., 2018; Miller et al.,

2020). The definition of an effective counselor includes the necessary and adequate values,

attitudes, and characteristics that demonstrate integrity, honor, and professionalism in the work

that is done with clients (Choate et al., 2005; Redekop & Wlazelek, 2010). This definition must

be prevalent in both the individual counselor's personal and professional life (Gibson et al.,

2010; Luke & Goodrich, 2010), creating a united professional identity (Miller et al., 2020). The

development of personal and professional dispositions in graduate programs provides a distinct

path for positive dispositions to become a guiding force for the development of a strong

professional identity (Christensen et al., 2018; Dottin, 2009; VanZandt, 1990).

**Professional Behavior Outside of the Counseling Room**

Behaviors that are problematic for counseling students include inadequate clinical skills,

personality or psychological issues, and unethical behavior (Henderson & Dufrene, 2012; Kerl &

Eichler, 2007). Problematic behaviors for counseling students also involve an inability to or

unwillingness to acquire and integrate professional behavior, an inability to develop professional

skills needed, an inability to manage personal issues including stress, dysfunction or emotional

responses, and an inability to maintain ethical behavior (Lamb et al., 1987). These problematic

behaviors fall into two categories: issues in the classroom and dispositional behavior problems

outside of the counseling room.

Problems with professional competency, which can include ethical decision-making,

academics, and interpersonal problems, pose a threat to the counseling profession if not

identified and remediated (Olson et al., 2016). Clinical supervisors have identified that one-

quarter to one-half of their supervisees displayed problems with professional competency such as

unethical behaviors, unprofessional behaviors, and difficulty regulating emotions (Jorgensen et al., 2017). Research has suggested that many mental health professionals choose the field of counseling as a way to solve and cope with their own personal emotional problems (White & Franzoni, 1990). But a counselor's negative values, attitudes, and personal characteristics often lead to ethical dilemmas, inappropriate behavior, and mental health issues such as emotion regulation, which must be addressed in training and through the gatekeeping process (Corey et al., 1998; Duba et al., 2010). Research indicates the need for diligent assessment of problematic behaviors of interpersonal functioning (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2019).

Though counselor education programs focus on counselor skills and knowledge, there is little focus on the conduct and professional behavior outside of the counseling room and how this reflects on the field of counseling. There also continues to be a lack of research in this area and the impact that the behavior of the counselor has on clients, colleagues, coworkers, and employers. Behaviors such as inappropriate online presence and interactions, poor work ethic, negative or biased attitudes, dishonesty, poor emotion regulation, gossiping, relationship issues, and cultural insensitivity can damage the integrity of the profession of counseling (Dugger & Francis, 2014). For example, strong political, social, or systemic biases that are shared on social media can cause harm to current or future clients seeking an unbiased counselor and acceptance through counseling (Brew et al., 2013; Myers et al., 2012). Other ethical or unprofessional behaviors such as lack of work ethic or dishonesty may appear to not affect clients or the treatment being provided but instead undermine the work of the counselor or agency they might represent, causing fraudulent actions, inaccurate, or a lack of documentation (Judd & Johnston, 2012).

**The Relationship Between Dispositions and Professional Behavior**

Counselor dispositions influence and are influenced by cognitive, affective, and behavioral development, and they are consistent with clinical proficiency (Miller et al., 2020). Dispositions are a strong indicator of professional competence and impact not only work with clients but also other students, colleagues, and professors who struggle to deal with and remediate problematic behaviors (Christensen et al., 2018; Letourneau, 2016).The impact of negative counselor dispositions are primarily concerns with the ability to have successful therapeutic relationships and outcomes, the ability to work with diverse populations, and the possibility of harmful behavior toward clients (Christensen et al., 2018; Duba et al., 2010).

Counselor educators and supervisors, as gatekeepers, must ensure that counselors-in-training not only understand the ethical code of conduct with their clients, but they must also be well trained in ethical behavior outside of the counseling room, which is often connected to personal dispositions (Herlithy & Dufrene 2011). Behaviors such as sexual relationships with clients, managing boundaries, and maintaining confidentiality can be traced back to dispositional areas of the student's personality (Lloyd-Hazlett & Foster, 2017). Ethical self-awareness and professional judgment are key areas that can help counselors to avoid ethical dilemmas and violations (Cottone & Tarvydas, 2007).

**Remediation and Gatekeeping Regarding Dispositions and Professional Behavior**

Gatekeeping and remediation of negative counselor dispositions and unprofessional behavior is significant in assisting students with self-awareness (Gleason & Hays, 2019). Without self-awareness, counselors-in-training may never be able to identify problematic dispositions or be consciously aware of their internal states, interactions, or relationships and

therefore change them (Sutton, 2016). Increased self-awareness in the areas of behavior and attitudes is a career-sustaining behavior for professional counselors (Lawson, 2007).

Counselor educators have an ethical responsibility to promote wellness and self-awareness and the unique opportunity to shed light on the areas that may prevent professional development or inhibit progression of a professional identity (ACA, 2014, 2016; CACREP, 2009). Though there are many reasons why counselor educators may be reluctant to perform their duties as gatekeepers, students require decisions regarding identification and intervention of behaviors that may have consequences (Vacha-Haase et al., 2004). Acting on specific problems of students is difficult regardless of whether there are guidelines provided by the university. But with as many as one quarter to one half of students displaying inadequate skills, ethical incompetence, or unprofessional behaviors, counselor educators and supervisors must seek to remediate them (Jorgensen et al., 2017).

Problematic students and issues of professional competence with students negatively impact counselor educators and supervisors through an increase in their workload and disruption in the flow of their workday (Jorgensen et al., 2017). This along with the emotional toll and burnout that comes from conflict with the student, entering a dual role with the student, and lack of institutional support can cause increased frustration for educators and gate slippage (Kerl et al., 2002; Russell et al., 2007). The breakdown of gatekeeping at the university/graduate level creates a difficult situation for the future employer or the future client of the student (Cox & Grus, 2019). Issues of incompetence continue to increase once the student enters the field, with the costs being far greater as behaviors such as lack of motivation, incomplete documentation, inappropriate interactions with colleagues, inappropriate dress, or lack of professionalism online

or in the community begin to negatively impact clients and the image of professional counseling (Brown, 2013; Falender et al., 2009).

Though the CACREP (2009) requires that accredited counselor education programs have procedures for student remediation and require that this is included in student handbooks, the implementation is left to the individual programs to develop. CACREP standards have specific criteria for student learning, but when it comes to criteria for the evaluation of professional and personal fitness, educators are left on their own to determine what dispositions and behaviors require remediation (CACREP, 2009). There is also a lack of clear and concise assessment criteria or learning outcomes based on personal and professional characteristics, leaving programs with no accountability regarding appropriate counselor dispositions (Henderson & Dufrene, 2012; McAdams & Foster, 2007). Providing learning outcomes in this area may take some of the negativity around gatekeeping in this area away, as educators would have the ability to address behavioral expectations as competencies and in a more positive way (Henderson & Dufrene, 2012).

## Significance of Supervision

### Role of Supervision in Other Professional Fields

Teacher dispositions, as with counselors, are bound to the individual's values, beliefs, and attitudes that influence behaviors and are linked to their past and morals (Borko et al., 2007). Often teachers are referred to in terms of their dispositions rather than their skills and knowledge (Shoffner et al., 2014). Some of the most desired dispositions of teachers include patience, encouragement, and stimulation, which contribute to the effectiveness of the teacher (Katz & Rath, 1985; Shoffner et al., 2014). The NCATE (2003) defined teacher dispositions as the necessary skills and abilities for effective classroom interaction and the teacher's ability to create

a positive classroom environment. With dispositions and the professional behavior of teachers strongly impacting the student's learning and development, the field of teaching has focused on the teaching of dispositions and appropriate behaviors, the consistent measurement and assessment of these areas, teacher mentoring, and collaboration with supervising faculty to ensure that there is continued development in the area of professionalism (Canrinus et al., 2012; Saltis et al., 2020).

The field of nursing sets a similar precedent with the argument of personal dispositional factors playing an important role in the way nurses respond and perform their work with patients (Laschinger & Finegan, 2008). Nursing supervisors and preceptors, who are responsible for the training and education of nursing students, partner with universities and nursing education programs to provide support, assessment, and evaluation of clinical competence and behavior of students (Trede et al., 2016). Studies have showed the need for acknowledgement of responsibility within supervision, along with clear information for students, feedback on supervision practices, and ongoing support from colleagues contributed to effective and competent supervision within the field of nursing (Trede et al., 2014).

Professional dispositions and behavior are of equal concern across disciplines, and the necessary standards, training and supervisor support is demonstrated in various ways in other fields. In contrast, resident-in-counseling supervisors can feel left on their own and without professional support and continued mentoring. This lack of attention to the needs and concerns of supervisors can facilitate an attitude of confusion or lack of responsibility in regard to the continued professional development of supervisees or residents. The need for the field of counseling to follow the lead of other professional fields in the form of mentoring, support, training, and clarification of roles is evident to strengthen resident-in-counseling supervision.

**Role of Supervision in Counseling**

Clinical supervision is the cornerstone of counselor training and continued counselor development (Crunk & Barden, 2017). Excellent supervision provides support for the development of the supervisee's counselor competence through the application of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values as well as assistance in self-assessment and accepting feedback (Falender & Shafranske, 2012). Through support, education, collaboration, and mentoring, supervision ensures the welfare of clients (Barnett et al., 2007; Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). Supervision also seeks to facilitate learning in specialty areas and assists supervisees with recognizing the lifelong process of counselor development and the satisfaction that this brings (Falender & Shafranske, 2012; Fitch et al., 2010). In addition, supervision provides supervisees with the ability to begin the socialization of professional values due to exposure to standards of practice and mentoring, which further solidifies the training and knowledge attained in the counselor education program (Falender et al., 2004). Without supervision, professional development after university would suffer, leaving the field of counseling without the necessary oversight that a good clinical supervisor provides (Falender et al., 2004; Falender & Shafranske, 2012).

The role of the supervisor can also provide a safe haven or secure base for supervisees who are often carrying the load of multiple patients seeking help with life's problems or trying to work through significant grief (Fitch et al., 2010). The security and protection that can be felt through professional supervision provides a soft place to land for clinicians and just as supervision resembles therapy, the ability to talk about and process things can facilitate better understanding through the guidance of the supervisor (Jordan, 2018). Along with the security received through supervision, supervisors can assist supervisees with better understanding

worldviews and cultural considerations in order to enhance counseling and build trust with clients (Akkurt et al., 2018).

Along with this evidence of the significance of supervisions, it was recognized as a specialty with the publication of the ACES Standards for Counseling Supervisors in 1990. The continued progression of supervision has influenced other regulations and credentialing, which has helped to demonstrate the significance of this piece of counselor training (Brun, 2020). Even with this recognition, there continues to be a lack of training in this area leaving a missing link in the development of supervisors and counselors-in-training (Falender, 2018).

**Collaboration Between Counselor Educators and Site Supervisors**

Counselor education programs provide students with the ability to learn and acquire knowledge in counseling and ethics (Bhat et al., 2016; Ziomek & Christensen, 2010). Along with this knowledge, programs provide and cultivate the skills that counselors will need throughout their work with clients (Dufrene & Henderson, 2011). Counselor educators rely on site supervisors of internship and practicum experiences to provide direct supervision of their work with clients and to continue to guide and direct students in their professional development through their work and interactions on-site (Bjornestad et al., 2014). Dispositional issues that may arise in practicum and internship settings include a lack of cultural competency, personal characteristics that are not in line with the site or the field of counseling, inappropriate relationships with clients, personal biases or values that prevent the development of a therapeutic alliance, and inappropriate or unprofessional behavior in the community or with colleagues and coworkers (Dediego & Burgin, 2016; Henderson & Dufrene, 2012).

Collaboration between counselor educators and site supervisors is important as they work to appropriately evaluate dispositions and behavior of students (Spurgeon et al., 2012). This

collaboration is key to creating greater awareness of personal dispositions and behaviors through remediation and preventing harm to clients during practicum and internship (Dediego & Burgin, 2016; Henderson & Dufrene, 2012; Spurgeon et al., 2012). The collaboration between site supervisors and their corresponding counselor education program can be met with difficulties in remediating students' behaviors (Dean et al., 2018). But remediation and dismissal processes, though they may seem harsh, help to protect future clients and the profession of counseling by only allowing competent individuals to provide services and treatment, which indicates the importance of the site supervisor's ability to communicate effectively (Foster et al., 2014).

**Impact of the Supervisor–Supervisee Relationship**

A strong relationship between supervisor and supervisee is crucial for effective supervision, mentoring, and collaboration (Gunn & Pistole, 2012). The supervisory relationship is a contributing factor in the supervisee's professional development both in and outside of the counseling room (Vespia et al., 2002). This relationship sets the tone for the behavior of the counselor-in-training throughout their career and demonstrates how good or bad supervision is passed on to the next supervisee (Borders, 2014).

Supervision relies on the ability of counselors-in-training to share important information, but there are instances where they may fear that the supervisor has a negative perception of the supervisee (Hess et al., 2008). Though perfection is not an obtainable goal, supervisees can feel that that the expectations of their supervisor create a need to withhold information (Cook et al., 2018). A negative supervisory relationship can impede the professional development of the supervisee through the lack of self-disclosure and the inability of the supervisee to share information or appear incompetent to their supervisor (Ladany, 2014). Thus, information about both the supervisee and the clients who are being treated depends on the relationship between

supervisee and supervisor (Watkins et al., 2015). Further, the supervisory relationship can influence the continued development of the supervisee as they begin to model behavior that is demonstrated during the course of supervision (Baker et al., 2002; Uellendahl & Tenenbaum, 2015). The ability of the supervisor to provide feedback, set goals, and establish well defined expectations can not only positively influence the supervisee but can also help to model what the supervision process should look like (Vespia et al., 2002).

When inappropriate supervision takes place, this can damage the field of counseling and the continued professional development of supervisees (Baker et al., 2002; Getz, 1999). A negative supervisor relationship affects the supervision alliance that facilitates growth and allows for mentoring (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). Supervision is the primary vehicle through which trainees develop their counseling skills and their professional identity, and a strong supervisory relationship can ensure that this development can take place (Gunn & Pistole, 2012; Vespia et al., 2002). Therefore, both the supervisor and the supervisee must cultivate and form an effective relationship that allows for motivation, disclosure, collaboration, learning and continued growth of the supervisee to ensure the professional development of the counselor and the safety of future clients (Cook et al., 2018; Watkins et al., 2015).

**Pre- to Post-Graduate Supervision**

Site supervisors to counseling practicum and internship students are an integral part of preparing individuals for the real-world application of skills and techniques previously learned in the classroom (Storliea et al., 2019). While balancing multiple responsibilities and professional relationships, including consistent interaction with the corresponding counselor educator, site supervisors are not only responsible for evaluating and monitoring supervisees but providing opportunities for leadership and advocacy (Bedford & Gehlert, 2013; Luo & Liu, 2014; Storliea

et al., 2019). Leadership abilities and skills are part of the professional identity development of counselors-in-training and set the tone for professional roles and responsibilities in counseling, including behavior both in and outside of the counseling room (Peters & Luke, 2021). This pre-graduate supervision benefits from the support, collaboration, and remediation guidance that is provided by the university or counselor education program (Bjornestad et al., 2014; Uellendahl & Tenenbaum, 2015). The supervision provided here, along with the sharing of remediation and gatekeeping responsibilities, supports the school and the skill development educators are working to acquire with their students, ensuring that students are well trained and competent (Freeman et al., 2016; Uellendahl & Tenenbaum, 2015).

Post-graduate supervision or resident-in-counseling supervision is a crucial time for the continued professional development of supervisees (Cruikshanks & Burns, 2017). Without the continued support and collaboration of the counselor education program, supervisors can feel lost and experience difficulty with remediating, resolving, and gatekeeping issues with their supervisee (Nelson et al., 2000; Russell et al., 2007; Schuermann et al., 2018). This can lead to supervisees struggling with professionalism and appropriate behavior in and outside of the counseling room, affecting them later in their career as they may become supervisors (West & Hamm, 2012). Research shows that experience in the field of counseling as a counselor alone is likely not sufficient for the adequate development of a resident-in-counseling supervisor, and often equal amounts of experience and supervision training are what is required to grow and improve the supervisor's self-efficacy, which positively affects the supervision provided (Stevens et al., 1998).

**Post-Graduate or Residency Supervision**

The professional identity development of a counselor includes post-graduate supervision and the real-world application of the previously learned skills and knowledge through counselor education (Trede et al., 2012). This authentic experience in the workplace leads to an intersection between personal and professional values, attitudes, and beliefs or dispositions and allows the counselor-in-training to develop with the help of their resident-in-counseling supervisor (Cherry, 2005; Trede et al., 2014). The ability of the supervisee to reconcile their personal values with those of the profession of counseling is crucial in their development as a counselor and requires understanding the attitudes, beliefs, responsibilities, and standards associated with counseling (Jackson, 2016; Trede et al., 2012). This continued professional development also relies on new knowledge to shape the counselor into their role as a professional (Clouder, 2005). Work roles allow for the development of knowledge in how to work as a team, communicate with others, and socialize within the workplace culture (Trede & McEwen, 2015). The understanding of the student's profession, including skills, qualities, conduct, culture, and ideology can be better determined with the interaction with other professionals during their post-graduate supervision and residency (Jackson, 2016). It is imperative that post-graduate supervision assists supervisees with developing a strong sense of who they are as professionals not just within the counseling room but in the communities in which they serve and counsel (Jackson, 2016; Nystrom, 2009).

Though resident-in-counseling supervisors have this important role, state requirements for resident-in-counseling supervisors differ from state to state and lack consistency in regard to training and requirements. As this study was conducted in the state of Virginia, it is important to note these requirements as an example of approved counseling supervisor standards. In Virginia, supervisors must demonstrate an active, unrestricted license for a period of 2 years along with

post-licensure clinical experience (Virginia Department of Health/Board of Counseling, 2021).

Training requirements include 20 hours of continuing education in supervision per year from an

approved provider, which is limited and leaves supervisors with clinical experience being their

main source of preparation (Borders, 2014; Virginia Board of Counseling, 2021).

Adherence to professional ethical codes and standards and guidelines for supervision is

also a crucial aspect of residency supervision (Borders, 2014). Along with protecting client care,

supervisors must oversee and expect the same from their supervisees while also avoiding dual

relationships with supervisees, modeling self-care, addressing supervisee's personal issues

without acting as a counselor and provide ongoing assessment, evaluation, and feedback

(Borders, 2014; Cruikshanks & Burns, 2017). State regulations and standards require the clinical

experience and training but continue to lack attention to the development of the supervisor and

the sharpening of skills and strategies in supervision (Domino & Risler, 2012). With the task of

providing supervision along with the responsibilities of a job as a counselor, supervisors can

benefit from increased formal training, mentoring from other supervisors, and more support from

licensing boards as they work to develop the skills, knowledge, and dispositions learned within

the counselor education program (Borders, 2014; Dimino & Risler, 2012).

**The Role of Resident-in-Counseling Supervisors**

Supervisors understand their role clinically and work to provide direction and support to

supervisees as they begin to provide treatment to clients post-graduation (Vespia et al., 2002).

Residency enables supervisors to broaden their role and assist with the continuation of

professional development of the supervisee, both in and outside of the counseling room (Borders,

2014). The influence of the supervisory relationship is strong due to the required number of

supervised hours to qualify for licensing and the necessity of a positive supervisory relationship

(Uellendahl & Tenenbaum, 2015). This provides an opportunity to fully mentor and assist resident supervisees with understanding the need for professionalism both with clients and in other areas such as the community (Dye & Borders, 1990; Manninen et al., 2015). Dispositional factors, along with contributing behaviors, can be shaped along with the development of an understanding of how the behavior of the counselor contributes to the image of the profession of counseling through the role of the resident-in-counseling supervisor (Vespia et al., 2002).

Though supervisors have this important role in counselor development, heavy workloads and responsibilities mean that resident-in-counseling supervisors may struggle with finding adequate time for anything outside of supervising the direct care of the clients (Freeman et al., 2016). With the challenges of resident-in-counseling supervision and the stress placed on supervisors to be gatekeepers, many supervisors find it difficult to define their role and determine the best way to positively affect supervisees and remediate issues (Russell et al., 2007). Though internship and practicum supervisors work in conjunction with a counselor education program with whom they have contracted with on behalf of the student, resident-in-counseling supervisors work with little support and contract directly with the supervisee (Dean et al., 2018).

The lack of required training and mentoring for supervisors in how to provide adequate supervision along with little research on resident-in-counseling supervision has also left supervisors unclear about their role (Dimino & Risler, 2012). Supervisors can feel lost with remediation and gatekeeping with their supervisees and have no recourse for handling difficult situations outside of terminating their supervision contract or the employment of the supervisee (Freeman et al., 2016; Russell et al., 2007). The professional behavior of the supervisee or counselor outside of the counseling room can be difficult to address and remediate with the

uncertainty of roles and responsibilities, making this part of professional development suffer (Peters & Luke, 2021; Sabella et al., 2020).

**Training and Standards for Resident-In-Counseling Supervisors**

The ACES's (2011) task force developed the best practices for clinical supervision, which includes research-based contributions regarding best practices for the provision of competent supervision. This included the CACREP (2009) standards for counselor education programs and the ACA (2014) Code of Ethics guide for ethical behavior and competencies in the field of counseling and supervision. Ethical/legal, facilitating supervisee development, cultural responsiveness, supervisory understanding, and skills and evaluation, along with more than 30 competencies align with the identified best practices for supervisors (Colburn et al., 2016; see also ACES, 2011; CACREP, 2009). Competencies such as knowledge, skills, values, social context, overarching issues, training of supervision competencies, and assessment of supervision are also important for supervisor training and development (Falender & Shafranske, 2014).

The ACA (2014) Code of Ethics further outlines supervision practices in regard to supervisee behavior and professional development in the following areas:

1. Client welfare and rights

    a. 1.06: Counseling supervisors are responsible for making every effort to monitor both the professional actions, and failures to take action, of their supervisees.

2. Supervisory Role

    b. 2.12: Supervisors, through ongoing supervisee assessment and evaluation, should be aware of any personal or professional limitations of supervisees that are likely to impede future professional performance. Supervisors have the responsibility of recommending remedial assistance to the supervisee and of screening from the

training program, applied counseling setting, or state licensure those supervisees who

are unable to provide competent professional services. These recommendations

should be clearly and professionally explained in writing to the supervisees who are

so evaluated.

    c.  2.13: Supervisors should not endorse a supervisee for certification, licensure,

completion of an academic training program, or continued employment if the

supervisor believes the supervisee is impaired in any way that would interfere with

the performance of counseling duties. The presence of any such impairment should

begin a process of feedback and remediation wherever possible so that the supervisee

understands the nature of the impairment and has the opportunity to remedy the

problem and continue with his or her professional development.

1.       Program Administration Role

    a.  3.18:  A supervisor may recommend participation in activities such as personal

growth groups or personal counseling when it has been determined that a supervisee

has deficits in the areas of self-understanding and problem resolution that impede his

or her professional functioning. The supervisor should not be the direct provider of

these activities for the supervisee. (p. 14)

Even with the implementation of these standards for supervision, formal training and

standards for this area have been largely neglected (Falendar et al., 2004). In the past, it was

assumed that experience as a counselor and supervisee was sufficient training to become a

supervisor (Dimino & Risler, 2012). But the development of the Approved Clinical Supervisor

credential has demonstrated the need for more competent and trained supervisors while

highlighting the limited oversight and inconsistent regulations on supervision training in the

United States (Bruns, 2020). Additionally, with inconsistencies between states in requirements for licensure or to become a board-certified supervisor, supervision training is often inefficient or lacking in comparison to the importance of the role of a resident-in-counseling supervisor (Milne et al., 2011). This has caused limited growth in competency and proficiency in supervision (Callahan & Watkins, 2018). Resident-in-counseling supervisors carry unique responsibilities, which include administrative supervision and clinical supervision, so they encounter situations that require help provided by the general ethical standards (ACES, 1990).

**Standards for the Professional Behavior of Counselors**

Though there are some standards for the practice of resident-in-counseling supervision, there continues to be no clear, concise standards for the required or appropriate professional behavior of residents or counselors outside of their clinical work with clients. The ACA (2014) Code of Ethics calls for the assessment, remediation, and gatekeeping of dispositions and behavior by counselor educators and supervisors but does not fully define what behaviors are problematic or unprofessional outside of the ethical treatment of clients. This missing link in the field of counseling can undermine the trust that patients may have in counseling services and prevent the complete professional development of counselors (Calley & Hawley, 2008; Person et al., 2020). Supervisor input and collaboration can help to shed light on the issues that are prevalent and assist with developing standards for the professional behavior of counseling residents and counselors in the future.

Crucial counselor development areas such as leadership and advocacy also have a lack of focus (Bayne & Doyle, 2019). Counselors may see advocacy in ways that are unprofessional, biased, and judgmental, which are damaging to clients and the community. This can affect their ability to appropriately advocate for important issues and client needs. As counselors, it is

important to be leaders in the community and develop trust through caring, support, and integrity (Cox & Grus, 2019). Standards for professional behavior outside of the counseling room can assist counselors with navigating their roles as advocates, counselors, and leaders and strengthen the field of counseling through ongoing professional development of counselors.

**Chapter Summary**

The professional development of the counselor, including dispositions and professional behavior both in and outside of the counseling room is a crucial aspect of becoming a competent and ethical counselor. Research provides a significant amount of information on the importance of counselor dispositions and professional development in counselor education but lacks in the area of the professional behavior of counselors outside of the counseling room and its impact on colleagues, employers, clients. Once the student or supervisee moves to post-graduation, the resident-in-counseling supervisor is left to navigate remediation and gatekeeping without the collaboration and support of the counselor education program. New research is needed to better understand the experiences and perceptions of resident-in-counseling supervisors' role in the development of professional behaviors with their residents in order to expand the training and remediation of residents in this area and continue with the professional image of counseling.

**CHAPTER THREE: METHOD**

The primary purpose of this research was to examine the perceptions of resident-in-counseling supervisors' roles in developing the professional behaviors of their supervisees outside of the counseling room to determine the role that supervisors have in training counselors in this area. The principal research question for this qualitative study was "What are the shared experiences of resident-in-counseling supervisors in regard to the professional behavior of their supervisees?" In this chapter, I present the qualitative methodology and foundation used to examine the shared experiences of resident-in-counseling supervisors in developing the professional behavior of their supervisees. This chapter includes the research questions, the research design, the participants, the procedures, and the data analysis process. Finally, I provide verification procedures and ethical considerations.

**Research Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of counseling residency supervisors' role in developing the professional behavior of their supervisees outside of the counseling room. This chapter includes the research purpose, the research questions, the research design, the participants, the procedures, and the data analyses. Finally, I provide verification procedures and ethical considerations.

**Research Questions**

The research questions that guided this study are:

1. What are resident-in-counseling supervisors' perceptions of their role in the development of their supervisees' professional behavior outside of the counseling room?

2. What are the shared experiences of resident-in-counseling supervisors in developing professional behavior of supervisees in the office or workplace?

3.        What are the shared experiences of resident-in-counseling supervisors in addressing and developing professional dispositions of supervisees in the office or workplace?

4.        What are the shared experiences of resident-in-counseling supervisors in addressing and developing professional behavior of supervisees with social media and online interactions?

5.        What are the shared experiences of resident-in-counseling supervisors in regard to dealing with persistent problematic unprofessional behavior of supervisees?

**Research Design**

The research design used for this study was a phenomenological thematic analysis. I chose this design as my approach due to its ability to find the common meaning found in the shared experiences of various individuals (Creswell et al., 2007; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This method allowed me to answer the research question by examining the emergent themes from the experience phenomenon described by residency supervisors who are approved supervisors in the state of Virginia.

When determining the choice of qualitative design, it is important to discuss why a phenomenological thematic analysis was the best approach for this study rather than other qualitative methods (Hays & Wood, 2011; McLeod, 2011). Since I sought to examine multiple participants' views on supervision and professional behavior of supervisees, I ruled out case studies because they would have limited me to a single participant's experience. Since I was examining individual supervisors and not an identified group or organization, I also eliminated an ethnographic approach. Finally, I eliminated grounded theory because it was not my intention to develop a new theory.

Current research suggests that supervision within internship and practicum experiences is a valuable tool in the education of counselors in training, but there is currently little research on post-graduate supervision and the impact this has on the professional development and continued training of counselors. Due to this, my main criterion for selecting an approach was its ability to find the common meaning among supervisors who had a shared experience or phenomenon, which would help fill a gap that has not be adequately explored. Therefore, I used the phenomenological research method to take a closer look at the lived experiences of residency/post-graduate supervisors and their experience or role in training and mentoring professionalism and professional with their supervisees.

Thematic analysis also provided flexibility in methodology while allowing for rich detail and description at the same time (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Sundler et al., 2019). In this thematic analysis, I played an active role in identifying and reporting the themes of interest. This methodology allows for themes to emerge organically from the data, but I provided narrative descriptions about these emergent themes (Braun & Clark, 2019). Thematic analysis also allows the researcher to take either an inductive or a deductive approach to identify codes and emergent themes, but it is important to note that these studies are not strictly one approach or the other. For the purpose of this study, I felt that the deductive method was not appropriate due to its use of existing concepts or ideas as a framework to interpret data. Instead, the inductive approach derives the themes and codes from the content of the data, which allowed meaning to naturally become visible from the data (Braun et al., 2019; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The inductive approach allowed me to discover the themes that emerged from the questions asked during the interviews (Braun et al., 2019).

**Selection of Participants**

The target population for this study consisted of board approved LPC supervisors of residents in counseling in the commonwealth of Virginia. This population was within the range and guidelines set forth for qualitative phenomenological research designs (Creswell, 2007). The rationale for utilizing participants in only the state of Virginia is because the criteria for LPC supervision is different in every state. These supervisors were either presently approved and providing clinical supervision to counselor residents or have provided supervision in the past two years. All supervisors met the state requirements for licensure and all other standards and regulations to provide clinical supervision. Institutional review board (IRB) approval was obtained prior to contacting any participants on August 27, 2021 along with permission to record and publish the findings prior to contacting any participant.

**Role of the Researcher**

In this study, I was the human instrument through which all data were collected and analyzed (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). As a researcher, I was a facilitator of the supervisors' stories and recounting of their experiences and understanding of providing appropriate supervision. As the human instrument, it is important to identify any potential bias that could have manifested in the collection of data and the analysis. I was also an approved clinical supervisor providing supervision at the time of these interviews, so I used bracketing in the process of analyzing the findings and writing the results according to the notes and mapping I did while collecting data. Using the Moustakas' (1994) epoche process of bracketing of my assumptions and expectations during the interviews and making room for the participant to fully engage in their experience was effective in removing any bias. I also maintained close contact with my committee to help be self-aware, unbiased, and accountable.

**Research Procedure**

Participants were asked to participate in an audio-recorded 45- to 60-minute interview or a video-recorded 60- to 90-minute focus group via Zoom and reflect on their experiences with supervisees and professional behavior, which is consistent with research recommendations (Creswell et al., 2007; Creswell et al., 2017). The interview questions are available in Appendix A. The questions were open-ended and allowed the participants to reflect fully on their experience. Once the interviews were complete, I carefully transcribed each interview and focus group separately. To assist with verifying accuracy, I read the transcripts while also listening to the recorded interviews.

**Preparing to Collect Data**

Initially, I developed a list of potential interview questions that may help to participants to share their experience, which I shared with my committee to review. After considering committee suggestions, I was able to narrow the focus and direction of the questions and after committee review, five questions were determined (Appendix C).

After receiving IRB approval, I contacted the participants via email. The email invited them to participate in the study and provided information about the purpose of the research. If they chose to participate, they responded with a signed consent form. The next step was to arrange an interview, either in person or by video conference. I recorded the interviews and focus group with two audio recording devices in case one malfunctioned. These recordings were kept in a secure place, in a password-protected online storage provider that was set up for each participant enabling them the opportunity to go back and listen to their recording as well as add any additional information that may have been left out of the original interview. These approaches protected confidentiality of the participants. All other information such as transcripts,

researcher notes, and digital recordings were placed on a secure server. I then transcribed the interviews verbatim.

<div style="text-align:center"><strong>Process of Thematic Analysis</strong></div>

My approach to thematic analysis was based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) 6-phase approach, which includes familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming themes, and producing a report. To increase trustworthiness, I used criteria established by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which assisted with the development of strategies for each phase. After transcribing the interviews and verifying their accuracy, to become more familiar with the data, I read through the material several times.

### Step 1: Become Familiar with the Data

The first step to Braun et al.'s (2019) analysis guided me in how to become familiar with the data. To become familiar with the data, I read each interview numerous times, first while listening to the recording and then again without making notes or documenting observations. During the next reading, I made notes of my observations and reflections and looked for common themes or significant comments. I continued to reread the transcripts to increase my understanding and knowledge of the data. I made comments on each transcript regarding emerging themes, and I placed these on an Excel worksheet where I was able to document initial observations and reflective thoughts about the themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### Step 2: Generate Initial Codes

The second step of Braun et al.'s (2019) analysis assisted me with finding meanings, commonalities and things of interest within the transcripts (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). After reviewing my initial comments, I created a document with initial coding and assigned a number to the corresponding quote. I only used coding that arose

through this process. These initial codes were reviewed by my dissertation chair. I later created a separate coding worksheet to keep track of potential emerging themes. Any irrelevant material was then removed (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Howitt, & Cramer, 2007; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

**Step 3: Search for Themes**

The next step required a review of the remaining data line by line to further define and refine the themes established in the previous step. I examined different codes and how they naturally combine to form different themes or broader categories of significance (Braun et al., 2019). Themes were formed through topics of conversation, frequency, and context (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). These findings were combined on a new spreadsheet where I was able to extract direct statements from the participants. These were then discussed and negotiated with my dissertation chair (Braun & Clark, 2006).

**Step 4: Reviewing Themes**

The fourth step allowed me to begin extracting the remaining information after I reviewed the themes and then document and denote how the themes and subthemes are related or have a relationship (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process helped me to review how the data were starting to tell a story and revise the data as needed (Braun et al., 2019). I discarded what was not directly related to the story or classified as potential subthemes. I then mapped the data to assure the data made sense and that the data fit in the denoted category.

**Step 5: Define and Name Themes**

The fifth step required defining and naming the themes to ensure that each theme and subtheme accurately represented the essence of the participants' experiences (Braun et al., 2019).

Based on feedback from my dissertation chair and committee, I reorganized and renamed themes for better clarity, combining some of the themes for increased accuracy.

**Step 6: Write Up Findings**

The last step was the production of the report, which tells the story of all the data across all themes and subthemes. Additionally, all participants were assigned gender-neutral pseudonyms and identifiable locations and events were redacted to maintain confidentiality. I then used Braun and Clarke's (2006) 15-point checklist to verify the accuracy of the thematic analysis.

## Verification Procedures

There are four areas of trustworthiness in qualitative research (McLeod, 2011). Credibility was addressed through critical self-reflection and bracketing. This was also addressed through verbatim transcripts, which assist with creating an accurate portrayal of participants' meaning and to help avoid inference. The issue of transferability was addressed through a comprehensive and detailed explanation of the context of the study and the specific phenomena being investigated. Dependability and confirmability were addressed through member checking, which allowed the participants to verify the transcripts (Bowen, 2005).

## Ethical Considerations

Consent was obtained from participants prior to conducting interviews or focus groups (see Appendix D). The consent form provided a detailed description of what the study would entail and instructions on how to respond should they choose to participate. The consent form also provided information about the confidentiality of the participants, which was repeated during the interview. I adhered to all guidelines set by the IRB with the intention of reducing and eliminating all risk to the participants. All data are password-protected and accessible only by

me. But for the verification of data each participant was given access to the transcript of their recording via a secure Dropbox, which is password-protected and accessible only to the participant to ensure confidentiality and anonymity with the participants.

## Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the methodology used to answer the research questions. This included participant selection, the 6-phase process of thematic analysis, the role of the researcher, and the process of establishing trustworthiness. In the next chapter, I will provide a detailed description of the analysis and themes that emerged.

**CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS**

Chapter 4 provides a detailed exploration of the thematic analysis used to arrive at the themes and subthemes for the data. This chapter describes the focus of the research, the methodology, and the sample. It also provides an overview of the procedure and data analysis. Additionally, the themes, associated subthemes, and other items of interest will be provided with supporting verbatim quotations from the data.

**Research Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to gain knowledge of the role that supervisors have in training counselors on professional behavior outside of the counseling room, based on their personal experience. With counselor dispositions and professional behavior being more difficult to assess within counselor education and a lack of research on counselor behavior outside of the counseling room, there was a need to examine the factors that would increase counselor development in this area primarily within supervision residency. Understanding the perceptions of resident-in-counseling supervisors about developing and teaching professional behavior will provide insight for the field of counseling seeking to enhance and improve the professional development and behavior of supervisees and positively impact clients.

**Sample**

As discussed in Chapter 3, potential participants for this study consisted of approved counseling supervisors listed on the Virginia Counseling Board website. This was a purposefully selected sample. IRB approval was obtained on August 27, 2021, along with permission to record and publish the findings, before sending the recruitment letter and informed consent documents to potential participants via email. Of the potential participants, six supervisors indicated their interest in participating in the study by returning the informed consent document.
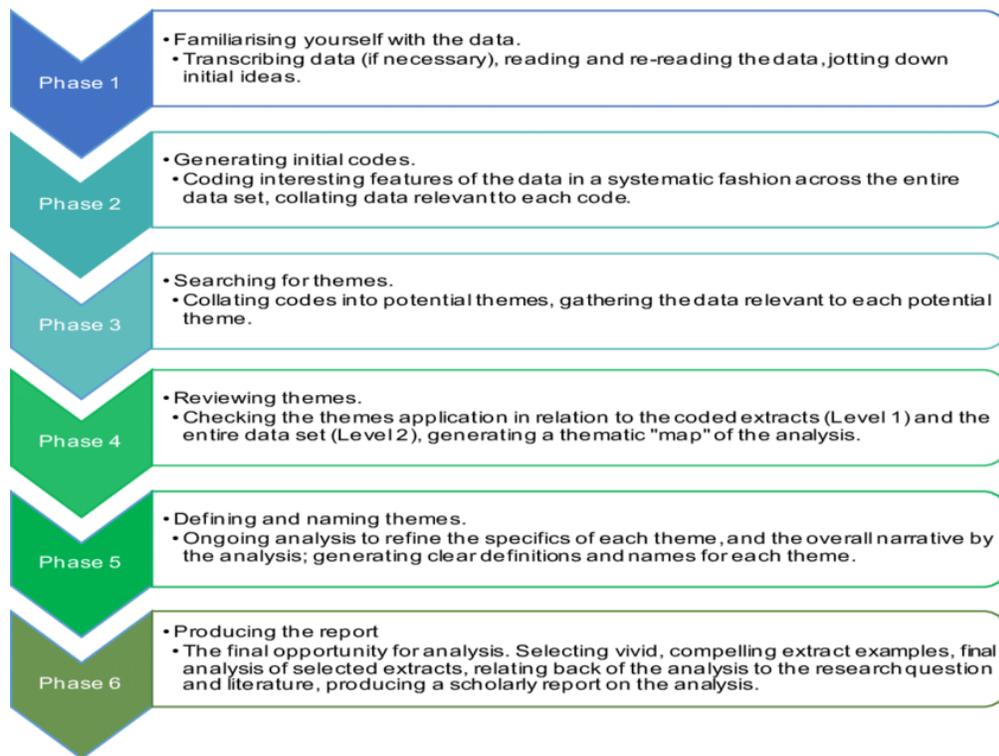
A follow-up email was sent to potential participants 1 week later, and one additional supervisor indicated their interest in participating in the study by returning the informed consent document at that time. After ensuring that they met the study criteria, I contacted the seven participants to set up times for them to participate in either a video interview of focus group. All seven participants opted to participate in the individual interview.

## Research Methodology

Data for this study were gathered through individual interviews using Zoom video conferencing. All interviews were audiotaped, and the interviews were transcribed into verbatim transcripts using Otter.ai transcription software. To confirm the accuracy of the transcription, I listened to each audio recording of the individual interviews to clarify any content the software may have overlooked or transcribed incorrectly. The themes and subthemes were reviewed at least 12 times. During the review, more commonalities among the data emerged, allowing for the themes and subthemes to become more defined with each iteration. As the codes and data extracts were analyzed, I generated multiple thematic maps, which were reviewed and revised over time. After developing each theme and subtheme, a thorough review to establish accuracy was conducted, leading to a comprehensive thematic analysis of the data.

## Data Analysis

I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis (see Figure 1). First, I became familiar with the data. Next, I coded the individual data. After this, I searched for and coded themes and developed a thematic map. I reviewed these themes again and revised the thematic map several times. Finally, I worked with my dissertation chair and another colleague to triangulate the data and generate a report.

**Figure 1**

*Six Phases of Thematic Data Analysis*



| Phase 1 | • Familiarising yourself with the data.<br>• Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, jotting down initial ideas. |
| --- | --- |
| Phase 2 | • Generating initial codes.<br>• Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code. |
| Phase 3 | • Searching for themes.<br>• Collating codes into potential themes, gathering the data relevant to each potential theme. |
| Phase 4 | • Reviewing themes.<br>• Checking the themes application in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic "map" of the analysis. |
| Phase 5 | • Defining and naming themes.<br>• Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall narrative by the analysis; generating clear definitions and names for each theme. |
| Phase 6 | • Producing the report<br>• The final opportunity for analysis. Selecting vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report on the analysis. |

**Results**

**Research Question 1**

The first two questions of the interview focused on the perceptions that resident-in-counseling supervisors have on the professional behaviors of their supervisees outside of the client–counselor relationship as well as their role in developing these behaviors in their supervisees. Upon analysis, I found three themes, which were further broken down into subthemes where appropriate. The three major themes were person of the counselor, community interactions, and supervisor's role. These themes and subthemes will be further discussed in the following sections. For this data set, there were no disconfirming data sets shown.

*Theme 1: Person of the Counselor*

Participants discussed the importance of personal attributes or the person of the counselor and how this shapes professional behavior both in and outside of the counseling room. The personal dispositions exhibited outside of the counseling setting carry over to their professional identity in their role as a counselor. This can impact the therapeutic relationship when working with clients. As Beth noted,

> As a counselor, we bring not only our clinical, professional expertise, but we also bring ourselves and all of our life experience to a session. So, you're talking about other aspects of a counselor as a person that would be important to develop in a supervisee. I think one thing is, to practice what you preach. I think that it's easier for people to give advice or suggestions or counsel than it is to actually follow some of those directions yourself.

Other participants discussed the importance of the person of the counselor in the resident's personal life and throughout personal and professional worlds. Participants felt there needed to be a congruence between who counselors are as a person and who they are as a professional. George stated,

> I think the first thing that would come to mind is what I'm doing or being and, that could go a lot of subcategories, such as how I spend my time, who I'm involved with, who I spend time with, certain interests in organizations, or lifestyles, that could possibly have a detrimental effect to our role as therapists and who we are.

Finally, participants discussed the congruence of personal values necessary in shaping professional behavior. Matthew added,

So, I think that it's important to like encourage professionalism which is like my behavior in general. So, you know, being respectful, having integrity, showing honesty in situations, but also not portraying anything outside of the counselor room that I feel like if a client saw me outside of the counseling room that they would feel concerned about.

*Theme 2: Community Interactions*

Participants viewed community interactions as an important aspect when describing what constitutes professional behavior outside the counseling room. Participants discussed how community interactions were a reflection on professional counseling and can compromise work that is done in the counseling room such as inappropriate public or community behavior. William stated,

I have clients that I see here, and I will leave the office and go to the locker room at the gym and who do I see in the locker room? The client that I just had a session with. I'm not in the counseling room now, but I'm still his counselor. So, the question is, when he sees me in the steam room and when I see him on Tuesday, does he still have that respect for me based on a conversation he heard me have with someone?

Beth added,

When I'm in the supermarket shopping and I'm upset with the cashier, if a client was in the line behind me, would he still feel like the things we're working on in session are authentic based on the way I'm handling those situations? I always advocate for my trainees to be the same person. Who you are as a person, even when you're not in the counseling room on the job, how does that reflect if your client should see you?

*Theme 3: Supervisor's Role*

Participants were asked to describe their role in helping supervisees to develop professional behavior outside of the counselor–client relationship. The central role reported by the participants was providing appropriate modeling of professional behaviors. Other themes that emerged when discussing their roles were the need to navigate professional boundaries with their supervisees and ways to proactively address how behavior outside of the counselor–client relationship can impact their professional behaviors in the counseling room.

**Subtheme 1: Modeling.** Most participants discussed that their role in developing professional behavior with their supervisees took place naturally within the supervisory relationship through mentoring and modeling of professionalism. James noted the importance of the parallel process as a role model when working with his supervisees:

I don't know that that role is gigantic because there might be some things that I wouldn't want to know or there is no way for me to know, but I think that being a good role model myself is huge and important. I don't really want a supervisee to see me in the community engaging in behaviors that would cause them to feel concerned about my ability to guide them in their residency. I think that the role is there, I don't know exactly how large I feel like it is.

William discussed how creating experiences and role playing were a part of his role as a model:

I'm really big on modeling. I take some of the experience and the supervision outside of just the clinical room and have them help me in things that are more business meeting related, getting to observe interactions like that. I like role plays a lot and thinking

through different clinical scenarios in public and really stressing how important those

things are.

Beth discussed how a part of modeling is discussing her developmental process as a

counselor with her supervisees:

That's a good discussion to have because in and of itself, that's modeling. Being able to

show them the process of how I got there, because it's not something I think that you

always know at first, like who you are as a counselor outside of the counselor room, or

maybe even within it.

**Subtheme 2: Professional Boundaries.** Participants also discussed the challenge of

maintaining professional boundaries when addressing professional behavior with supervisees.

Some participants noted the need to respect the boundary between the supervisee's personal and

professional lives. Gina discussed the difficulty with addressing professional behavior outside

the counselor–client relationship while respecting personal boundaries:

I think professional development is a huge concern and challenge [for supervisors]. You

try and get to know them as best you can but you don't know them outside the office and

you don't know their full story and of course that's personal.

Amy added the need to maintain professional boundaries with supervisees as an ethical

aspect of supervision: "Boundaries would need to be considered, but that's very clear, we're

trained and educated on boundaries with our patients and, so those [boundaries with a

supervisee] are the first thing that come to mind."

When dealing with a supervisee's personal issues, Beth stressed the importance of

maintaining the professional boundaries within the supervisory relationship by not transitioning

into a therapeutic relationship with a supervisee:

I do quite a bit of recommending therapy for my residents when they have personal stuff or get triggered by something. I really try to have firm boundaries between what we do in a supervisory relationship versus what you need to do with your therapist and how that differentiates in the work that can be done.

**Subtheme 3: Personal and Professional Development.** Some participants felt that their role as a supervisor of residents was to help their supervisees grow in their personal and professional development as a counselor. Addressing importance of being congruent between professional and personal selves, Mary stated,

One of the things that I always advocate for is not trying to be three different people, so I'm this person in the counseling room, I'm this person at the bar and I'm this person here … who are you? And the person you are, how do you demonstrate that in different settings.

Beth discussed the importance of who a counselor is within a community, which can impact their ability to provide professional services to the community: "The supervisor definitely should touch on what you are for the community, how you portray yourself is important simply because of what type of support you're providing to the community in general."

George discussed the importance of developing those personal attributes and behaviors that are integral to their professional identity:

I definitely feel like it's important to make positive, respectful, responsible choices in the public eye as a counselor, just because I don't want the community or the client to see me in the community and feel concerned about my behavior. If I'm guiding supervisees toward their goals, I want to make sure that my behavior and the supervisee's behavior is heading in a direction where they don't make decisions that would come off as

irresponsible, disrespectful or lacking integrity. Not to say that everybody can't have fun.

Of course, I've had fun, but just be careful about where you are and who you're with and

what's happening when you're having a good time.

**Research Question 2**

Interview Questions 3 through 6 focused on the supervisors' experiences with their

supervisees' in-office behaviors. Specifically, participants discussed their expectations for

professional dress and time management in the office as well as how they address these

behaviors in their supervisees. Upon analysis, I found three themes, which were broken down

into subthemes where appropriate. The three themes were contractual agreement, facilitating

professional development, and client welfare. These themes and subthemes will be further

discussed in the following sections.

*Theme 1: Contractual Agreement*

In discussing their expectations for professional dress and time management in the office,

participants noted the importance of establishing a formal agreement with their supervisees that

clarified the expectations prior to their working together. Two subthemes that emerged included

establishing a supervisory contract and the site's employment policy.

**Subtheme 1: Supervision Contract.** Participants discussed the importance of having

their supervisees sign a supervision contract at the beginning of supervision. This contract was

designed to communicate and express expectations of the supervisory relationship, including

areas such as dress and time management. Participants discussed how the contract also serves as

a point of reference throughout the supervision relationship when addressing issues. Gina

discussed how she uses the supervision contract to communicate expectations and address

problems with professional behavior:

Before I sign the contract, I go over these things and address the way you dress, your

time management, the language you use and the way you conduct yourself. Your

supervision time is preparing you for what you will be doing. If something happens, I

refer back to what we agreed to.

George discussed how he uses the supervisory contract to communicate his expectations

and to provide ongoing guidance for appropriate professional dress both inside and outside of the

counseling room:

I would tell my supervisees to refer to the supervision contract for guidance on what to

wear. In there we say we do not wear hats when we are coming to supervision just as we

do not wear hats when we are in the counseling session. My supervisees don't wear

shorts and flip flops when they are in supervision. I don't engage things like caps, shorts,

flip flops, sagging pants, underwear showing, T-shirts with derogatory writing on

them.  We don't do that. I make it clear that when you come for supervision, think of it as

a counseling session.

**Subtheme 2: Employment Policy.** Participants also discussed the importance of

reviewing their site's employment policy and procedures with their supervisees. This allows

them to communicate and address the site's expectations, including professional dress and time

management. Beth discussed the importance of referencing the employment policy and

procedures when establishing guidelines for professional dress in the office:

Within our agency, the number one thing that we focus on is modesty. Often, I will tell

staff if you are even questioning if this is appropriate, it's not. I've got staff going into the

jails to do things and at the CSB [Community Service Board], we have a pretty specific

dress code that I can fall back on which is business casual. I think with our clients this is part of our professional behavior as well.

James also discussed the importance of understanding and adhering to the agency's policies when addressing professional dress with his supervisees:

I would say as an expectation, the first thing when addressing issues like dress would be adhering to the agency's policy. We have guidelines for how we expect our staff to dress. For instance, right now I have jeans on, because it's Friday, that's a known thing that we can wear jeans on Friday and people do. So, I would say definitely adhering to the agency policy is an important thing to learn as a resident.

In addition to professional dress, Matthew discussed the need to help his supervisees adhere to the agency's time management policies and procedures:

I am not necessarily supervising them in their role at the agency. That is left up to their direct supervisor, but I would assist them with adhering to the policy on notes and being on time by possibly looking into what is contributing to the issue.

*Theme 2: Facilitating Professional Development*

Participants discussed the importance of supervision in the professional development of their supervisees. This supervisory relationship provided the necessary foundation for ongoing discussion, communication, and remediation of professional behaviors. Three subthemes that emerged included facilitating growth, provide additional training, and addressing issues.

**Subtheme 1: Facilitating Growth.** Participants discussed the importance of providing space for their supervisee to grow and develop their own style or way of working. George noted the need to encourage his supervisees to develop their own way of working:

When it comes to completing documentation, I typically recommend that they can

complete their documentation as they go along or at least by the end of the day. But I

don't really like to micromanage that stuff because some people work differently.

Beth discussed the importance of encouraging supervisees to do things on their own and

providing more support when it is needed:

Supervisees need to be able to manage time well and have good documentation. I'm not

overly controlling about it, but I will say, "I would have done that note much shorter" or

"you could have really paraphrased this." I won't say stop it, or don't do that, but I will

provide what I normally would do in that case. Then I will let the resident continue to

work on it and if they continue to struggle or don't take the feedback, I'll bring it back up

in a "we really need to change this" way.

**Subtheme 2: Provide Additional Training.** Participants also discussed the importance

of providing additional training as needed when there are deficits in the supervisee's professional

behavior. Gina discussed her role in providing ongoing training to her supervisees:

When there is a persistent problem, I think my first assumption is that it's a training issue.

Professional behavior is not something you were born with or have the ability to

understand right off. If there is an issue, we will have additional training and

conversations about how what I wear to court is different than what I wear every day to

work with clients and so on.

William also discussed the importance of providing additional training to help his

supervisees grow professionally: "I would just address it. I don't have to be judgmental or

hateful about it, but I can provide the supervision and training necessary to assist them with

understanding what it means to be professional."

**Subtheme 3: Addressing Professional Behaviors.** Participants mentioned the importance of discussing, communicating, and addressing professional expectations as an ongoing process. Through the supervisory relationship, participants noted that they gained an awareness of factors that can affect their supervisees' professional development. George discussed how this relationship is foundational when discussing issues that can arise with his supervisees' professional behaviors:

> What I do think is important is that you create the foundation first.  You want to make the expectation be known and if that is violated you go back and say "What's going on today? We talked about not wearing tank tops, we talked about not wearing shorts and I notice you are wearing shorts today, what's going on?"

Amy discussed how the supervisory relationship can assist her supervisees as they learn how to integrate their personal and professional life:

> I want to hear what's going on here, where you're coming from to make sure I'm not overlooking something. There are a lot of different reasons a person can be late as they navigate their personal and professional life. So, I try to hear that out and then maybe problem solve a little bit if it reaches a point of really needing that.

*Theme 3: Client Welfare*

Many participants discussed the importance of addressing how professional behaviors such as dress and time management impact the client. Two subthemes that emerged included impact on the therapeutic relationship and client comfort.

**Subtheme 1: Therapeutic Environment.** Participants discussed the role that in-office professional behaviors play in creating the therapeutic environment. When discussing

appropriate professional dress, Gina discussed the need to balance the client's comfort level and appropriate professional dress:

> So, that's also a part of the conversation, we want to meet our clients where they are at and help them to feel comfortable, but at the same time wearing ripped blue jeans or a short skirt or a low cut top or something like that would be kind of the opposite of that. So it's really that balance. So that's definitely something we can address and do talk about.

James also noted the role that professional dress has on creating a comfortable environment that will set a positive tone for the therapeutic relationship:

> I often encourage supervisees to take their dress in a manner that also wouldn't be threatening to a client. … So as far as dress is concerned, like appropriately covered, you know, not too comfy, not too relaxed, but I also don't think being completely dressed up sets the best tone for the counselor client relationship.

Amy discussed how professional dress can influence the comfort level of the client and enhance the therapeutic relationship:

> I would take a step back and have a conversation about how that appears to the client, the most important part of everything we do is ensuring, although you and I are currently talking about outside of that room, it's important that we talk about what that's like for the client. You're setting up that environment for that person. Just as you want the environment to be comfortable, you want them to feel comfortable with you.

**Subtheme 2: Impact on the Therapeutic Relationship.** Participants discussed the importance their supervisees understanding the impact that their in-office professional behaviors

have on the therapeutic relationship with the client. Amy discussed how professional dress can potentially influence the therapeutic relationship:

I would take a step back and have a conversation about how that appears to the client … So I think I would absolutely address how, whatever the inappropriate attire is, how that would impact the client's focus, how that would impact the client's level of comfortability, how they might not feel open to discussing certain aspects of what they need to simply from what the counselor is wearing.

George noted that his supervisees in-office time management can be a predictor of their time management behaviors when working with the client:

If they are not timely in the office, then it will make me question. I want them to recognize the responsibility they have to the client that they're working with. I know for a fact that anxiety can creep in for somebody who's sitting in a waiting room waiting to talk to someone about the things that they're struggling with. So, I don't feel like it's a good idea unless it can't be avoided ever have a client sitting in a waiting room or even sitting in your office for 15, 20 minutes. I just don't think that's appropriate. So, I would want to know how does that differ? So, you're showing up late for me today for supervision. How is that different than you showing up late for your client?

William also discussed the parallel process, noting how the supervisee's administrative time management can be a predictor of the importance that they place on timeliness when working with the client:

I think that like, anytime a counselor is engaging in something that they have a time requirement for, whether it's paperwork, a deadline, or attending supervision or attending a professional development training or a conference. I feel like it's really important to be

on time. I view that as if you're on time for these things, if you're on time for supervision with me, then that means that timeliness with your client is important to you as well. So I feel like professionalism should kind of go from the counselor room to outside of that room, to the other responsibilities that a counselor or supervisee has. And if they're not timely with me with their supervision, if they're not timely in professional development or trainings or things like that, then it will make me question if they are or will be with clients.

**Research Question 3**

Interview Questions 7 and 8 focused on the supervisors' experiences with their supervisees' in-office professional dispositions. Specifically, participants discussed their expectations for professional dispositions within the office as well as how they address these behaviors in their supervisees. Upon analysis I found two major themes: respectful behaviors and facilitating counselor development.

*Theme 1: Respectful*

Participants discussed the expectation that supervisees would conduct themselves in a respectful manner at all times when interacting with colleagues and staff in the workplace. Participants also felt that professional behavior is being respectful of other views and opinions even when those are different than our own. Gina discussed helping supervisees to develop respectful ways of interacting in the office through acceptance of other's perspectives:

I think I would start by saying, how would that feel for you if the situation was reversed? So, if that person did not uphold their word, or if that person became disrespectful because they disagreed with you, how would that feel for you in the workplace? Um, in general, would you feel supported? Would you feel comfortable continuing to provide

counseling here? Um, I think it's so important to recognize the other perspectives of

people and how that might feel.

Beth discussed her expectation that supervisees be respectful and learn to recognize when

interactions are inappropriate:

I would expect supervisees to be respectful and for communication to be open both ways.

I also 100% expect for any employee, especially supervisees, to remove themselves from

situations that cannot remain respectful and not allow themselves to get involved in office

drama or arguing.

James discussed the importance of supervisees respecting the views and beliefs of others

in the workplace and learning how to handle differing opinions:

I do promote respectful communication interactions. We talk about things like religion,

sexual orientation, cultural beliefs, political beliefs that may come up that are different

and how do you handle those? Especially if it is different from your view, your myriad or

your way of doing it.

### *Theme 2: Facilitating Counselor Development*

Participants felt that professional behaviors in their interoffice interactions is something

that supervisees must learn and develop over time. Noting that these professional behaviors do

not always come naturally, participants discussed various methods they used to facilitate

professional development in this area. Amy discussed the importance of the supervisees

developing these behaviors over the course of their residency through learning and experience:

I guess I'd probably come from a more traditional model in that sense. I think that

evolves through the course of the internship and residency experience to the point that

they're participating in treatment team meetings or even leading things. So, I tend to take

a pre-developmental approach on that and start off in learner mode. And then if everything goes well, you should be at a more collegial status towards the end of the internship.

Matthew discussed the benefit of modeling appropriate professional interactions and addressing issues as they arise:

I'm very comfortable with that transparent conversation, that's not something that I struggle with my supervisees at all. And I want that back from them too, and sort of model that, like what they expect from supervision. And so if there, if there's something I'm concerned about within the office I will bring it up and we will continue to talk about it and then normally I will recommend something such as additional training or resolution if needed.

William discussed proactively addressing interoffice issues directly with both the supervisee and the other persons involved in the conflict:

I'm back to modeling a little bit and you know, some conflict resolution. Let's not stay behind closed doors and talk about it, you know, for the next three supervisory meetings, let's resolve it or let's get everyone together and work this out assertively and appropriately and going directly to the person. That kind of thing is pretty critical.

**Research Question 4**

Interview Questions 9 through 12 focused on the supervisors' experiences with their supervisees' interactions with social media and online sites. Specifically, participants discussed their expectations for their supervisees' professional behaviors when they are engaged in virtual platforms as well as how they address these behaviors in their supervisees. Upon analysis I found

three themes: perception of professionalism, ethical considerations, and addressing social media in supervision.

### *Theme 1: Perception of Their Professionalism*

Participants discussed the potential damage to their professional image that could occur if supervisees demonstrated a lack of professionalism with their social media and online interactions. Beth discussed the importance of supervisees being aware of the image that they portray to the community as a counselor when interacting with social media and other online sites:

> I think it's important to stay neutral at times, or not allowing yourself to be in a place where you are derogatory to others, where you are saying things out of frustration, because this person disagrees with you. My expectation for myself is that I'm not going to engage in any type of back and forth debate on social media. I've not ever seen it change anybody's mind. And so, I'm not going to do that at all ever and I want to teach those things to them. I want to talk to them about what's important for them as a counselor to portray on social media, how do they want to be seen in the community?

Amy discussed how the supervisee's professional responsibilities as a counselor extended into their interactions with social media and other online sites:

> I know we're in a free country and we have rights and there are certain freedoms and we have freedom of speech. However, I don't think that means we always have to speak up as a professional therapist, you know, discretion is the better part of valor. Blogging and venting, and I'm not saying you don't have a right to do that, but I think those avenues and expressions of communication probably need to be looked through a lens. You

probably have to have a lens of licensed professional counselor [LPC] or find less

publicly accessible avenues to have those kinds of discussions.

Beth found it important for her supervisees to understand that their clients often use

social media and other online sites to find information about their counselor. Therefore, they

must be aware of potential perceptions that their clients may form based on their posts:

It may be hard to seek to convince them that what they did was something that they

shouldn't have posted or they shouldn't have said, but I am going to try to make them

understand that it's not really about having the opinion or viewpoint, but it's the way

other people might interpret that. Your clients are looking you up on social media … you

know, that's one of the first things they're going to do. They're going to dig through your

social media.

George discussed the importance of considering the effect that their social media and

other online interactions can have on their ability to provide professional services within their

community:

What if somebody put this on their Facebook page and somebody saw it and it impacted

people wanting to come and see them. I would give them scenarios where if you put this

on twitter, Instagram or Facebook and your client's aunt's cousin's friend saw it and said

"Isn't this your counselor?" the next time that Johnny comes in to see you will he still

have that respect for you? You are telling Johnny to do deep breathing, but then he sees

you cussing on Facebook would he still believe in what you're sharing with him? When

we interact on social media, if your client should see that, how would it impact the

dynamic and the things that you're trying to work with them on?

*Theme 2: Ethical Considerations*

Participants discussed the importance of addressing ethical practice regarding social media posting and other online interactions. As such, they are careful to have discussions about ethical concerns that their supervisees need to consider in this area. Two subthemes emerged: confidentiality and boundaries.

**Subtheme 1: Confidentiality.** Participants discussed the importance of supervisees ensuring confidentiality of clients throughout all social media and online interactions. Amy discussed her expectation that her supervisees must maintain confidentiality and privacy whenever they are posting on social media and other online sites:

I would absolutely have an expectation in the area of confidentiality. So I know there are lots of blogs and podcasts, where people are discussing things that they've seen in their treatment and I don't think those are wrong. I think that that can provide a lot of insight when you're hearing about personal experiences, but there cannot ever be a slip up where confidentiality and privacy is concerned.

Matthew discussed with his supervisees how counselors can unintentionally violate confidentiality by sharing seemingly benign pieces of information on social media and online sites:

I tell supervisees that you have to be very careful what you chose to post especially when it comes to maintaining confidentiality. I have seen a lot of instances that people post things that are really, really dumb, for lack of a better word and I think, how could you not notice that? Sometimes people do not realize how sharing even small bits of information can be breaches of confidentiality and harmful to clients, posting it on social media, it can be terrible.

**Subtheme 2: Boundaries** Participants also discussed the importance of maintaining appropriate professional boundaries when interacting on social media and other online sites. Gina discussed the importance of setting clear boundaries when clients, staff, or supervisees want to interact with them on social media and other online sites:

> We have obviously clear ethical boundaries about not friending clients and not looking
> them up on Facebook. I am not friends with any of my residents or supervisees and I do
> not look at their social media. I have staff or supervisees, that will attempt to friend me
> and I'll explain that I just don't do that. And so I will separate from that. If I had
> somebody that wants to talk about it, then absolutely. We talk about making sure your
> social media platforms are secure and private and about ensuring confidentiality and
> always maintaining boundaries when online.

William discussed the importance of adhering to the ACA Code of Ethics regarding overall social media and online interactions.

> We have a clear set of ethics which states that you don't interact with clients on
> Facebook. I am intentionally not friends with residents, supervisees or staff that I manage
> and I don't look at their social media. I think it is important to maintain those boundaries.
> They are there for a reason.

*Theme 3: Addressing Social Media in Supervision*

All participants felt that monitoring their supervisees' personal social media and other online interactions was outside the scope of their role as a supervisor; however, they also noted the importance of discussing appropriate and professional behaviors that included social media use. Upon analysis, two subthemes emerged: aspect of professional development and creating learning experiences.

**Subtheme 1: Aspect of Professional Development.** Though participants did not specifically address the personal social media or other online interactions of their supervisees, they did discuss appropriate online interactions within the context of professional development. Gina viewed her role as a supervisor was to help develop the professionalism her supervisees needed to be able to make ethical and appropriate decisions, including social media:

I don't know that I have expectations [for my supervisees' social media use]. I have expectations of myself and I want to, as the supervisor in a residency situation, encourage that supervisee to have those expectations of themselves. I understand when an employer addresses a social media situation, because I feel like that often needs to happen. But as the supervisor, my role, I think is to teach professionalism so that they make good decisions on appropriate behaviors on social media when they are no longer under my supervision.

Matthew noted that he does not monitor his supervisees' social media, but he will address it if an issue arises:

I don't micromanage people. We don't really have any control over that [supervisees' social media use] and how you really monitor it closely, or how you do that. But if something comes up, I address it directly and immediately.

**Subtheme 2: Creating Learning Experiences.** Some participants took a more active role by creating learning experiences that would help supervisees understand their professional responsibilities when interacting on online sites. George discussed how he uses examples and scenarios to help supervisees understand appropriate professional behaviors and parameters that would guide their current and future decisions regarding their online interactions:

In supervision we talk about different scenarios and how this is going to apply to you whenever you are licensed or how will this apply to you whenever you own your own practice and I give different examples. I feel like examples help them to own it more, it makes more sense to them. My hope is that as we develop that and as we talk about pros and cons and the disadvantages of certain behaviors hopefully they will own it and decide maybe I want to watch this, I want to check on this. Without having to micromanage and check their Facebook all day. It's definitely something we discuss and educate them on. We try and emphasize the value of considering it but I don't directly have a policy on this that says this is not okay.

William discussed how he created scenarios that would help his supervisees explore and consider the potential consequences of their posts on social media:

I like to look at what the natural negative consequences would be of the decisions you make on social media. Then just allowing the two of us in supervision to explore. Maybe they hadn't thought that X, Y, and Z can happen but I've seen it happen. I think that gives them the chance to come up with their own plan.

**Research Question 5**

Interview Questions 13 through 17 focused on supervisors' experiences with handling persistent problematic professional behavior of their supervisees. They also discussed the process that they use in making gatekeeping decisions. Upon analysis I found four themes: endorsement, supervisee remediation, colleague support, and supervision training.

*Theme 1: Endorsement*

Participants discussed how their main role as a resident-in-counseling supervisor is to verify for the state that their supervisee has the competence needed to provide services under an

independent license. As such, they were aware of their role as a gatekeeper for the profession of counseling. Amy discussed the importance of the supervisor's role as a gatekeeper in ensuring that the supervisee will provide ethical professional treatment of their clients:

> I think it's something that should be taken very seriously. This gatekeeping and residency of counseling is more important than ever. People are struggling with their mental health and people are struggling with symptoms that impact daily functioning and stability. And I want people who are working with individuals who are struggling to be prepared to work with them and to be prepared, they need to do their research and they need to be professional. It's always important, but it's even more important now.

James discussed the importance of ensuring that by the end of their residency, he is able verify for the licensure board that his supervisees are well prepared and demonstrate the competence needed to provide services independently:

> One of the things I tell my supervisees is that when I sign off on your final hours and your final evaluation, based on the work that I've done with you I am saying that I'm comfortable that you are able to go out there and practice as a licensed professional counselor. That's what I am putting my name on and I don't sign that thinking "Oh my goodness, I don't know, Oh Lord, I don't trust her" I want to be comfortable when I sign that and authentic that I really believe you can go out there and maintain what you're supposed to do and your professional identity.

William discussed the difficult decisions he faces as a supervisor when he is unable to endorse a supervisee because they lack the skills and competencies to needed to work with clients:

I think that supervision can be difficult with potentially liking someone, seeing potential in them, believing they have the ability, but then their performance may not reflect that. Then how do you sort that out in regard to holding them from potentially being licensed or finishing a master's program or something like that. It is a pretty big decision. To think that you're the one who's potentially stopping someone from fulfilling their life goal or dream carries some weight to it and I do everything to prevent that final decision from being made, but then once we're at that point, then I know it's the right decision.

## *Theme 2: Supervisee Remediation*

Participants discussed the importance of providing remediation for supervisees who may be struggling with professional behavior. This was mainly accomplished by providing their supervisees with additional education or supervision. Gina discussed how she helps supervisees work through problematic behaviors while also monitoring their progress to ensure effective remediation:

It might depend on what the persistent unprofessional behavior is. I feel like I can absolutely manage and educate and work through those issues on my own and see how that person's doing. See if they're progressing in a better light and then move forward if they are. If they're not, and or if it was a higher level of professionalism issue or problematic behavior, then I would definitely staff with other counselors and licensed individuals in the building where I work.

George discussed how he provides extra time and additional support as needed to his supervisees so that they have the greatest opportunity to gain the competencies needed for licensure:

I know we have talked about halting the hours and putting those aside for a minute to go ahead and work on problematic issues. I have definitely provided more trainings and more time and supervision to individuals who I feel like are needing more support. That is a means of gatekeeping I've used a lot where I've worked with that person much more than is required for their residency so that they can feel more supported. I don't ever want to come off too terribly punitive unless that's what's necessary. I would like to educate them and to work on how can we make a better path for you? I don't want anybody who's passionate about becoming a counselor to not be able to become a counselor unless there's a very ethical issue involved. But I think that sometimes putting in more effort with that person is important.

Finally, Amy discussed assisting supervisees with accessing needed resources to address personal issues that are beginning to impact their professional performance and the consequences of not addressing them:

I'm never going to mandate somebody to EAP [employee assistance program], but I will get stronger in my language about it. I might say, "I think this is something you could look at. This is more than what we can do here and this is really affecting you and you really need to address this. It is holding you back from being able to move forward with your hours." When folks are really struggling with their own stuff, it affects their professionalism. I have gotten to the point where if you don't address the issue, I'm not going to supervise you anymore. But if it were something that was significant, that now your behavior is bordering on not being up to the standards of care, or ethical treatment, then at that point, I do feel like I could say, as a supervisor, I no longer can use my license to support this journey unless we can get movement on this.

*Theme 3: Consultation Support*

Participants discussed the importance of seeking support and consultation as when making decisions regarding remediation and gatekeeping with their supervisees. Ongoing support was considered a vital component in the decision-making process when evaluating the need for potential remedial actions. Upon analysis two subthemes emerged: colleague support and lack of professional support.

**Subtheme 1: Colleagues.** Participants discussed the role of consultation and support from colleagues when considering potential remediation for supervisees who may be struggling with professional behavior. Amy discussed how support and consultation with colleagues provides her with the feedback needed prior to initiating remediation processes:

I like consulting with others just to make sure I'm not misinterpreting something or maybe having my own personal reaction to something. But then at that point, if I'm validated through the consultation, I can be straight forward with real behavioral concrete objectives. This is what you will do by this date, setting smart goals.

James discussed how he utilizes support from colleagues and mentors to assist him with handling potential problematic behavior with supervisees:

I have good colleagues and previous mentors and people that I know I can call and count on them to take time to let me run a scenario [history of supervisee's behaviors] by them. I definitely feel like I have that.

**Subtheme 2: Board of Counseling.** Though most participants felt confident in their ability to establish a remediation plan, some participants also discussed the lack of support they received from the Board of Counseling. As such, they did not tend to contact the board for consultation or guidance regarding remediation or gatekeeping of supervisees, relying instead on

their more experienced colleagues. Matthew discussed that although the Board of Counseling may not provide support and consultation to supervisors, it is important to find others to consult with:

> I certainly have people I can talk to, colleagues in the office who are experienced. I haven't reached out to the Board [of Counseling] because they just don't offer support like that, which is unfortunate. But I think that's important that we do consult and ethically we should be doing that. Right.

William discussed the importance of well-trained supervisors who understand that they may have limited professional support from the Board of Counseling:

> We have to be prepared when we are given the opportunity and the privilege to supervise others, especially since we don't have much help or direction from the Board of Counseling. If you're not prepared, maybe you should not be doing this. Or consult with a colleague, right? Always, always have a couple people, at least that you can say "this one is really beating my head" Having another perspective is what you need.

### *Theme 4: Challenges and Barriers*

Participants also discussed how the current supervisor training and board regulations can create barriers that can keep supervisors from better understanding their role in addressing the professional behaviors of supervisees. Beth discussed the need to have residency supervisors undergo a more structured level of supervision training than is currently required:

> Make sure that supervisors get good training right now. There is some good stuff out there through the years … and more training [resources] on supervision than ever. There probably needs to be better [formalized] training because supervisors are often very casual in their supervision. I don't know how often this happens these days, but back

several years ago it was very casual, you know, just having a conversation over lunch. I still think that goes on.

Gina discussed how supervisors would benefit from having a clearer definition of professionalism, which could then help them to address it in supervision:

I don't know how you would train supervisees on professionalism specifically, but at least in my program it wasn't necessarily a significant piece of the training. Having more emphasis on or additional training later, or a focus on it during supervision is needed. I think there's a section on the form that says "professionalism," but I also think it's such a broad topic that breaking it down to where people really know what that means would help.

James discussed the need for supervisors to give and receive more education and training regarding professional behavior outside of the counseling room:

I think there needs to be more education and training on all of the things [professional behaviors] we've talked about today … Probably even the minor things need to be addressed so they don't become bigger things. There needs to be a social media policy [for my private practice] … and some kind of accountability, which I think would be challenging.

Amy discussed that though counseling's focus on the person of the counselor makes the acquisition of professional behavior important, this has not currently been incorporated in the training of supervisees:

It isn't something that I think is a huge focus right now for supervisors, or at least explicitly. So, I mean, like I said, in counseling, you bring yourself to the process, you know, more than a lot of other professions, so it's definitely relevant, but it's something

that's, right now, as far as like my understanding of what supervision should be, and the training that I've gotten, that [professional behavior] hasn't really been the emphasis. I think because supervision could be seen more as like the training process and it's like, "we'll be trained." It [professional behavior] doesn't really fit into the purview of training somebody. And then this is more [about] being careful, being mindful of who you are. Not necessarily just while you're working with the client, but in other areas.

## Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented the qualitative thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clark (2006) that was used to answer the research questions. The results of the thematic analysis included fifteen themes and sixteen subthemes. These themes and subthemes work together to describe the factors that influence the perceptions of resident-in-counseling supervisors of their role in the developing of professional behavior of their supervisees outside of the counseling room. The following chapter includes an evaluation of these findings as well as how these findings relate to the current literature and advance the knowledge in the field of counselor education and supervision. The chapter also contains recommendations for future research.

**CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In this study, I explored the perceptions of resident-in-counseling supervisors and their role in developing their supervisees' professional behavior outside of the counseling room. Information was gathered through participant interviews, which contributed to further insight into the impact of resident-in-counseling supervisors' experiences. In this chapter, I discuss the findings from the thematic analysis of the interview data and results presented in Chapter 4. I then discuss the findings in this study in relation to the current literature. I also discuss the implications for counselors, counselor educators, and supervisors. Finally, I discuss the limitations and recommendations for future literature.

## Discussion

There has been a lack of research on the role that residency supervision plays in the continued development of professional behavior for residents in counseling outside of the counseling room. Given the importance of the professional and personal development of counselors, this study was conducted to increase the existing knowledge base. Several of the themes found within this study were consistent with prior research on counselor residency supervision as well as provide new information on counselor professional development. The following sections of the study will relate the themes that emerged from the participants' experiences to previous literature and discuss any new findings.

### Research Question 1

In answering Research Question 1, participants discussed their perceptions of professional behavior of their supervisees and the role they feel they have in helping to develop behaviors outside of the client–counselor relationship. These perceptions were organized under three themes: person of the counselor, community interactions, and supervisor's role.

*Theme 1: Person of the Counselor*

The first theme that emerged was the importance of the personal attributes or the person of the counselor in shaping the professional development and behavior of the supervisee both in and outside of the counseling room. The participants discussed how personal dispositions and behavior exhibited outside of the counseling room can carry over into the professional identity of the counselor, which can impact the therapeutic relationship with clients. Participants also felt that congruence between who counselors are as a person and who they are as a professional is necessary in shaping professional behavior. These findings are consistent with existing literature that defined professional dispositions, or the person of the counselor, as the personal attributes that support a counselor's professional capacity (Christensen et al., 2018), such as core values, attitudes, and beliefs (Acherman & Hilsenroth, 2003; McAdams & Foster, 2007; Spurgeon et al., 2012).

*Theme 2: Community Interactions*

Participants reported community interactions as an important aspect of how they would define professional behavior outside of the counseling room. These interactions within the community were seen as a direct reflection on the counseling profession and impactful on the work being done with clients in the counseling room. Participants indicated that clinical work in the counseling room can be compromised by inappropriate public or community behavior of counselor thus hindering treatment. These findings add new insight, as the existing literature did not discuss the impact that a counselor's professional and personal behaviors within the community have on the therapeutic relationship as well as the profession as a whole.

*Theme 3: Supervisor's Role*

Participants also discussed their role in helping supervisees to develop professional behavior outside of the counselor–client relationship. Perceptions of their supervisory roles varied, resulting in the emergence of three subthemes: modeling, professional boundaries, and personal and professional development.

**Subtheme 1: Modeling.** Participants discussed the importance of mentoring and modeling as part of their role in developing professional behavior with supervisees. Many participants felt that assisting supervisees with professional growth in this area should be a natural process that is cultivated through the supervisory relationship. Participants also noted the significance of the parallel process on their ability to be role models to their supervisees. Other forms of modeling were discussed including assisting supervisees through creating learning experiences, role plays, and sharing their own developmental process with supervisees. These findings are consistent with research that noted the influence of the supervisory relationship on the continued development of the supervisee through modeling during the course of supervision (Baker et al., 2002; Uellendahl & Tenenbaum, 2015).

**Subtheme 2: Professional Boundaries.** Participants noted the challenge of maintaining professional boundaries when discussing their supervisees' personal and professional behaviors outside of the counseling room. Though participants felt it necessary to address problematic personal and professional behavior of their supervisees, they were careful to be respectful of their personal boundaries as an aspect of ethical supervision. Finally, participants also noted the importance of not transitioning into a therapeutic role with supervisees when addressing their personal issues or behavior. These findings are consistent with existing literature on maintaining appropriate professional boundaries within the supervision relationship (Brown-Rice & Olson,

2017; Cruikshanks & Burns, 2017; Borders, 2014; ACES, 2011), but they also offer insight into the boundary challenges faced by supervisors when addressing professional and personal behaviors out of the counseling room.

**Subtheme 3: Personal and Professional Development.** Participants also mentioned the role they play in helping their supervisees to grow both personally and professionally. Many participants noted the importance of congruence between the personal and professional self in their ability to positively impact the community and to provide services as a professional counselor. Participants also discussed how their supervisees' development of personal attributes and behaviors affect their professional identity. These findings are consistent with existing literature on the development of the personal and professional aspects of the counselor, which then become a guiding force for the development of a strong professional identity (Christensen et al., 2018; Dottin, 2009; VanZandt, 1990).

**Research Question 2**

Participants' expectations for supervisees' professional behavior within the office setting, specifically for dress and time management, related to Research Question 2. Along with expectations, participants shared how they communicate and address these behaviors with their supervisees. These perceptions were organized under three themes: contractual agreement, facilitating professional development, and client welfare.

*Theme 1: Contractual Agreement*

Participants noted the importance of establishing a formal agreement to communicate and clarify their expectations for dress and time management in the office. The two types of formal agreements referenced by the participants were the supervision contract and the site's employment policies and procedures.

**Subtheme 1: Supervision Contract.** Participants discussed the importance of establishing a supervision contract prior to residency to communicate and clarify expectations for the supervisee's professional behavior, such as dress and time management. In addition, participants noted that this contractual agreement was beneficial in addressing problematic professional behavior, as it serves as a reference point for expectations previously discussed. Finally, the supervisory contract provides the necessary clarification of roles and responsibilities of both the supervisee and supervisor when discussing problematic behaviors. These findings are consistent with the ACA Code of Ethics (2014) and ACES Best Practices in Clinical Supervision, (2011), which all stress the importance of establishing a supervision contract prior to entering a supervisory relationship, including the policies and procedures that supervisees need to adhere to throughout the supervisory relationship. These findings are also consistent with the existing research on supervision best practices (Amaro et al., 2019; Dye & Borders, 1990; Falender, 2018; Freeman et al., 2016; Herlihy & Dufrene, 2011; Ladany, 2014; Tugendrajch et al., 2021).

**Subtheme 2: Employment Policy.** In addition to the supervision contract, participants discussed the importance of reviewing the site's employment policy with their supervisees when establishing guidelines on professional dress and time management. They found that by reviewing the policy and procedures set by the site, they could ensure that the supervisees were aware of the expectations of the agency or employer. As with the supervision contract, the employment agreement was beneficial in addressing problematic professional behavior. These findings add new insight as the existing literature did not specifically address the importance of the supervision site's employment policy and procedures as an adjunct to the supervision contract when establishing and communicating expectations regarding professional behaviors.

*Theme 2: Facilitating Professional Development*

Theme 2 came from participants' responses on the importance of the supervisory relationship in the facilitation of professional development. This relationship provided the foundation needed for communication and remediation of professional behaviors. Perceptions of their role in facilitating professional development with supervisees varied, resulting in three subthemes: facilitating growth, providing additional training, and addressing professional behaviors.

**Subtheme 1: Facilitating Growth.** Participants discussed the importance of providing space for their supervisee to grow and develop their own style or way of working. This included encouraging their supervisees to act more independently, providing space for developing a personal counseling style, and providing additional support when it is needed. Finally, the main role of the supervisor was seen as helping their supervisees to learn and grow professionally through the guidance, support, and feedback provided during supervision. These findings are consistent with previous findings that note the importance of supervisory support in the development of the supervisee's growth and competence (Brun, 2020; Falender & Shafranske, 2012; Thancker & Diambra, 2019; Woo et al., 2017).

**Subtheme 2: Provide Additional Training.** Participants also highlighted the importance of providing ongoing training as needed to their supervisees throughout the supervisory relationship to support continual professional development. They noted that remedial training was particularly important when they observed potentially problematic deficits in the supervisee's professional behaviors. These findings are consistent with existing research that states that supervisors should assist supervisees with securing additional training for their

supervisees as needed to ensure their competence (ACA, 2011; Borders, 2014; Gilbert et al., 2019; Henderson & Dufrene, 2012, 2017).

**Subtheme 3: Addressing Professional Behaviors.** Participants stated the importance of discussing, communicating, and addressing professional expectations as an ongoing process within supervision. Through the supervisory relationship, participants noted that they gained an awareness of various factors that can affect their supervisees' professional development. They also felt that the strength of the supervisory relationship was foundational, allowing for open discussions about behavior and ways to integrate personal and professional life, an essential component of professional development. These findings are consistent with existing literature that addresses the role of the supervisory relationship in handling issues that may arise in the supervisees' personal and professional development (Cook et al., 2018; Falender & Shafranske, 2012; Fitch et al., 2010; Ladany, 2014).

*Theme 3: Client Welfare*

Theme 3 came from participants' responses on the importance of addressing how professional behaviors of the supervisee, such as dress and time management, may impact the client. Their perceptions were organized under two subthemes: therapeutic environment and impact on the therapeutic relationship.

**Subtheme 1: Therapeutic Environment.** Participants discussed how professional dress helps to set the tone of the therapeutic environment. Participants noted the need to balance appropriate professional dress with meeting the comfort level of the client. Finally, they mentioned the role that dress plays in creating a comfortable space that contributes positively to the client's ability to engage in treatment. These findings add new insight as the existing research

did not discuss the how a counselor's professional dress contributes to the therapeutic environment by enhancing the comfort level of the client.

**Subtheme 2: Impact on the Therapeutic Relationship.** In addition to the therapeutic environment, participants noted how professional dress and time management impacts the therapeutic relationship with the client. One participant noted how inappropriate dress can directly interfere with the client's ability to engage in the process. Other participants discussed how in office time management was a potential predictor of how supervisees will manage their time when with the client, such as starting and ending sessions on time. In turn, the ensuing anxiety that occurs when a counselor does not show up on time can negatively impact the therapeutic relationship. These findings add new insight to the existing literature concerning the potential impact that in-office professional behaviors, such as dress and time management, have on the therapeutic relationship.

## Research Question 3

Research Question 3 was answered through participants noting their expectations for their supervisees' professional dispositions in the office. Along with their expectations, participants shared how they communicate and address these behaviors with their supervisees. Their perceptions were organized into two themes: respectful behaviors and facilitating counselor development.

### *Theme 1: Respectful Behaviors*

Participants discussed their expectations that their supervisees conduct themselves in a respectful manner when interacting with colleagues and staff in the workplace. Participants also felt that it was essential that supervisees were able to be respectful of other views and opinions in the office, even when they differ from their own beliefs. Thus, participants focused on helping

their supervisees to develop respectful ways of interacting in the office, including learning to accept others' perspectives, recognizing when interactions are inappropriate, and appropriately handling differing opinions with colleagues and staff. These findings are consistent with existing research on the professional dispositions required for counselors, including an awareness of self and others, respect for other viewpoints, and emotional stability (ACA, 2014; Ackerman & Hilsenroth, 2003; Brown-Rice & Furr, 2019; Christensen et al., 2018; Jennings & Skovholt, 1999; Pope & Kline, 1999; Sabella et al., 2020).

### *Theme 2: Facilitating Counselor Development*

Participants felt that professional interoffice interactions are something that supervisees must learn and develop over time. Noting that these professional behaviors do not always come naturally, participants discussed various methods they used to facilitate professional development in this area. These included modeling appropriate professional interactions, addressing issues as they arise, and teaching conflict resolution skills by directly working with both the supervisee and the other persons involved in the conflict. These findings are consistent with existing research that identifies the importance of supervisees continuing to learn and expand their skills and knowledge through ongoing education and professional development (Limberg et al., 2013; Lloyd-Hazlett & Foster, 2017; Miller et al., 2020; Moss et al., 2014; Nystrom, 2009; Olsen et al., 2016; Thacker & Diambr, 2019; Woo et al., 2017).

### Research Question 4

Participants' expectations for their supervisees' professional behavior when they are engaging in virtual platforms related to Research Question 4. Along with expectations, participants shared how they communicate and address these behaviors with their supervisees.

These perceptions were organized into three themes: perception of professionalism, ethical considerations, and addressing social media in supervision.

*Theme 1: Perception of their Professionalism*

Participants discussed the importance of supervisees being aware of the image they portray while interacting online and the potential damage to their professional image from inappropriate use. Participants also felt that supervisees had a professional responsibility as a counselor that extended into these types of interactions, which can affect their ability to provide professional services within their community. Supervisees should also be aware of potential perceptions that clients may form based on their posts, as clients often utilize social media and other online sites to find information about their counselor. These findings add new insight as the existing literature did not specifically address the impact that online interactions may have on professional perception of counselors or supervisees.

*Theme 2: Ethical Considerations*

Participants also discussed the importance of addressing and adhering to ethical counseling practices regarding their supervisees' social media postings and other online interactions. Therefore, they are careful to have discussions about the ethical mandates that their supervisees need to consider when engaged in this venue. Their perceptions were organized under two subthemes: confidentiality and boundaries.

**Subtheme 1: Confidentiality.** Participants communicated their expectation that their supervisees must maintain their clients' confidentiality and privacy whenever they are posting on social media and other online sites. Participants also discussed how counselors can unintentionally violate confidentiality through the sharing of seemingly benign pieces of information on virtual platforms, which can inadvertently violate client confidentiality. These

findings are consistent with the ACA Code of Ethics (2014) requiring that counselors take precautions to avoid disclosing information through public social media as well as the current literature, which discusses the importance of confidentiality and privacy when using social media or other online sites (Heidari et al., 2020; Herlithy & Dufrene, 2011; Jenkin et al., 2019; Judd & Johnston, 2012).

**Subtheme 2: Boundaries.** Participants also discussed the importance of maintaining appropriate professional boundaries when interacting with clients, staff, or supervisees on social media and other online sites. Helping supervisees to set clear boundaries with clients, colleagues and staff when interacting online was seen as a necessary aspect of supervision. Participants also noted the importance of ensuring that supervisees adhere to the ACA Code of Ethics regarding all of their social media and online interactions (ACA, 2014). These findings are consistent with existing literature, which discusses the importance of counselors setting and maintaining appropriate professional boundaries with clients, staff, and colleagues (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2019; Cook et al., 2018; Cruikshanks & Burns, 2019; Heidari et al., 2020; Kasperiuniene & Zydzjunaite, 2019; Kaplan et al., 2011).

*Theme 3: Addressing Social Media in Supervision*

Participants felt that monitoring their supervisees' personal social media and other online interactions was outside of the scope of their role as a supervisor. However, they also noted the importance of discussing appropriate and professional behaviors, which included the use of social media or other online interactions. As the participants discussed how they resolve the ensuing dilemma, two subthemes emerged: viewing it as an aspect of professional development and creating learning experiences.

**Subtheme 1: Aspect of Professional Development.** Though participants did not specifically address the personal social media or other online interactions of their supervisees, they did discuss that appropriate online interactions occasionally came up within the context of professional development. As such, some participants viewed their roles as supervisors as helping their supervisees develop the professionalism needed to be able to make ethical and appropriate decisions, including their use of social media. Participants also noted that although they do not monitor the social media interactions of their supervisees, they felt that this area is important enough that they will address problems should they arise. These findings are consistent with the literature that discusses professional behavior in social media (Kitsis et al., 2016; Kaplan et al., 2011; Lloyd-Hazlett & Foster, 2017; O'Regan et al., 2018). These findings provide new insight to existing literature that suggests that while professional development should include social media, the supervisor's role in assisting or monitoring their supervisees in this area is not as clear.

**Subtheme 2: Creating Learning Experiences.** Some participants took a more active role in helping their supervisees understand their professional responsibilities in their online interactions by creating learning experiences. They discussed the use of examples and scenarios to assist supervisees to identify appropriate online professional behaviors and explore potential consequences of their social media and other online posts. These findings are consistent with the existing literature that discusses the role of the supervisor in addressing and teaching professionalism of their supervisees (Moss et al., 2014; Sabella et al., 2020; Thacker & Diambra, 2019; Trede, 2012; Trede et al., 2012). These findings also add new insight to the existing literature regarding the dilemma reported by supervisors between maintaining professional

boundaries with their supervisee and their role in addressing and teaching professionalism in their supervisees' online interactions.

**Research Question 5**

Research Question 5 was answered by participants' experiences with handling persistent problematic professional behavior of their supervisees. The process used for making gatekeeping decisions was also discussed. These experiences were organized into four themes: endorsement, supervisee remediation, colleague support, and supervision training.

*Theme 1: Endorsement*

Participants stated that their main role as a resident-in-counseling supervisor is to verify for the state that their supervisee has the required skills and competencies to provide clinical services under an independent license. As such, participants talked about the importance of their primary role as a gatekeeper for the counseling profession, which primarily involved verifying their supervisees' hours and their evaluations. They also discussed the difficult decisions that must be made when supervisees cannot be endorsed for licensure. Though they felt empathy for the supervisee in these cases, they felt that as a gatekeeper, their first responsibility was to the client. These findings are consistent with the existing literature, which addresses the role of supervision in gatekeeping for the profession and ensuring the ethical and competent treatment of clients (ACA, 2014; Cox & Grus, 2019; Gleason & Hays, 2019; Jorgensen et al., 2017; Rapp & Stewart, 2018; Russell et al., 2007; Sutton, 2016).

*Theme 2: Supervisee Remediation*

Theme 2 is the importance of remediation of professional behaviors. Participants viewed remediation as a way to ensure that their supervisees have the best opportunity possible to gain the competencies needed for licensure. This required a commitment to provide their supervisees

with additional time and support needed to work through problematic areas, which could range from teaching basic skills to helping them access resources for personal issues. Additionally, participants felt that ongoing monitoring of supervisees' progress helped to ensure that effective remediation takes place. These findings are consistent with the current literature emphasizing the ethical responsibility of supervisors to remediate supervisees as needed (Dean et al., 2018; Foster et al., 2014; Freeman et al., 2016; Gizzara & Forrest, 2004; Henderson & Dufrene, 2017).

*Theme 3: Consultation and Support*

Theme 3 pertains to the importance of obtaining consultation and support when making remediation and gatekeeping decisions. Ongoing support was considered a vital component in the decision-making process when evaluating the need for potential remedial actions. When examining their experiences, two subthemes emerged: obtaining consultation and support from colleagues and from the Board of Counseling.

**Subtheme 1: Colleagues.** Participants discussed the role of consultation and support from colleagues when considering potential remediation for supervisees who may be struggling with professional behavior. Some participants noted how colleague support and consultation provided them with feedback on their decision-making processes prior to initiating any remediation action. They also consulted colleagues to obtain assistance in ways to handle potential problematic behavior with their supervisees. These findings are consistent with existing literature that emphasizes the importance of supervision consultation during the decision-making process for remediation and gatekeeping of supervisees (ACES, 2011; Borders, 2014; Brown-Rice & Olson, 2017; Dean et al., 2018; Freeman et al., 2016; Henderson & Dufrene, 2017; Russell et al., 2007; West & Ham, 2012).

**Subtheme 2: Board of Counseling.** Though most participants felt confident in their ability to establish a remediation plan, some participants also discussed the lack of support they received from the Board of Counseling. As a result, they did not tend to contact the board for consultation or guidance regarding remediation or gatekeeping of supervisees. Rather, they noted the importance of consulting with well-trained supervisors, given the limited professional support from the Board of Counseling. These findings add new insight to the existing literature on the role of consultation in the supervisors' remediation and gatekeeping decision-making processes.

*Theme 4: Challenges and Barriers*

Referencing current board regulations, participants discussed the challenges and barriers faced by supervisors when trying to understand their role in addressing the professional behaviors of supervisees. Noting the importance of professional values and behavior in overall counselor competence, they felt that there had not been an emphasis on providing training in overall professional behaviors. As a result, they felt that residency supervisors should undergo a more structured level of supervision training than is currently required. They also felt that supervisors would benefit from having a clearer definition of professionalism, which in turn, could help them to address it in supervision. These findings add new insight to the existing literature by identifying challenges and barriers that exist when addressing the professional behavior of supervisees within supervision.

## Implications for Counselor Educators and Supervisors

The results of this study provide new insight into the perceived role of resident-in-counseling supervisors in developing supervisees' professional behavior outside of the counseling room. The most significant finding suggests that resident-in-counseling supervisors

play an essential role in shaping the professional behavior of the counselor outside of the counseling room. Supervisors felt that professional behavior is an area that should be addressed during residency, including appropriate professionalism not only in the workplace but in their community interactions as well. The participants indicated that behavior within the community directly reflects on the work done with clients. Professional behavior of the counselor, such as dress and time management, impacts the therapeutic relationship and how the community makes decisions to seek treatment. As a result, this study also provided a greater understanding on the impact that a counselor's behaviors outside of the counseling room has on the therapeutic relationship with the client.

In addition, the supervisors felt that addressing social media and online interactions of supervisees was an important aspect of professional development. Supervisors felt that it is important that supervisees are aware of the image that they portray when interacting online and of potential perceptions that may form based on their posts. Professional responsibility of the counselor should extend to these types of interactions and can affect their ability to provide services in their community. However, the supervisors had difficulty navigating the ethical dilemma that also requires them to maintain appropriate professional boundaries between the supervisee's personal and professional lives. As a result, supervisors were unclear on their role in monitoring and addressing the social media and online interactions of their supervisees.

This study also provides insight into relational dispositions of supervisees, such as counselor values and respect, which are important aspects of professional behavior when working with colleagues, coworkers, and staff in the office setting. Professionalism within the office is an important piece of development for supervisees and may not always come naturally;

therefore, supervisors felt that it is important to provide training and mentoring on how to appropriately interact with others in the workplace.

The study also highlights the importance of written contractual agreements such as supervision contracts, in communicating expectations and addressing professional behavior of the supervisee. Reviewing and referencing the supervision contract or ensuring that supervisees review and understand the site's employment policy can assist with establishing and communicating expectations and requirements for professional behavior, including more sensitive areas such as dress and time management.

This study also provides a greater understanding of how supervisors mainly utilize consultation with other supervisors when making remediation and gatekeeping decisions. Although responsible to the Board, supervisors do not feel that they can use the Board of Counseling as a consultation resource. Although supervisors felt confident in their ability to develop a plan for remediation or make difficult gatekeeping decisions, they felt that consultation from well-trained colleagues and supervisors is valuable and provides needed support.

Finally, this study supports the need for more structured and specific training on professional behavior for both supervisors and supervisees. A clear definition of professionalism can assist with a better understanding of professional behavior outside of the counseling room and therefore enhance the ability to address it during supervision.

## Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings, there are several recommendations for future research. First, further research is needed on developing a clear definition of dispositions and standards for professional behavior of counselor outside of the counseling room. Second, further research is needed on the challenges of addressing professional online interactions of supervisees given the

professional boundaries of the supervision relationship. Though research has discussed the importance of professional behavior of counselors in social media, the supervisor's role in assisting or monitoring their supervisees in this area is unclear (Lloyd-Hazlett & Foster, 2017; O'Regan et al., 2018).

Future research is also needed on the impact of the counselor's professional behavior outside of the counseling room, including dress and time management, on the therapeutic relationship and therapeutic environment for the client. Research supports the ethical and professional delivery of treatment to clients within the client–counselor relationship, yet there is no research on the impact of behaviors such as dress and time management of the counselor on the welfare of the client (Christensen et al., 2018; McAdams et al., 2007; McAdams & Foster, 2007).

Future research is also needed on the effects of social media on the professional perception of counselors within their community. The ACA Code of Ethics (2014) and the existing literature supports the ethical and appropriate use of social media and online sites, but further research on the professional responsibility of counselors (Heidari et al., 2020; Herlithy & Dufrene, 2011; Jenkin et al., 2019; Judd & Johnston, 2012). Determining the impact that counselor's social media use has on the professional perceptions of the community can provide further knowledge on the professional behavior of counselors.

Lastly, future research is needed to examine the processes used by supervisors in making gatekeeping decisions. The existing literature emphasizes the importance of supervision consultation and supervisors currently rely on colleagues and other supervisors to provide this (Borders, 2014; Brown-Rice & Olson, 2017; Dean et al., 2018; Freeman et al., 2016; Henderson & Dufrene, 2017). But due to the lack of professional support from the Board of Counseling,

further research in this area would assist supervisors with developing and maintaining appropriate processes for making importance decisions.

## Limitations

The study's data were obtained from resident-in-counseling supervisors from one state and one region of the state. Additionally, participants who would be interested in participating in the study most likely have higher levels of training and experience in supervision and therefore were more aware of professional behavior and development of their supervisees. However, this does not diminish the importance of the findings that were derived from these participants. Finally, as a resident-in-counseling supervisor, I could relate to the subject matter, which required me to bracket for potential researcher bias and consistently consult with my dissertation chair to process and manage these.

## Summary

This chapter included an evaluation of these findings as well as how these findings relate to the current literature and advance the knowledge in the field of counselor education and supervision. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of counseling residency supervisors' role in developing the professional behavior of their supervisees outside of the counseling room. The results of the study included 15 themes and 16 subthemes. These themes and subthemes work together to describe the experiences that had a direct impact on each participants' perception of their role in developing the professional behavior of their supervisees.

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**APPENDIX A: Interview Questions (Interview & Focus Groups)**

The purpose of the study is to examine the perceptions of resident-in-counseling supervisors' role in developing the professional behaviors of their supervisees outside of the counseling room. The study seeks to identify central themes that emerge from resident-in-counseling supervisors' narratives about developing, teaching and addressing the professional behavior of their supervisees.

From internship to residency, part of our role as supervisors is ensuring residents have the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to adequately work with clients, but there is a lack of research in the area of dispositions and professional behavior of the counselor outside of counselor/client interactions.

First, I am going to ask about your perceptions of the professional behaviors that should be developed in your supervisee apart from the counselor-client relationship. In other words, those professional behaviors outside of the client/counselor relationship that reflect upon the person of the counselor and the profession of counseling in either a positive or negative way.

1. What do you view as professional behavior outside of the counseling room?
2. What role do you feel that you play in helping to develop supervisees' professional behavior outside of the counselor-client relationship?

Now let's talk about your experiences in developing professional behavior of supervisees in their in-office behaviors.

3. Describe your expectations for how your supervisees' dress in the workplace.
4. Describe how you address inappropriate or unprofessional dress in the workplace.
5. Describe your expectations for appropriate time management when supervisees are not directly working with the client.
6. Describe how you would address a supervisee when they are not managing their time in the office in a professional manner.

As counselors we are taught to respect the views and beliefs of one another and not impose our own beliefs, opinions or views upon clients. Now let's talk about the professional behavior of supervisees in the area of community interactions and the effects of this upon the profession's image.

7. Describe your expectations for your supervisees' interactions with co-workers, staff and colleagues.
8. Discuss how you would address a supervisee who is not interacting appropriately with co-workers, staff or colleagues.
9. Describe your expectations for supervisees in the area of social media, such as twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok.
10. Describe how you would address a supervisees' inappropriate or unprofessional interactions on social media.

11. Describe your expectations for supervisees in the area of online presence, such as blogs, websites, online marketing, etc.
12. Describe how you would address supervisees' inappropriate or unprofessional interactions or posting online.

Another one of our responsibilities as supervisors is as gatekeepers of our profession. We've talked about expectations and how you would communicate and address concerns to supervisees. Now I would like to focus on the process that is utilized in making gatekeeping decisions when dealing with persistent problematic professional behavior of your supervisees.

13. How prepared do you feel in addressing persistent unprofessional behavior?
14. Describe any processes you may have for handling persistent unprofessional behavior with your supervisees.
15. What strategies have you utilized in resolving issues with persistent unprofessional behavior of your supervisees?
16. Describe any consultations you might engage in or support you might receive on issues of persistent unprofessional behavior of your supervisees.
17. Before we end, as you reflect on your experience as a resident-in-counseling supervisor, is there anything else you would like to add that has been left unsaid?

Since this is a qualitative study, some probing and clarifying questions may be needed to understand meaning. Some preplanned probing/clarifying questions include, "tell me more," "go on," "did I understand you when you said…" "Did I paraphrase what you said correctly?"

**APPENDIX B: Recruitment Letter**

Dear Supervisor:

As a student in the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to examine the perceptions of resident-in-counseling supervisors' role in developing the professional behaviors of their supervisees outside of the counseling room, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be licensed professional counselors who are approved by the Commonwealth of Virginia to supervise residents in counseling and who are either currently providing or have provided clinical supervision to residents within the past two years. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a 5-minute demographic questionnaire, participate in an audio-recorded 45- to 60-minute interview or a video-recorded 60-to 90-minute focus group via Zoom, and reflect on their experiences in developing the professional behaviors of their resident in counseling supervisees. You will also complete a member checking of the interview or focus group transcript, which will take 10 to 15 minutes. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

The consent document and demographic questionnaire are attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. To participate, please complete the attached demographic questionnaire, sign the consent document, and send them to ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. I will then schedule an interview or focus group with you, based on your preference. You may also contact me by email for more information.

If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me prior to the time of the interview or focus group.

Participants will receive a $20 Amazon gift card upon completion of the interview or focus group.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Gobble, LPC, NCC
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies, Liberty University

## APPENDIX C: Participant Questionnaire

Date: _____     Pseudonym (to be completed by researcher): _____

Are you a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) in the state of Virginia? Yes _____ No _____

Are you approved by the Commonwealth of Virginia as a Counseling Supervisor?

Yes _____ No _____

What training

Are you currently supervising counseling residents? Yes _____ No _____

Have you provided resident in counseling supervision in the last two years?

Yes _____ No _____

How long have you provided supervision to Counseling Residents? _____

What training or education have you received in providing supervision?
_____


How do you want to be contacted?



        Phone: _____



        Email: _____



        Other: _____ (please specify)

Please provide any additional information you would like for me to know about you.

**APPENDIX D: Informed Consent**

**Title of the Project:** Developing professional behaviors during residency: The shared experiences of resident-in-counseling supervisors

**Principal Investigator:** Jennifer Gobble, LPC, NCC, ACS, Doctoral Student, Liberty University

| Invitation to be Part of a Research Study |
| --- |

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a Licensed Professional counselor who is approved by the Commonwealth of Virginia to supervise Residents in counseling and who is either currently providing or has provided clinical supervision to residents within the past two years. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

| What is the study about and why is it being done? |
| --- |

The purpose of the study is to examine the perceptions of resident-in-counseling supervisors' role in developing the professional behaviors of their supervisees outside of the counseling room. The study seeks to identify the central themes that emerge from resident-in-counseling supervisors' narratives describing their interactions with their supervisees when addressing their non-client professional behaviors.

| What will happen if you take part in this study? |
| --- |

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:
1.      Complete a 5-minute demographic questionnaire.
2.      Participate in an audio-recorded 45-to 60-minute interview or a video-recorded 60 to 90-minute focus group via Zoom.
3.      Review the interview or focus group transcript for accuracy. Revise or remove any transcript content to ensure that the data accurately reflects your voice (10-15 minutes).

| How could you or others benefit from this study? |
| --- |

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include gaining a greater understanding of resident-in-counseling supervisor's perception of their role in developing the professional behaviors of their supervisees outside of the counseling room.

| What risks might you experience from being in this study? |
| --- |

The risks involved in this study include are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

| How will personal information be protected? |
| --- |

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.
- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms.

- Interviews and focus groups will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

## How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study with a $20 Amazon gift card, which will be emailed to participants upon completion of the interview or focus group.

## Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

## What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

## Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Jennifer Gobble. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Mary Deacon, at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

## Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, ▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

*Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.*

## Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records.  If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name


_____
Signature & Date